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## How do mid-level leaders communicate with white collar workers in a multi-national setting?

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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

HOW DO MID-LEVEL LEADERS COMMUNICATE WITH WHITE COLLAR WORKERS  
IN A MULTI-NATIONAL SETTING?

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Susan Al-Shammari

June, 2018

James Rocco DellaNeve, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Susan Al-Shammari

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## DEDICATION

*To my father and mother*

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For her intellectual, emotional, and financial support, I cannot thank my beloved mother enough. She got less sleep than I did during this process because she so much wanted me to succeed. I love you, Mom. Without you, I never would have reached the end of this process.

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## VITA

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## ABSTRACT

Managing employees from different cultural and national backgrounds within international business organizations is one of the greatest challenges that mid-level leaders face in the new millennium because of the broad range of communication difficulties that can arise (Cox, 1991; Cupach & Imahori, 1993; Fitzsimmons, 2013; Ietto-Gillies, 2005; Lisak & Erez, 2015; Oliveira, 2013). The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine and evaluate the effectiveness of the communication strategies and tactics of mid-level leaders in one major multinational company with a sizable multinational workforce, Saudi Aramco. The theoretical framework for this study was Communication Accommodation Theory (e.g., Giles, 2014; Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991, 2007). The principal survey instrument employed was the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (Downs & Hazen, 1977).

Only 7 demographic variables (education, age, gender, nationality match, language match, income, and duration of time with the company) had *any* significant correlations with the *Seven Dimensions Of Communication Satisfaction* proposed by Downs and Hazen (1977), but the strength of all those correlations was weak, with the exception of education. The more education the participants had, the more satisfied they were with their job.

Interestingly, in a culture in which gender differences play such an important role, there were no significant differences by gender in the workforce at Saudi Aramco. It was notable however, that the most satisfied employees were those who had been at the company the longest. National and language differences also played almost no role in employee satisfaction, most likely because the whole workforce is fluent in English. The employees did place some significance on what Suchan (2014) describes as Arabic styles of persuasion, which favor: (a) the

use of repetition and paraphrasing to make a point, (b) the use of highly ornate and metaphoric language, and (c) the use of strong emotion.

Finally, in comparing the employees' responses to Goleman's (2000) *Six Styles of Leadership*, the researcher discovered that the workers at Saudi Aramco relate most of all to Goleman's affiliative, coaching, and democratic leadership styles.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Background of the Study

What are the elements of effective communication? Thousands of years ago, in his *Ars Rhetorica (Art of Rhetoric)*, Aristotle (1959) pointed to three essential elements, which he called *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*.

*Ethos* is the credibility or believability of the person who is communicating. In an organizational setting, that credibility may come simply from the rank of the communicator, or from his or her integrity, character, and technical expertise (Edinger, 2013).

*Pathos* is the emotional connection between people. In an organizational setting, that connection may be enhanced by the communicator showing an interest in his or her listeners' career development and the progress of the organization. According to Edinger (2013), *pathos* is the most important of the three elements of communication in determining "followers' perception of their leader's effectiveness as a communicator" (p. 1).

*Logos* is the logic or rationale underlying a communication. According to Edinger (2013), "Employing strengths in strategic thinking, problem solving, and analytical skills is how today's leaders express logical ideas in clear and compelling enough terms to influence outcomes" (p. 1).

Thus, in any communication, the content is only part of the message, and not necessarily the most important part. Beyond the verbal content of any exchange are nonverbal cues that help to facilitate the communication if they are interpreted correctly by the receiver. According to Benjamin (2016):

Effective communication requires paying attention to an entire process, not only the content of the message. When one is the messenger in this process, he should consider potential barriers at several stages that can keep the audience from receiving the message correctly. The sender has to be aware of his attitudes, emotions, knowledge, and credibility with the receiver which might obstruct or alter whether and how the message is received. Awareness of sender's own body language when speaking, the attitudes and

knowledge, diversity in age, sex, and ethnicity or race adds to the communication challenges, as do different training backgrounds. Individuals from different cultures may assign very different meanings to facial expressions, use of space, and, especially, gestures. (p. 194)

In organizational settings, such as corporations, communication effectiveness is increasingly challenged today because so many corporations, especially international ones, have multinational workforces. Thanks to cultural and linguistic differences, this increase in numbers of multinational workers enhances the possibility of misinterpretation from sender to receiver, and back again. Thus, thanks to the current forces of globalization, mid-level leaders are presented with unique challenges when they have to supervise subordinates from diverse cultures and nationalities (Gacho Segumpan, Christopher, & Rao, 2007). Clearly, this situation raises communication issues in a context where, as Ahmad (2006) states, “a positive communication environment helps achieve an effective organization” (p. 27).

Barker and Gower (2010) note that in today’s world of rapid communication, supervisors and workers no longer have the luxury of time to adjust to each other’s communication styles and cultural differences:

Tight deadlines and time pressure hinder the ability of any group to build relationships. In the past, individuals and organizations were given time to study and adapt to the changing environment of the business world. The past two decades, however, have brought about increased expectations for the availability and immediacy of goods and services because of the advantages of using technology in worldwide business ventures, thereby imposing time constraints that deter members from having or allowing the time needed to network and build relationships between diverse organizational members. (p. 295)

There are also differences between individualistic and collectivistic cultures that can affect communication (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). Although the challenges faced by mid-level supervisors of multinational workers have been studied extensively in individualistic Western cultures, the researcher, after an exhaustive search of peer-



reviewed articles and books on EBSCO, ProQuest, and WorldCat.org, was unable to find a single study of these challenges in collectivistic Middle Eastern cultures. Therefore, the researcher, working within the theoretical framework of Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 2008; Giles et al., 1991, 2007), used the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire, or CSQ (Downs & Hazen, 1977), to examine worker satisfaction in one of the largest multinational organizations in the Middle East: the international headquarters of Saudi Aramco in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. The CSQ quantifies seven dimensions of worker satisfaction, which are described below in the section on this study's theoretical orientation (see pp. 15-20, below).

What is already known about the communication effectiveness of mid-level leaders with their workers, which is the dependent variable of this study, is that the more effective the communication is, the more efficient the organization as a whole is (Madlock, 2008; Pettit, Goris, & Vaught, 1997; Sharma, 2015; Wińska, 2010). Since, to date, nothing has been written on this subject in relation to multinational organizations in the Middle East, the present study makes a valuable contribution to the literature. The study is especially timely because more and more organizations in the Middle East are employing multinational workers today. By examining how one of the largest multinational corporations in the world is dealing with problems that arise from having a multinational workforce, this study will help mid-level leaders in other multinational organizations, especially ones in the Middle East, to communicate more effectively with their workers.

### **Problem Statement**

Many studies have shown that culturally heterogeneous groups experience significant communication problems that prevent them from reaching their performance potential (Earley & Gibson, 2002; Earley & Mosakoski, 2000; Franklin, 2007; Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999;

Ravlin, Thomas, & Ilsev, 2000). This problem becomes magnified when the cultural differences are national in origin. Yet, as noted, many multinational corporations today have multinational workforces (Aritz & Walker, 2014).

While there has been a great deal written about this problem in the United States, the United Kingdom, Western Europe, and China (e.g., Cox, 1991; Cupach & Imahori, 1993; Fitzsimmons, 2013; Ietto-Gillies, 2005; Lisak & Erez, 2015; Oliveira, 2013), the researcher's exhaustive search, described above, found nothing written about it in the Middle East in general, or Saudi Arabia in particular.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to examine and evaluate the effectiveness of the communication of mid-level leaders to their multinational subordinates in the headquarters of one major company in the Middle East, Saudi Aramco, which has a multinational workforce.

### **Importance of the Study**

By studying how one of the world's biggest multinational corporations is handling the issues that arise from having a multinational workforce, the researcher is providing data for other multinational organizations, especially those in the Middle East, which have mid-level leaders communicating with multinational workforces so that those leaders can communicate more effectively with their workers (Lear, Hodge, & Schulz, 2014). In particular, those other multinational organizations might utilize the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (Downs & Hazen, 1977) to survey their own workers.

The specific beneficiaries of this study will be mid-level leaders in multinational organizations in the Middle East, who will be enabled to communicate more effectively with their multinational workers. Those mid-level leaders, both in Aramco and other multinational

organizations, will improve their communication with their multinational workers by surveying them with the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (Downs & Hazen, 1977), which nicely complements Communication Accommodation Theory, the theoretical foundation of this study.

This study adds to what currently exists in the professional literature because it is the first to address multinational worker satisfaction in multinational corporations in the Middle East. It is important to conduct the study at this time precisely because more and more organizations in the Middle East are employing multinational workers today.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Accommodation.** Giles and Ogay (2006) define accommodation as the “constant movement toward and away from others by changing one’s communication behaviors” (p. 294).

**Alternative hypothesis.** Denoted by  $H_1$  or  $H_a$ , the alternative hypothesis proposes that sample observations are influenced by some non-random cause (Agresti & Finlay, 2007).

**ANOVA.** Analysis of variance is a collection of statistical models that are used by statisticians to analyze the differences among group means and their associated procedures, such as “variation” among and between groups (Agresti & Finlay, 2007).

**Approximation.** In Communication Accommodation Theory, approximation is defined as adjustment of communicative features (e.g., accent, speech rate, pauses, and nonverbal cues) used by individuals in order to be more similar to or more dissimilar from their interaction partner (C. M. Lee, 2007).

**Communication.** Robbins and Judge (2011) define communication as “the transfer and understanding of meaning” (p. 343).

**Convergence.** In Communication Accommodation Theory, convergence is defined as “a strategy through which individuals adapt their communicative behavior in such a way as to

become more similar to their interlocutor's behavior" (Gallois, Ogay, & Giles, 2005, p. 123).

C. M. Lee (2007) notes that "individuals have a need to be validated or reinforced. In order to achieve this, they actively seek out similarities in personal characteristics between themselves and others" (p. 31).

**Culture.** Parrillo (2000) defines culture as the "physical or material objects and values, attitudes, customs, beliefs, and habits shared by members of a society and transmitted to the next generation" (p. 29).

**Dependent variable.** A factor that depends on other factors and, unlike independent variables, is subject to change (Creswell, 2009). In the present study, the dependent variable is the communicative effectiveness of the mid-level leaders at the world headquarters of Saudi Aramco.

**Discourse management.** In Communication Accommodation Theory, discourse management, according to C. M. Lee (2007), involves "responding to or not responding to the conversational needs of one's interaction partner. Specifically, it focuses on the facilitation of ongoing talk during an interaction.... Behaviors indicative of discourse management include choosing topics which both parties have some knowledge about and can discuss, and making sure the other person does not feel threatened" (p. 27).

**Divergence.** In Communication Accommodation Theory, divergence, according to Gallois et al. (2005) involves "accentuating differences between oneself and another on various communication features (e.g., accent, speech rate)" (p. 123).

**Effective communication.** Lear et al. (2014) define effective communication as "a skill set whereby thoughts or ideas are communicated in such a way as to have meaning, and that intended meaning is understood by the recipient" (p. 65).

**Independent variable.** A variable that stands alone and is not changed by the other variables one is trying to measure (Creswell, 2009). In the present study, the independent variables are the demographic characteristics of the participants, such as their age, gender, national origin, and length of employment at Saudi Aramco's world headquarters.

**Interpersonal control.** In Communication Accommodation Theory, interpersonal control, according to C. M. Lee (2007), "focuses on those behaviors used to increase or decrease one's ability to change roles during an interaction. Specific behaviors associated with interpersonal control (i.e., allowing individuals the ability to change) are not dominating the conversation, allowing the other person to choose topics, and not interrupting the other person" (pp. 27-28).

**Interpretability.** In Communication Accommodation Theory, interpretability involves the use of behaviors that are used to increase or decrease understandability between interaction partners. Giles and Coupland (1991) indicated that interpretability might include the modification of language complexity and asking clarifying questions of one's interaction partner (E. Lee, 2007).

**Job satisfaction.** Pomirleanu & Mariadoss (2015) define job satisfaction as "a positive emotional state that reflects an affective response to the job situation" (p. 34).

**Maintenance.** In Communication Accommodation Theory, maintenance, according to Gallois et al. (2005), occurs "when a person persists in his or her original style, regardless of the communication behavior of the interlocutor" (p. 123). According to Giles and Gasiorek (2012), maintenance is "the absence of accommodative adjustments by individuals, that is, maintaining their 'default' way of communicating without taking into account the characteristics of their fellow interactants" (pp. 6-7).

**Multicultural workforce.** Fine (1991) defined a multicultural workforce as one in which “people from different cultural backgrounds bring different meanings, values, assumptions, and discourse styles into the workplace” (p. 295).

**Null hypothesis.** Denoted by  $H_0$ , a null hypothesis proposes that sample observations result purely from chance (Agresti & Finlay, 2007).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The principal theoretical framework for the present study is Communication Accommodation Theory (e.g., Giles, 2014; Giles et al., 1991, 2007). When people communicate with each other, according to that theory, they attempt, by verbal and nonverbal means, to minimize the social differences between them (called “convergence”), to maximize those differences (called “divergence”), or to keep those differences constant (called “maintenance”).

In other words, as synopsised by Guan (2009), Communication Accommodation Theory “provides a broad framework for understanding, predicting, and explaining how people generate, maintain, or reduce social distance in communication processes” (p. 10).

Individuals try to converge with their interlocutors for three reasons: (a) they expect their actions to produce more rewards than costs; (b) they want to have positive, productive communication; and (c) they want to follow social norms (BeeBe, 1981; Giles, 1973; Giles et al., 1973; Guan, 2009).

Communication Accommodation Theory was originally named Speech Accommodation Theory (Street & Giles, 1982), because it focused on oral communication to explain motivations underlying social interactions. Interestingly, experts now believe that people convey far more information nonverbally than verbally. DeVito and Hecht (1990), for example, determined that approximately 60% of meaning is conveyed between people nonverbally, whereas P. Miller

(2005) placed that number as high as 93%, with most information conveyed by facial expressions and vocal tones. Gender differences, among others, may also play a role in this. For example, Helweg-Larsen, Cunningham, Carrico, and Pergram (2004) determined that women usually nod more often than men do. Cultural and national differences may also play a role in nonverbal communication. For example, if two individuals speak different languages, they will probably resort to nonverbal means of communication, such as pantomime to indicate what they want. This can get individuals into trouble if the behaviors do not have universal significations. Some actions or gestures may even have opposite meanings in different cultures. For instance, eye contact is normally regarded as polite in the West, but impolite in the East. Or nodding to signify “yes” in one culture may actually mean “no” in another (Hall & Hall, 1977).

In general, individuals converge toward others whom they like and respect or who have power over them, and they diverge from others whom they dislike, disrespect, or regard as below them in power or status. Between convergence and divergence behaviors are what are called maintenance behaviors, which involve no convergence or divergence. Instead, the maintaining individual’s communication patterns or styles remain unchanged throughout the exchange (K. Miller, 2005). In other words, during maintenance, there is no accommodation.

Communication Accommodation Theory incorporates Social Identity Theory, which divides an individual’s self-concept into two types: personal identity and social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner & Reynolds, 2010). Social identity derives from comparisons that individuals make between groups to which they belong (“in-groups”) and groups to which they do not belong (“out-groups”). Thus, Communication Accommodation Theory is useful in detecting cultural and national differences between individuals and groups (Lauring, 2011;

Lauring & Klitmoller, 2015; Luring & Selmer, 2011; Neuliep, 2011; Purdy & Manning, 2015; Raina & Britt Roebuck, 2016; Schein, 2010).

Communication Accommodation Theory is also based on Similarity-Attraction Theory (Byrne, 1969), which contends that individuals seek and gain approval (consciously and unconsciously) by imitating others and positively evaluate others who are similar to themselves. Once again, this can enhance or diminish accurate communication between individuals of different cultures or nationalities (Jones, Gallois, Callan, & Barker, 1999). Similarity-Attraction Theory itself draws on three other theories: Social Exchange Theory (Homans, 1961), which contends that individuals evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of particular actions and select those that maximize rewards and minimize costs; Causal-Attribution Theory (Jones & Davis, 1965), which argues that individuals do not judge others' behavior at face value, but instead calculate the motivations behind the behavior to make a final evaluation; and Intergroup Distinctiveness Theory (Tajfel, 1974), which claims that individuals from different social groups tend to magnify rather than reduce the differences between them in order to highlight those differences to emphasize the uniqueness of their own group.

A third influence on Communication Accommodation Theory is Weiner's (1986, 1995) Attribution Theory, which contends that people have two behavioral drives: to comprehend and to control the world around them. Weiner (1986, 1985) partly developed Attribution Theory from Rotter's (1966) concept of "locus of control," of which there are two types. Individuals are motivated by an *internal locus of control* when they believe they largely control their environment or the events in their lives, and they are motivated by an *external locus of control* when they believe their environment or events in their lives largely control them. This has implications for interpersonal interactions because, for one thing, individuals tend to view the



undesirable behaviors of others less negatively when they believe that those behaviors have external causes (Guan, 2009). For example, a worker may regard a supervisor's orders as harsh, but not blame the supervisor because he or she was only conveying instructions from above.

Finally, to a small degree, Communication Accommodation Theory has been influenced by the Impression Management Theory of Erving Goffman (1959) who compared human communication to theatrical interactions between actors and an audience. According to this theory, individuals intentionally work to give off impressions to others, whom they implicitly expect to take their performance seriously. Giles and Street (1994) observed that such self-presentations and anticipated reactions could be regarded as a form of convergence.

Communication Accommodation Theory is especially useful for analyzing communications in a workplace setting, whether between equals, worker-to-worker or supervisor to supervisor; from superiors to subordinates, supervisor-to-worker; or from subordinates to superiors, worker-to-supervisor (Burke & Wilcox, 1969; Lonsdale, 2016; Steele & Plenty, 2015).

The Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (Downs & Hazen, 1977) intersects nicely with Communication Accommodation Theory by measuring seven dimensions of communication in the workplace from superiors to subordinates, as evaluated by the subordinates, and one dimension from subordinates to superiors, as evaluated by the superiors. To avoid a conflict of interest, we use only the seven dimensions that characterize subordinates' evaluations of their superiors. Downs and Hazen describe these seven dimensions of communication in detail. For purposes of clarity, the researcher offers the following synopses of the seven dimensions of communication:

1. *Communication Climate*: how well the supervisor motivates the employees to meet the goals of the organization.

2. *Relationship to Superiors*: how well the supervisor listens to employees and is open to their suggestions.
  3. *Organizational Integration*: information feedback about the employees' jobs that makes them understand their role within the organization.
  4. *Media Quality*: the effectiveness of oral or written vehicles for communicating feedback.
  5. *Horizontal and Informal Communication*: how well the supervisor encourages employees to communicate with each other.
  6. *Organizational Perspective*: information feedback about the organization's performance in relation to its goals.
  7. *Personal Feedback*: information feedback about *how* the supervisor evaluates the employees' job performance (i.e., the criteria used for that evaluation).
- (Downs & Hazen, 1977, p. 1)

A graphical representation is shown in Figure 1.

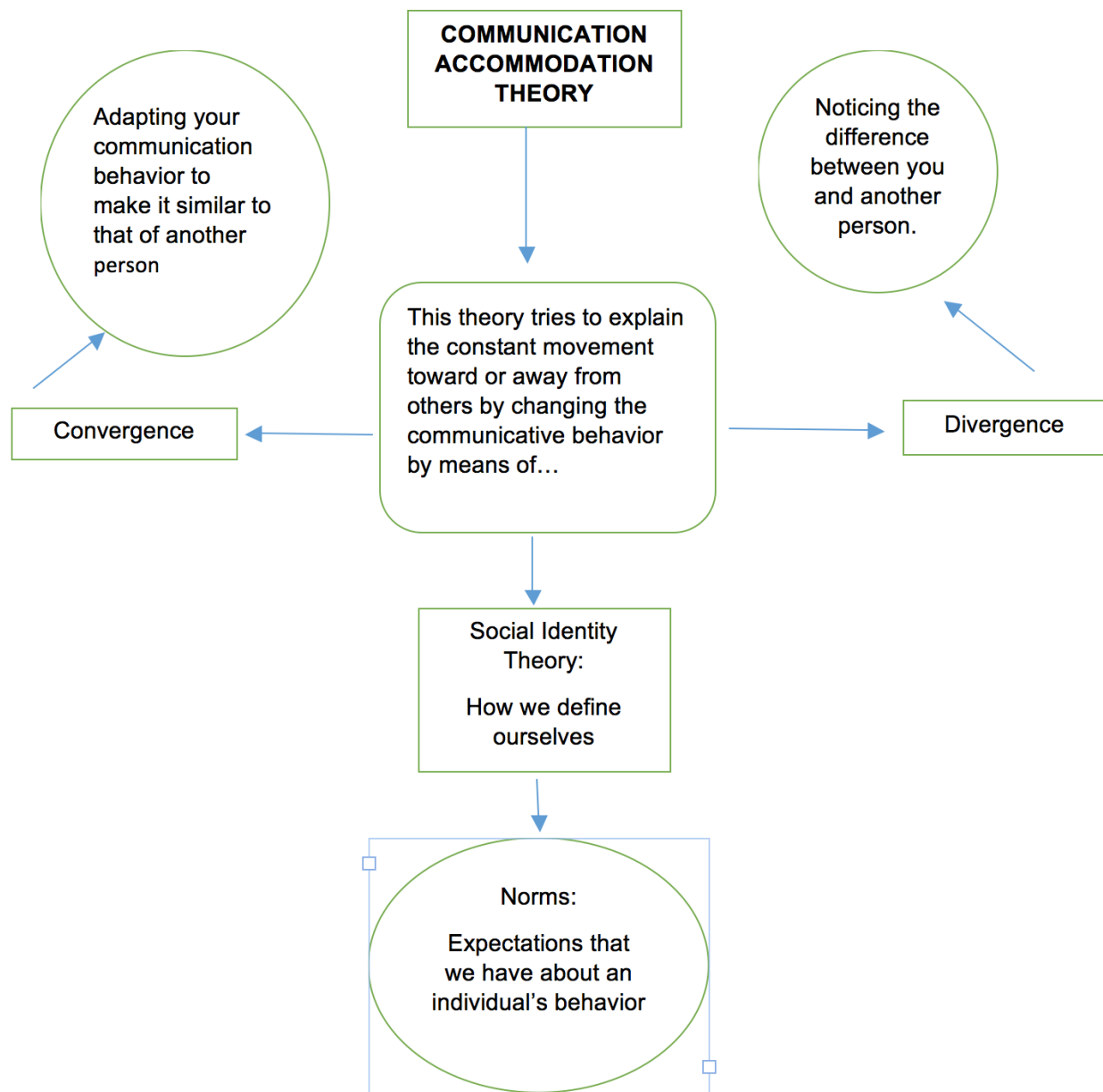


Figure 1. Graphic outline of communication accommodation theory (Reitan, 2016).

## **Research Questions**

Research Question 1: In what order, from highest to lowest level of satisfaction, do the white-collar workers at the world headquarters of Saudi Aramco rank their supervisors by dimension of communication effectiveness?

Research Question 2: How do the seven dimensions of supervisor communication effectiveness correlate with the demographic variables of the white-collar workers at the world headquarters of Saudi Aramco?

## **Limitations**

One limitation of this study is that it will only be surveying workers from the 80 nationalities represented at the world headquarters of Saudi Aramco (Saudi Aramco, 2016c). Since, if one counts Taiwan, there are 196 nations in the world at present (Worldometers, 2016), only 40.8% of the world's nations will be surveyed. Thus, the results of the present study may not be generalizable to unrepresented nations.

## **Delimitations**

1. The researcher's decision to study one multinational corporation, Saudi Aramco, rather than all the multinational corporations in the world, which would be beyond the means of one researcher to accomplish in a reasonable amount of time.
2. The researcher's choice to confine the study to Saudi Aramco's world headquarters, rather than survey its workers at all its sites around the world; again, a task that would be beyond the means of one researcher to accomplish in a reasonable amount of time.
3. The study would be completed within one year or less.

## **Assumptions**

The first assumption of this study was that the researcher would be able to find sufficient numbers of workers at Saudi Aramco's world headquarters who were willing to participate in this study, and who has the time and the freedom to share information with honesty.

The second assumption of this study was that Saudi Aramco is representative of large multinational companies operating in the world today, and that its employees' experiences reflect the experiences of the employees of other multinational companies.

## **Organization of the Study**

This research study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 presents an overview of the entire dissertation. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature. Chapter 3 describes the research design of the study. Chapter 4 presents the study's findings. Chapter 5 provides (a) a discussion of the findings, (b) conclusions, and (c) recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

### **Historical Background and Context of the Issue**

Saudi Aramco's history begins with the British and French excluding U.S. oil companies from exploring for oil after World War I in what was then Mesopotamia, now Iraq (San Remo Resolution, 1920). At that point, American oil companies began searching for oil elsewhere in the Middle East. In May 1932, Standard Oil of California, or SoCal, now Chevron, found oil in Bahrain, which led it to seek oil elsewhere on the Arabian Peninsula. A year later, in May 1933, SoCal signed an oil concession agreement with the government of Saudi Arabia, establishing the California Arabian Standard Oil Company, or CASOC for short. Actual exploration for oil began three months later, in August 1933.

In 1936, after CASOC had had no success in finding oil, it sold half of its assets to the Texas Oil Company, later Texaco. The first success did not come until 1938, when a well, referred to as Dammam No. 7, near Dhahran, immediately produced more than 1,500 barrels per day.

In 1944, the company changed its name to the Arabian American Oil Company, or Aramco. Then, in 1948, Standard Oil of New Jersey, now Exxon, purchased 30% of the company, and Socony Vacuum, later Mobil, purchased 10%, leaving SoCal and Texaco with 30% each. In 1950, Saudi Aramco agreed to share its profits 50/50 with the Kingdom, and its headquarters moved from New York to Dhahran.

Nevertheless, the company remained an American entity until 1973, when Saudi Arabia acquired a 25% stake in Aramco. That stake increased to 60% in 1974, and then to 100% in 1980. In 1988, the company changed its name from the Arabian American Oil Company, or

Aramco, to the Saudi Arabian Oil Company, or Saudi Aramco (Hoye, 1984; Saudi Aramco, 2016a and 2016b).

Today, Saudi Aramco has proven reserves of 260 billion barrels of oil, which is 20% of all the oil on the planet, plus 283 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves, which make it the fourth largest supplier on Earth. It has its own network of refineries and its own fleet of supertankers (Saudi Aramco, 2016a). At present, Saudi Aramco operates joint ventures and subsidiaries in numerous other countries, including China, Holland, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Milligan & Nalbantian, 2012). The company's current worth has been estimated to be between \$1.25 trillion and \$10 trillion (Baxter & Said, 2016).

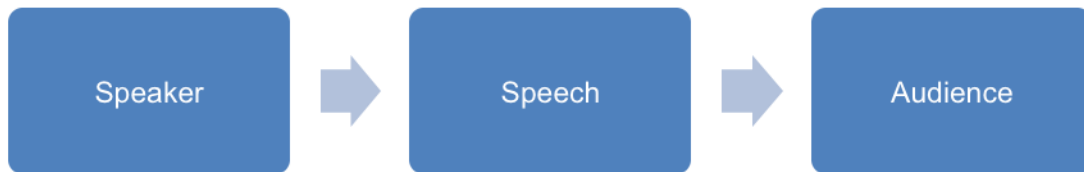
### **The Workforce at Saudi Aramco**

In the 1930s, when the company was first formed, the majority of its skilled workers came from the United States and Europe, with unskilled work mostly performed by Asians. Since the 1980s, the numbers of Americans and Europeans have gone down, and that trend continues today. However, by taking over Aramco in steps during the seven years between 1973 and 1980, with its share of ownership increasing from 25% to 60% to 100%, the Saudi government was able to replace many of the highly skilled Western technical and managerial workers gradually and painlessly. This was also true with the unskilled workers.

### **Theoretical Framework for the Study**

**Communication.** The principal theoretical lens through which the researcher has viewed the data is Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 2014; Giles et al., 1991, 2007). However, before we describe that theory, we should consider exactly what we mean by communication.

One of the earliest theories of communication was proposed in the 4th century B.C. by Aristotle in the *Ars Rhetorica*, or *Art of Rhetoric* (1959 translation), which proposed a linear model (see Figure 2), sometimes referred to as a transmission model, in which speech was transferred from a speaker to an audience.



*Figure 2.* Aristotle's (1959) model of communication.

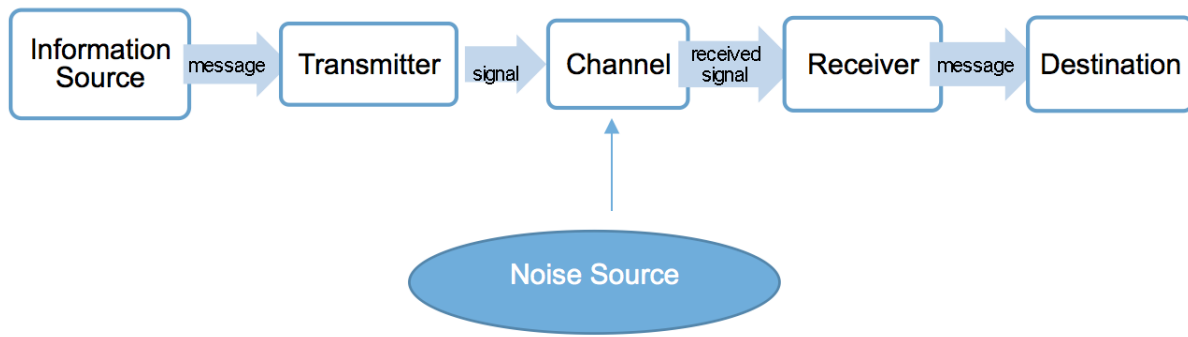
Linear models still prevailed in the 1940s. For example, Harold Lasswell (1948) proposed what is known as the Lasswell Formula (see Figure 3).



*Figure 3.* The Lasswell (1948) formula of communication.

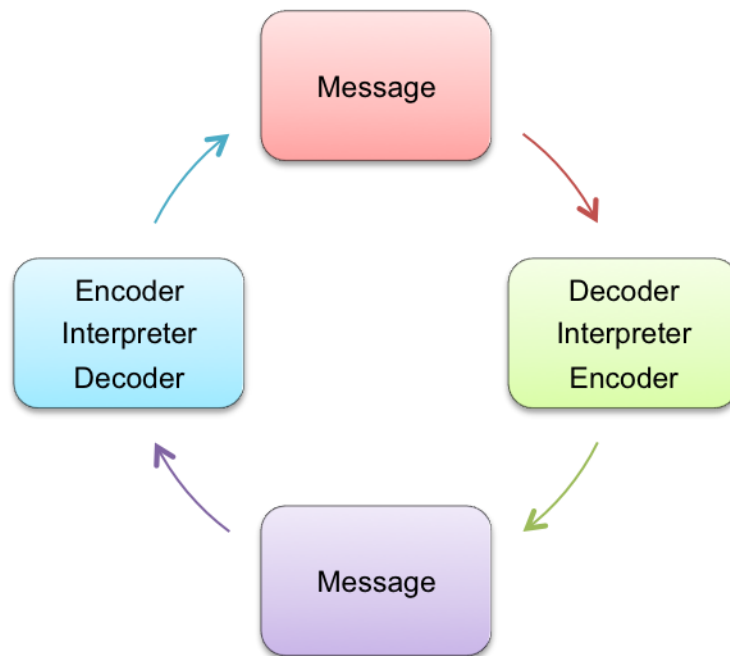
Shannon and Weaver (1949) added the element of *noise* (also called *barriers* or *interference*) to the linear model (see Figure 4), a factor we will consider shortly.





*Figure 4.* The Shannon and Weaver (1949) model of communication.

Charles Osgood (1952), an American psychologist, proposed a circular model of communication (see Figure 5) which was refined by his colleague at the University of Illinois, Wilbur Schramm (1954), the first scholar ever to hold the title Professor of Communications (Osgood, 1952).



*Figure 5.* The Osgood (1952) and Schramm (1954) model of communication.

Whereas Shannon and Weaver were more interested in the channels of communication, Osgood and Schramm were more interested in the senders and receivers. Their model takes into account the factor of feedback. It has, however, two weaknesses noted by this researcher. First, it describes communication between individuals, but not mass communication (such as film and TV), in which there may be no feedback. Furthermore, it assumes that the parties to the transaction are more or less equal, in terms of power, resources, and amount of time available to them, which is not always the case.

Finally, to this model, Schramm added the concept of “fields of experience.” In order for the receiver to understand the sender’s message, they must share some fields of experience, which McCornack (2010) defined as “life experiences, attitudes, values, and beliefs that each communicator brings to an interaction and that shape how messages are sent and received” (p. 10). Thus, if Physicist A discusses atomic theory with Physicist B, the communication between them will probably be totally successful. If, however, Physicist A says the same words to a kindergartener, the communication between them will probably be nonexistent. Thus, there must be some overlap in the fields of experience of the sender and receiver for communication to take place.

Berlo (1960) created a model of communication that focused on what he called “the ingredients of communication” (pp. 23-24) under the categories of Source, Message, Channel, and Receiver, for which reason his model is called the SMCR Model of Communication (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Berlo's (1960) SMCR Model of Communication*

<b>Source</b>	<b>Message</b>	<b>Channel</b>	<b>Receiver</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Communication Skills</li> <li>•Attitudes</li> <li>•Knowledge</li> <li>•Social System</li> <li>•Culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Elements</li> <li>•Structure</li> <li>•Content</li> <li>•Content</li> <li>•Code</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Seeing</li> <li>•Hearing</li> <li>•Tasting</li> <li>•Smelling</li> <li>•Feeling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Communication Skills</li> <li>•Attitudes</li> <li>•Knowledge</li> <li>•Social System</li> <li>•Culture</li> </ul>

Berlo (1960) also related communication to social organization, in three ways: (a) social systems, including pressures to conform to group norms, are created by communication; (b) in social systems, it is more likely that members will communicate with other members who are of comparable status rather than members of higher or lower status; and (c) having knowledge about a social system can help one to make predictions about individuals from knowing only the roles they play in the system; thus, in an organizational context, a “manager” is both a position in an organization and a set of behaviors.

Robbins and Judge (2011, p. 344) divided communication transfer or flow into seven parts: the source, encoding, the message, the channel, decoding, the receiver, and feedback. In Figure 6, the process looks like this:

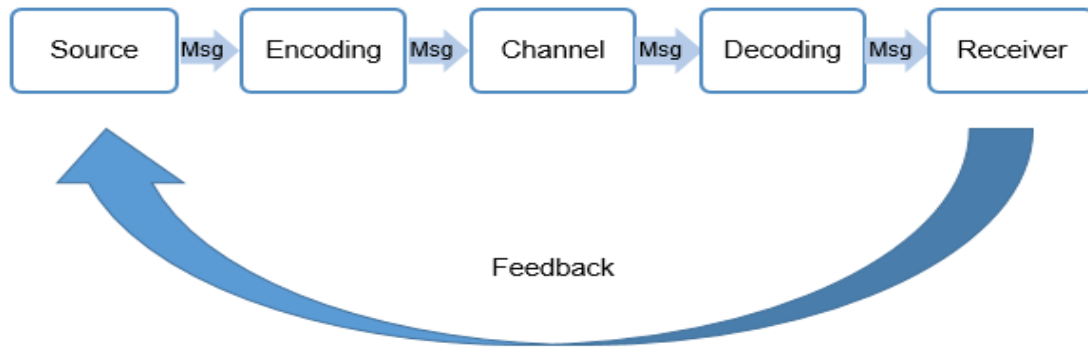


Figure 6. Communication flow (Robbins & Judge, 2011).

The *source* is the individual who sends out the information. This begins with the sender converting his or her thought into symbols (e.g., letters, sounds, gestures, ideas, or visual images), a process Robbins and Coulter (2002) call *encoding*. The *message* is the product of the encoding, in the form of words or nonverbal cues. The *channel* is the medium that the sender uses to transfer the information, such as speech or writing. The *receiver* is the individual or individuals with whom the sender is communicating. To comprehend the message, the receiver must translate or *decode* the symbols in the message. Finally, when the receiver responds to the message with a message of his or her own, that is the *feedback*.

Another way of thinking about communication was proposed by DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1981), who divided it into three aspects: its process, its structure, and its function.

The *process* of communication is the interaction between two or more individuals so that they influence each other's thoughts or behaviors. The *structure* of communication is the medium used to convey the message—which Robbins and Judge (2011) call the “channel” of communication, such as speech or writing. The *function* of communication, according to Chang (2006), is “to reduce uncertainty or ambiguity in relationships” (p. 32), which includes

eliminating ignorance of one degree or another on the part of the receiver. In an organizational context, the function of communication from managers to employees is to affect the behavior of the latter.

Robbins and Coulter (2002) addressed four major functions of communication, especially in an organizational context: (1) it provides a release for emotional expression and the fulfillment of social needs; (2) it acts to control the behavior of members; (3) it motivates employees by clarifying their responsibilities and how they can improve their performance; and (4) it helps people to make decisions.

### **Barriers to Effective Communication**

Communication breaks down when the sender's information is vague, incomplete, or inaccurate (Shrivastava, 2012), or, as in the case of the physicist and the kindergartener, above, the information is way outside the receiver's field of experience. Any of these barriers to understanding tends to lower the receiver's satisfaction with the communication (Ramirez, 2012; Sharma, 2015). On the other hand, information overload can also interfere with effective communication by flooding the receiver with more information than he or she can comprehend and interpret. Thus, more communication is not necessarily better or more effective communication (Baker, 2002; Conrad, 1994; Richmond & McCroskey, 1992; Steingrimsdottir, 2011). Quantity does not guarantee quality. Barriers to communication can come in a variety of types, including physical, linguistic, and cultural.

**Physical barriers.** Physical barriers to communication include walls, doors, and separator screens, which are intended to create zones to keep outsiders from entering designated areas. The organizational intention behind this is to restrict separate information by department or status of the individuals (Shrivastava, 2012). According to Faheem and Aparna (2014):

Physical barriers are the physical borders or marked out territories that separate people in a sense of status, pride, etc. They hinder communication between the speaker and the listener.... To control physical barriers, etiquette and manners play a very important role for a civilized life, and particularly in today's business world....

Listening is one of the important skills to remove physical barriers. Listening is a process of receiving, interpreting, and reacting to a message received from the speaker. (p. 65)

**Language barriers.** Language barriers to communication include different languages, as well as dialects of the same language, both of which can interfere with comprehension to varying degrees, from completely to slightly (Shrivastava, 2012). Language barriers can create enormous communication problems, especially in emergency situations. For example, if a caller with a poor command of the local language phones in a medical emergency, the operator may doubt the authenticity of the call if the caller's description is vague, inaccurate, or difficult to comprehend. In general, when a speaker's statements are difficult to process, the listener may judge the content as less than truthful. Such miscommunication may lead to serious and even life-threatening outcomes (Gerwing & Indseth, 2016). Other miscommunications can come from generational differences; for example, teens may use terms that are unfamiliar to their parents (Robbins & Judge, 2011). In a more general context, Robbins and Judge (2011) note that "senders tend to assume the words and terms they use mean the same to the receiver as to them. This assumption is often incorrect" (p. 360).

Just as attentive listening can overcome physical barriers, it can also sometimes overcome language barriers. As Faheem and Aparna (2014) note:

Listening requires voluntary attention and then making sense of what is heard. It requires a conscious effort to interpret the sounds, grasp the meanings of the words, and react to the message. The interpretation of sound signals is a cognitive act, which completely depends on the knowledge of the listener and also on his attitude towards the sender and the message.

Listening skill is one of the important language skills that needs one's success in academic and professional pursuits. Listening makes oral

interaction possible, it helps in making decisions and stimulates others to act to achieve individual as well as professional objectives. It develops information and understanding essential for decision-making in meetings and conferences. It leads to unification between the activities of individuals as a work team, towards achievement of common business, professional, or organizational goals and promotes maintenance of professional relations.

While working in an organization, one will use his listening skills in a variety of situations; listening to distressed and dissatisfied workers, listening during telephonic conversations, listening while taking instructions, conducting a meeting, and many such instances. (p. 65)

**Cultural barriers.** Cultural barriers to communication include gender, religion, nationality, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and bigotry. The greater the difference between the cultures of the sender and the receiver, the greater the opportunities for miscommunication (Adler, 1991).

Miscommunication can most easily occur when individuals come from different nations that can be categorized as lower-context cultures and higher-context cultures (Hall, 1976).

Robbins and Judge (2011) define and describe the differences between these two categories of culture as follows:

Cultures tend to differ in the degree to which context influences the meaning individuals take from communication. In high-context cultures such as China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, people rely heavily on nonverbal and subtle situational cues in communicating with others, and a person's official status, place in society, and reputation carry considerable weight. What is not said may be more significant than what is said. (p. 363)

In low-context cultures, on the other hand, such as those in Europe and North America, nonverbal and situational cues are much less important. People there "rely essentially on spoken and written words to convey meaning; body language and formal titles are secondary" (p. 357). These differences have a profound impact on trust: "Communication in high-context cultures," say Robbins and Judge (2011), "implies considerably more trust by both parties. What may appear to be casual and insignificant conversation in fact reflects the desire to build a

relationship and create trust” (p. 357). Thus, according to Robbins and Judge (2011), there is a difference between these cultures in how they handle agreements:

Oral agreements imply strong commitments in high-context cultures. And who you are—your age, seniority, rank in the organization—is highly valued and heavily influences your credibility. But in low-context cultures, enforceable contracts tend to be in writing, precisely worded, and highly legalistic. (p. 357)

Furthermore, there is a difference between the two kinds of cultures in how direct and explicit communications are:

Low-context cultures value directness. Managers are expected to be explicit and precise in conveying intended meaning. It’s quite different in high-context cultures, in which managers tend to “make suggestions” rather than give orders. (p. 357)

Higher-context cultures include, in addition to China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam: Afghanistan, African nations, Arabic nations, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Iran, Latin American nations, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Thailand, and Turkey. Lower-context cultures include Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Holland, Israel, New Zealand, Scandinavia, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Nishimura, Nevgi, & Tella, 2008).

Robbins and Judge (2011) rank cultures from high to low context as presented in Figure 7.

High context	China Korea Japan Vietnam Middle East: <i>Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen</i>
Low context	Greece Spain Italy United Kingdom United States and Canada Scandinavia ( <i>Sweden, Norway, and Denmark</i> ) Switzerland Germany

Figure 7. High-context versus low-context cultures (Robbins & Judge, 2011).



**Emotional barriers.** Emotional barriers to effective communication include anger, fear, jealousy, and sadness, which tend to make people dislike themselves and others, and impedes honest and direct communication (Sharma, 2015). As Robbins and Judge (2011) observe, “You may interpret the same message differently when you’re angry or distraught than when you’re happy. Extreme emotions such as jubilation or depression are most likely to hinder effective communication. In such instances, we are most prone to disregard our rational or objective thinking processes and substitute emotional judgments” (p. 359). Faheem and Aparna (2014) list the following emotional barriers to effective communication: fear, hesitation, nervousness, shyness, mistrust, suspicion, and prejudice. Personality traits and skills that help to overcome emotional barriers, according to Faheem and Aparna (2014), include attentive listening, emotional maturity, eagerness to learn, and a willingness to share and embrace new ideas.

**Personality barriers.** Personality barriers to effective communication include being hypercritical of others or unable to listen attentively (Ramirez, 2012). These five barriers are summarized in Figure 8.



Figure 8. Kinds of barriers to effective communication.

## **Communication and Satisfaction**

Chang (2006) describes satisfaction as “a sense of contentment that occurs when one’s expectations are fulfilled, or even exceeded” (p. 43). As an organizational concept, satisfaction “usually relates to comfort; hence, satisfaction with communication means that [one] may be comfortable with the messages, media, and relationships in the organization.... Communication satisfaction clearly contributes to job satisfaction” (pp. 43-44).

Downs and Hazen (1977), the creators of the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, defined communication satisfaction in the workplace in terms of how employees feel about seven dimensions or aspects of communication. These are satisfaction with communication climate, satisfaction with superiors, satisfaction with organizational integration, satisfaction with media quality, satisfaction with horizontal and informal communication, satisfaction with organizational perspective, and satisfaction with personal feedback.

**Satisfaction with communication climate.** This dimension measures the degree to which employees feel stimulated and motivated by the organizational environment at the macro level.

**Satisfaction with superiors.** This dimension measures the degree to which employees feel that their supervisors trust and listen to them.

**Organizational integration.** This dimension measures the degree to which employees feel that they are part of the organization.

**Media quality.** This dimension measures the degree to which employees feel that the organization’s publications and memos are helpful and clear.

**Horizontal and informal communication.** This dimension measures the degree to which employees feel comfortable in their relations with their co-workers.

**Organizational perspective.** This dimension measures the degree to which employees feel informed about the organization's goals and performance.

**Personal feedback.** This dimension measures the degree to which employees feel that their supervisors understand the problems they face on the job and are evaluated by fair criteria.

Downs and Hazen (1977) describe an eighth dimension of communication satisfaction, Relationship with Subordinates, which we will not be measuring in this study because we are confining ourselves to the communication satisfaction of employees, not managers or supervisors.

In a meta-study of results obtained by various researchers using the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire in business organizations, Chang (2006) found that, of the seven dimensions of employee satisfaction, the strongest correlations were with Communication Climate, Supervisor Communication, and Personal Feedback. On the other hand, demographic variables were poor predictors of levels of communication satisfaction. One exception to this was discovered by Akkirman and Harris (2005), who found that virtual office workers (who work via the internet) are more satisfied than in-house office workers with their experience of communication at work. Another exception was discovered by Gray and Laidlaw (2002), who found that part-time employees are significantly more dissatisfied than full-time employees.

In two university settings, Ahmad (2006) found high satisfaction with supervisor communication, media quality, and horizontal communication, and low satisfaction with communication climate, organizational integration, organizational perspective, and personal feedback.

## **Communication and Job Satisfaction**

Numerous studies have found that there is a positive correlation between workers' satisfaction with their own communication abilities on the job and their satisfaction with the job (e.g., Pettit et al., 1997; Rubin, 1993; Sharma, 2015). There is also a positive correlation between workers' satisfaction with their supervisor's communication skills and their own job satisfaction (Madlock, 2008; Pettit et al., 1997; Sharma, 2015; Wińska, 2010). Interestingly, both kinds of satisfaction were found by one study to be most important to workers who had been employed in the same place for 11 to 15 years (Society for Human Resource Management, SHRM, 2012).

When supervisors give employees too much or too little communication (sometimes called communication overload and communication underload), that will tend to lower the employees' level of job satisfaction and job performance (Goris, Pettit, & Vaught, 2002). Employees also prefer face-to-face communication over communication via email (Merten & Gloor, 2009).

## **Communication Satisfaction and Demographic Variables**

**Communication and demographic diversity.** Demographic diversity in the workplace has both advantages and disadvantages. Among the advantages that have been found, one of the most significant is the probability of enhanced creativity, both technological and artistic (Diamond, 1996; Jimeno-Ingrum, 2007).

Among the disadvantages of demographic diversity in the workplace is the possibility that it may distract employees from their work (Jimeno-Ingrum, 2007; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998).

**Age.** Several researchers have studied intergenerational communication across different cultures (e.g., Giles, 2004; Pecchioni, Ota, & Sparks, 2004). For example, in Western nations,

young people tend to find communication with older adults who are not members of their family to be problematic and dissatisfactory (Hummert, 2012; Williams & Giles, 1996). Among other things, young adults believe that older persons often patronize them, are overprotective, dismissive, authoritarian, inattentive, preoccupied with their own problems, and hold unflattering stereotypes of their peer group (Giles & Williams, 1994). For this reason, younger adults often tend to avoid contact with older adults, although when they have such contact, they feel they should be respectful (Coupland, Coupland, & Giles, 1991; Gallois et al., 1999; Giles, Fortman, Honeycutt, & Ota, 2003; Ryan et al., 1992). Interestingly, female younger adults have been found to be more respectful to their elders than male younger adults (e.g., Laditka, Fischer, Laditka, & Segal, 2004). Older adults, on the other hand, tend to find younger adults less accommodating than individuals their own age (e.g., Noels, Giles, Gallois, & Ng., 2001). Many of them feel patronized by younger adults who stereotype them as old (e.g., Giles & Gasiorek, 2010; Giles, Ryan, & Anas, 2008).

In the context of work, younger adults tend to view older adults as less productive, less motivated, less adaptable and flexible, hard to train (especially technologically), and physically incapacitated (Jimeno-Ingrum, 2007; Lyon & Mogendorff, 1991; McNaught, 1992). Many clichés capture this negative attitude toward older workers, such as “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks,” “Ready for the gold watch,” and “On the shelf.” Although research has found that this negative stereotyping is usually inaccurate (Czaja, 1995), managerial decisions affecting older workers are sometimes based on such assumptions (Rosen & Jerdee, 1985). On the positive side, older workers are regarded as careful, reliable, stable, loyal, responsible, and principled (Lucas, 1993). Interestingly, older workers have been found to prefer giving advice to their supervisors, whereas younger workers prefer receiving advice from their supervisors, which can

result in job dissatisfaction in the workplace if either form of communication predominates over the other (Fu & Mount, 2002).

**Education.** Research has shown that as an individual's level of education increases, so does his or her writing and oral communication skills, which usually translates into increased job satisfaction (e.g., CollegeAtlas, 2015; Ünsar, 2014). On the other hand, the higher one's level of education, the lower one's evaluation of the communication in the workplace, since more educated individuals tend to require more information than lesser educated individuals (Gunbayi, 2007).

**Gender.** Of all the demographic variables, gender diversity has been studied more than any other (Jimeno-Ingrum, 2007). As with all other demographic variables, there are advantages and disadvantages to gender diversity in the workplace. Among the advantages are the cross-fertilization of ideas that stem from the different social and political environments in which men and women are raised, which lead to diverse values and attitudes (Jimeno-Ingrum, 2007; Milliken & Martins, 1996). One disadvantage is that men tend to occupy higher positions in the workplace than women do, and therefore managers and employees tend to expect greater performance from men than from women and defer more to men's ideas and opinions than they do to the ideas and opinions of women (C. M. Lee, 2007).

As far as communication behavior is concerned, in or out of the workplace, researchers have found little difference between the genders (Sullivan, 2004). In the workplace context, researchers have found that organizations that have relatively few women in senior management positions tend to have environments in which gender roles are somewhat problematic and stereotypical (e.g., Ely, 1995; Jimeno-Ingrum, 2007).

In many countries, there are different standards for what is appropriate behavior for males and for females. This includes the way the two genders tend to resolve conflicts. In the United States, males have been conditioned to communicate in aggressive and confrontational ways, whereas females have been conditioned to be nurturing and passive and receptive (Holt & DeVore, 2005). Thus, in business, political, and other negotiations, women will tend to be less confrontational and aggressive than men (Holt & DeVore, 2005; Kolb, 1993). To resolve conflicts, men will tend to use direct communication strategies, whereas women will tend to use indirect communication strategies, such as compromising or withdrawing (Holt & DeVore, 2005; Ting-Toomey et al., 2000). Furthermore, men tend to rate aggressive behavior more favorably than do women (Holt & DeVore, 2005; Renwick, 1977). More will be said about this issue under Income, below.

**Income.** In general, the higher an employee's income, the more likely it is that the employee will be satisfied with his or her job (Bakan, 2013). Furthermore, employees' satisfaction with their pay is directly related to two issues: organizational fairness and job turnover (Jung & Yoon, 2015). If employees perceive that they are treated fairly by their employers, that increases their commitment to and efforts for the workplace (Tekleab, Bartol, & Liu, 2005).

There are dramatic differences between the genders when it comes to negotiating for salaries or wages. To begin with, men tend to be far more aggressive than women in negotiating for higher pay. One study found that half (50%) of the male applicants for a job negotiated their salaries, whereas only one in eight (12.5%) female applicants did so (Bowles, 2014). Women who do negotiate for higher pay tend to put their relationships with their supervisors and co-workers at risk because it goes against the gender stereotype of women being deferential, and

other-oriented. In fact, women almost feel the need to apologize for negotiating over compensation, whereas men regard this as a basic right (Babcock, Laschever, Gelfand, & Small, 2003).

Such behavior can also undermine the organization's appraisal of the woman as a team player, and her commitment to being part of that team. Therefore, the best strategy for women who are negotiating for higher pay is to find ways to balance her requests with demonstrations of loyalty to the organization. Men, on the other hand, do not have to deal with this dilemma (O'Neill, 2009).

Interestingly, all of these generalizations become irrelevant if women are negotiating assertively for someone other than themselves, which is considered socially appropriate. In fact, studies have shown that women negotiate more successfully, both for monetary compensation and other factors, than they do for themselves (Babcock et al., 2003).

**Language.** Language barriers frequently produce misunderstandings in the workplace because of subtle cues that may be missed or differences between similar-sounding words, and this can lead to difficulties between employees and between managers and employees (Dawson, Madera, Neal, & Chen, 2014). To circumvent these barriers, managers may resort to hiring bilingual or multilingual interpreters or translate organization materials into multiple languages for their employees who speak languages other than the primary one in the workplace (Zeidner, 2009). When the language barriers in a workplace are significant, this can lead to absenteeism, stress, burnout, and employee turnover (Gray & Laidlaw, 2004). Furthermore, if employees have a poor command of the primary language spoken in a workplace, they are likely to be disadvantaged when it comes to career advancement (Castro, Fujishiro, Sweitzer, & Oliva,



2006). Needless to say, providing language training to employees is time-consuming and expensive (Zeidner, 2009).

**Length of employment.** Researchers have found that diversity in length of employment leads to increased technical innovation (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Jimeno-Ingrum, 2007). Workers with greater lengths of employment have greater experience and knowledge about the workplace, which they can share with workers with shorter lengths of employment, but the former may also be more resistant to organizational change, and thus less able to think “outside the box” (Jimeno-Ingrum, 2007; Milliken & Martins, 1996).

**Nationality, culture, race, and ethnicity.** Researchers have discovered that national or cultural diversity can increase conflict in a workplace because the employees often react negatively to the cultural and linguistic differences between them (Holt & DeVore, 2005; Ting-Toomey et al., 2000). Given historical prejudices and biases, racial diversity is the most divisive of all the demographic variables in the workplace. Interests, opinions, and values, both work-related and non-work-related, are likely to be different, with the potential for conflict (Jimeno-Ingrum, 2007; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). On the other hand, as with all the other demographic variables, racial diversity can lead to enhanced creativity (Diamond, 1996; Jimeno-Ingrum, 2007).

### **Communication Accommodation Theory**

According to Communication Accommodation Theory, when people communicate with each other, they attempt to minimize the social differences between them (convergence), maximize those differences (divergence), or keep them constant (maintenance) by verbal and nonverbal means, which include word choices, accents, pitch, speech rate, gestures and other body language, facial expressions, and even dress. The environment in which the individuals

interact can also affect the communication behavior, so that, for example, people will behave differently in formal and informal settings or when there is a power differential between them (Kupritz & Hillsman, 2011). In a job interview, for instance, the interviewee will usually strive to accommodate to the verbal and nonverbal style and behavior of the interviewer to increase the chances of being hired (Jaworski & Kohl, 1991).

Giles and Gasiorek (2012) observe that the notion of communication among Communication Accommodation theorists has changed over time:

While early models of communication treated communication as a simple transmission of messages, more recent work has shown that it may better be understood as a joint effort in inferential problem solving by its interactants (e.g., Berger, 2001). In this conceptualization, the function of communication is to reach some form of shared understanding between those communicating, particularly as individuals generally come to encounters with different perspectives, past experiences, and expectations. (pp. 9-10)

In general, individuals converge toward others whom they like, respect, or who have power over them, and diverge from others whom they dislike, disrespect, or regard as below them in power or status. It is possible, within one interaction, to simultaneously converge in one way while diverging in another. For example, if “Barbara” dislikes “Bob” but has to be polite to him because he has power over her, she may speak to him with friendly tones, but give him false information that will get him into trouble. On the other hand, Barbara may wish to ingratiate herself with Bob, so she over-accommodates to him in ways that he finds transparent, and so the social consequence is that Bob judges Barbara as insincere.

Communication Accommodation Theory incorporates Social Identity Theory, which divides an individual’s self-concept into two types: personal identity and social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner & Reynolds, 2010). The latter derives from comparisons that individuals make between groups to which they belong (in-groups) and groups to which they do not belong

(“out-groups”). Thus, Communication Accommodation Theory is useful in detecting cultural and national differences between individuals and groups (Lauring, 2011; Lauring & Klitmoller, 2015; Lauring & Selmer, 2011; Neuliep, 2011; Purdy & Manning, 2015; Raina & Britt Roebuck, 2016; Schein, 2010).

In essence, Communication Accommodation Theory posits that individuals and groups accommodate to their subjective perceptions or impressions of who their interactants are, rather than to the objective reality of those persons. At bottom, perception is the process of paying attention to and interpreting a message sent by another party, whereas evaluation is the process of judging that message. Individuals can evaluate the communication itself without evaluating the other party—for example, if the other party sends a message anonymously. Furthermore, one may perceive a communication without bothering to evaluate it or the sender. For example, if a customer asks a salesman for the price of an item, and the salesman responds with a number without showing any attitude, the customer will probably pay the amount without giving a thought to the quality of the salesman or his communication.

Communication Accommodation Theory is based on several assumptions (Giles, 2014; Giles et al., 1991, 2007):

1. In any communication between two or more individuals, there will be verbal and nonverbal similarities and differences. The more similarities there are between the parties, the more likely they are to converge in their communication.
2. The qualities that individuals display in the course of communication derive from their life experiences and backgrounds. In other words, when individuals communicate with each other, they always bring their past

history with them, so the communication contains both present and past information simultaneously. Included in life experiences and backgrounds are an individual's cultural and national origin, which bring with them a set of expectations or norms about appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

3. Individuals decide how to accommodate to others based on their evaluation of the others as higher, lower, or equal to them in status, which depends on the individuals' attitudes and beliefs. The greater the similarity in their attitudes and beliefs, the more they will be attracted to each other, and the more they will attempt to accommodate each other in their communication. In general, individuals tend to accommodate to those they regard as higher in status, and to diverge from those they regard as lower in status.

When individuals who speak different languages attempt to communicate, the language they use is likely to be the principal language of the higher status person (Fan, Liberman, Keysar, & Kinzler, 2015). In multinational corporations, such as Saudi Aramco, this scenario tends not to arise because those corporations usually insist on a common language throughout the workplace—in most cases, English (Greenberg, 2014).

**Four basic accommodation strategies.** There are four basic communication strategies: *accommodation*, *under-accommodation*, *over-accommodation*, and *non-accommodation* (e.g., Coupland et al., 1988; Coupland et al., 1991; Giles & Ogay, 2006; Williams, Giles, Coupland, Dalby, & Manasse, 1990).

***Accommodation.*** Giles (2008) defined accommodation as “a process concerned with how we can both reduce and magnify communicative differences between people in interaction” (p. 163). In other words, it includes both convergence and divergence. The ability to

accommodate is equally important on both sides of the interaction (Guan, 2009). In general, people think of accommodation as positive, unless there is too little or too much of it (Giles & Smith, 1979).

***Under-accommodation.*** In under-accommodation, the receiver of a communication perceives the sender as putting minimal positive effort into the interaction. It occurs on a continuum between maintenance and accommodation (Coupland et al., 1991; Coupland, Coupland, Giles, & Henwood, 1988; Williams et al., 1990). Under-accommodation is often associated with intergenerational communication, with young people assuming that their elders under-accommodate them because they do not understand them (Giles et al., 2003; Williams & Giles, 1996), and older people assuming that young people under-accommodate them because they feel that older people talk too much about health problems associated with aging (Barker, 2007). Giles and Gasiorek (2012) call this latter form of under-accommodation “elderspeak” (p. 7). Gasiorek (2010) found that young American adults use under-accommodation more than over-accommodation by a ratio higher than 9 to 1. Furthermore, those adults view under-accommodation as significantly more negative than over-accommodation (Giles & Gasiorek, 2012).

***Over-accommodation.*** In over-accommodation, the receiver of a communication perceives the sender as overemphasizing some communicative style in order to achieve convergence. Like under-accommodation, over-accommodation is common in intergenerational communication. Older people feel that younger people condescend to them with patronizing baby talk, including slow speech, simple grammar, excessive smiling and touching, and constant head nodding, which annoys them (Coupland et al., 1991; Ryan, Hummert, & Boich, 1995; Williams & Nussbaum, 2001). Giles and Gasiorek (2012) note that “over- and

underaccommodation are evaluations made by the recipient of the communication in question, [so] a speaker's actual motive or intentions are not strictly relevant to labeling an action as over- or underaccommodative. Rather, it is a speaker's perceived motives that matter" (p. 8). In other words, under-accommodation and over-accommodation are both "social attributions, not objective behaviors" (Giles & Gasiorek, p. 8).

**Non-accommodation.** Non-accommodation includes all the forms of non-adaptive communication—namely, maintenance, divergence, over-accommodation, and under-accommodation (Giles & Gasiorek, 2012). Because both under-accommodation and over-accommodation are subjective determinations by the receiver of a communication, what one individual perceives as non-accommodation may be perceived as accommodation by another person, and vice versa. That other person could be a participant in a similar dialogue or a third party observing the dialogue of two other individuals. Edwards and Noller (1993), for example, "found that over-accommodative interactions between an older adult and a caretaker were evaluated as less patronizing by the participants in the interactions, as compared to outside observers (nursing students or psychology students)" (Giles & Gasiorek, 2012, p. 9).

The four accommodation strategies are summarized in Figure 9.



Figure 9. The four accommodation strategies.

### **Communication accommodation theory in the workplace.** Communication

Accommodation Theory is highly useful for analyzing communications in a workplace setting, whether those communications are between equals (workers-to-workers or supervisors-to-supervisors), from subordinates to superiors (workers-to-supervisors), or, as is the case in the present study, from superiors to subordinates (supervisors-to-workers, as evaluated by the latter) (Burke & Wilcox, 1969; Lonsdale, 2016; Steele & Plenty, 2015).

### **Goleman's Six Leadership Styles**

One of the most comprehensive and insightful analyses of communication styles from superiors to subordinates was devised by Daniel Goleman (2000). Based on his concept of emotional intelligence, Goleman (2000) describes six types of leadership styles, which he calls coercive/commanding, authoritative/visionary, affiliative, democratic, pacesetting, and coaching. Goleman noted that the most effective and successful leaders are able to use different styles of communication in different circumstances. The most effective of the six styles, he concluded, are the authoritative/visionary, affiliative, democratic, and coaching, whereas the least effective are the coercive/commanding and the pacesetting.

**The coercive/commanding leadership style of communication.** With a coercive/commanding leadership style, which some authors refer to as an authoritarian, top-down, or bullying leadership style (e.g., Northouse, 2009), leaders dictate their organization's goals, policies, and procedures, and control all the subordinates' activities without any significant feedback from them. In short, coercive leaders have total authority and control over all decision-making, and the subordinates have little or no autonomy. This style of leadership, which is usually the most ineffective because it tends to breed resentment among the

subordinates, may be unavoidable and appropriate in situations in which there is little time for discussion, such as medical emergencies and military conflicts (Goleman, 2000).

This style of leadership was first advocated as a theory of “scientific management” by Frederick Winslow Taylor (1911/1947), who proposed a relationship between workers and managers in which the former performed the physical labor and the latter performed the intellectual labor, or mental planning, with a transfer of knowledge, principally from above to below in the form of orders and rules, with little or no feedback from the latter (Miller, 2015; Sharma, 2015). This formal and rigid style of communication was opposed by Max Weber (1947), the founder of the Theory of Bureaucracy, who argued that such depersonalization between workers and supervisors is inefficient and counterproductive. Elton Mayo (1930/1960), the founder of Human Relations Theory, also argued that organizations tend to be more efficient and productive when there is a balance between informal and formal relationships among workers and supervisors.

McGregor (1960), who proposed two different styles of management and worker motivation, which he called Theory X and Theory Y, described under Theory X a communication style that anticipates Goleman’s coercive/commanding style. Theory X managers assume that workers have little ambition or sense of responsibility, are less intelligent than their supervisors, and perform their work essentially only to make a living. Thus, Theory X managers adopt a strict management and communication style, with rewards and punishments handed out by the managers as they think appropriate. This style is most often used in settings where the work is repetitious, as on an assembly line, and where the chances of promotion are small or nonexistent.



In terms of Communication Accommodation Theory, the coercive/commanding style of top-down leadership involves leaders' non-accommodation or under-accommodation of their subordinates. That is, the subordinates perceive their supervisors as giving little or no consideration to feedback from them. The communication is one-way (Coupland et al., 1991; Coupland et al., 1988).

**The authoritative/visionary leadership style of communication.** Goleman (2000) describes this as the most effective and successful of the six types of leadership styles. Authoritative/visionary leaders are skilled at presenting clear goals and standards for their organization and providing data to prove that the goals are being met. This style is appropriate for virtually all situations, but especially when an organization lacks direction.

In terms of Communication Accommodation Theory, this style of leadership, which is also top-down, involves the supervisors minimizing the differences between themselves and their workers so that the organizational goals are logically clear (Giles & Smith, 1979; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013; Guan, 2009).

**The affiliative leadership style of communication.** The word *affiliate* comes from the Latin *filius*, "son," and *affiliare*, "to adopt as a son" (Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary). With an affiliative leadership style, leaders focus on building and maintaining harmonious relationships with and among their employees. Thus, leaders who adopt this style of communication essentially act as kind and supportive parents to their subordinates. Goleman (2000) recommends this style for situations when communication needs to be improved, morale or trust needs to be enhanced, or a team needs to be built from scratch.

In terms of Communication Accommodation Theory, this style of leadership, which is top-down, involves the supervisors maximizing similarities between themselves and their

workers, less by logical argument than by emotional persuasion (Giles & Smith, 1979; Goleman et al., 2013; Guan, 2009).

**The democratic leadership style of communication.** This style resembles the affiliative style insofar as it is intended to build and maintain trust and morale. The affiliative style, however, is more top-down or parental, whereas the democratic style is more bottom-up. That is, the emphasis of the democratic style (from the Greek *demos*, “municipality”) is on obtaining input or feedback from subordinates. This style of communication is most effective and successful when leaders want guidance from their subordinates before making significant decisions about strategies for the organization. Because this style encourages employee participation in decision-making, it tends to increase the loyalty of subordinates to the leader and the organization (Goleman, 2000).

In terms of Communication Accommodation Theory, this style of leadership, which is bottom-up, involves the workers logically convincing and emotionally persuading their supervisors of a course of action (Goleman et al., 2013).

**The pacesetting leadership style of communication.** Pacesetting leaders are highly skilled and perfectionistic, possibly even obsessive, and demand this standard of excellence from their subordinates. The emphasis in all communications from top to bottom is on results rather than harmonious human relations. This style of communication can work well when the subordinates are as skilled, perfectionistic, and motivated as the leader. Otherwise, it can lower workplace morale and be counterproductive. Goleman’s (2000) recommendation is to always use this style of communication sparingly and in combination with one or more of the other styles.

Goleman’s (2000) Pacesetting Style was anticipated by McGregor (1960) in description of what he called Theory Y management. Theory Y managers assume that workers are self-

motivated, enjoy their work, find it satisfying for its own sake, and require little or no supervision. One setting in which this approach works best is university teaching and research (Sharma, 2015).

In terms of Communication Accommodation Theory, this style of leadership is top-down, but does not require commands, like the coercive style, because the subordinates are motivated by their own standards of excellence, which are just as high as those of the leaders. One example of this would be the communication between the chair of an academic department and the professors of that department (Goleman et al., 2013).

**The coaching leadership style of communication.** Coaching leaders excel at clarifying the roles and duties of their subordinates, but they also seek feedback from those subordinates. In other words, the leaders still make the decisions, but the workplace communication is two-way. Coaching leaders guide and inspire their subordinates to enhance their performance. This style of communication is most effective when the subordinates are experienced and responsible individuals who comprehend the overall objective of the organization and their own participation in and contribution to it (Goleman, 2000).

Miles (1965), the founder of Human Resources Theory, emphasized teamwork between employers and employees, with each side sharing in both the work and the planning for it. According to Miles's theory, an organization's most important resources are the employers' and employees' ideas, skills, energy, and commitment. Communication in such organizations emphasizes relationships, exchanges of information, and feedback (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

In terms of Communication Accommodation Theory, this style of leadership is top-down in the sense that leaders still make the final decisions, but also bottom-up in the sense that leaders

accept feedback from their subordinates and encourage the subordinates to work on themselves to meet the goals set by the leaders (Goleman et al., 2013).

### **Individualistic Versus Collectivistic Cultures**

An important factor that influences decision-making by multicultural teams is whether the surrounding national culture is predominantly individualistic or collectivistic (House et al., 2004; Ting-Toomey et al., 2000). Members of individualistic cultures tend to place great emphasis and value on individual opinions, view interpersonal conflict as unpleasant but an inevitable part of life, promote self-reliance, and allow for individual diversity. Members of collectivistic cultures, on the other hand, tend to place great emphasis and value on group opinions, view interpersonal conflict as shameful, have a highly defined hierarchical communication structure, insist on social conformity, and, in business, usually need to establish trust with partners before they conduct business with them. Examples of individualistic cultures include the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada, and Australia; examples of collectivistic cultures include China, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, the Philippines, and the whole Middle East, including Saudi Arabia.

In the workplace, this difference between individualistic and collectivistic cultures has ramifications for decision-making. For example, in individualistic cultures, workers and managers, who are more concerned with self than others, tend to favor direct and assertive methods of resolving conflict, whereas members of collectivistic cultures (including Saudi Arabia), who are more concerned with others than self, tend to favor compromise and even withdrawal in order to “save face” rather than create embarrassment (House et al., 2004; Ting-Toomey, 1988).

Interestingly, within the United States, ethnic minorities may not use the same conflict-resolution styles as European Americans. For example, African American males, who are as individualistic as any other Americans, often tend to feel uncomfortable with aggressive styles of conflict because they do not wish to be negatively stereotyped (Haslam, Turner, Oakes, McGarty, & Reynolds, 1998; House et al., 2004). Perhaps surprisingly, African American females are more likely than African American males and European American males or females to use aggressive styles of conflict (Algert, 1998; House et al., 2004).

**African cultures and leadership.** African cultures are predominantly collectivistic, so individuals tend to be sensitive to the needs of others and are especially concerned about family members and friends. Therefore, the leadership style that is most successful is one that stresses team orientation (Chhokar, Brodbeck, & House, 2007; House et al., 2004).

**Latin American cultures and leadership.** Like African cultures, Latin American cultures tend to be predominantly collectivistic, so, once again, individuals tend to be sensitive to the needs of others, especially family members and friends. Thus, the leaders who are team oriented tend to be the most successful (House et al., 2004; Northouse, 2012).

**Asian cultures and leadership.** Asian cultures, like their counterparts in Africa and Latin America, tend to be predominantly collectivistic. However, unlike those two cultures, they are more paternalistic and autocratic, so they favor a more authoritarian than democratic leadership style, in Goleman's (2000) sense.

**North American and European cultures and leadership.** North American and European cultures tend to be predominantly individualistic. North American cultures in particular, because they are so culturally diverse, have successful leaders in any and all of

Goleman's (2000) leadership varieties, from autocratic to democratic (House et al., 2004; Munson, St. John, & Greif, 2007).

**Arabic cultures and leadership.** Because Saudi Aramco, the company being considered in the present study, is headquartered in Saudi Arabia, it is important to discuss this cultural context in greater detail than the others. To begin with, we should note that Arabic is the principal language of 26 countries, from Morocco in the west to Oman in the east. It is spoken by approximately 300 million people as their primary language, with approximately 250 million additional people speaking it as their secondary language (Suchan, 2014). Although there are five principal dialects of Arabic—Egyptian, Arabian (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates), Iraqi, Levantine (Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine), and Maghrebi (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya)—a speaker of any dialect can usually understand any of the other dialects.

“One key to understanding how people think, organize, and interact,” says Suchan (2014), “is to examine their language. That is particularly true in the Middle East where language..., social and political organization, and individual and national identity are tightly intertwined” (p. 281). Suchan goes on to state that communication in Arabic cultures, especially in relation to persuasion, has three primary characteristics: (a) the use of repetition and paraphrasing to make a point, (b) the use of highly ornate and metaphoric language, and (c) the use of strong emotion.

***Repetition.*** As a persuasive communicative strategy, speakers of Arabic tend to use repetition on several different levels, including the sound of words (phonology), the writing of words (lexicology), the grammar of words (syntax), and the meaning of words (semantics). Or as Suchan (2014) puts it, “there is repetition in both form and content” (p. 286). This differs from

Western persuasive strategies, which rely more on cause-and-effect relations, contrast, and subordination. Khali (1989), who studied Arab college students in America who spoke English as a second language, argued that, from a Western perspective, those students tended to overuse repetition for their arguments and underused logical presentations.

Koch (1983) and Johnstone (1991) contend that this repetitive persuasive strategy originates in the Arab perception that persuasion depends on stating and restating established truths. “In the Arabic worldview,” says Suchan (2014), “many truths are self-evident, are accepted, and thus are ‘in’ the language that is communicating them” (p. 286). Suchan goes on to observe that “the process for making truth clear is to enable the audience to see into the container from various angles or perspectives. Consequently, paraphrasing, reverse paraphrasing, and repetition are all means of providing the audience with different angles to recognize truth” (p. 291). This technique is used by leaders in various domains—including business, politics, religion, and family relations—to persuade subordinates to accept information as authoritative and true.

This Arab approach to truth, in which eloquence is used to communicate the speaker’s social status, education, knowledge, and therefore credibility, can create verbal conflict, at the very least, with persons from other cultures that have different assumptions about truth. This conflict can not only come into play between individuals, but also between groups, businesses, cultures, and even nations. American businesses, for example, value facts that can be quantified and measured (Reardon, 1991). The same is true in the academic world. In both of those domains, highly metaphoric and emotional language will often undermine or compromise the speaker’s credibility. Such language in America is usually reserved for literary, dramatic, or political purposes.

Suchan (2014), who is a professor of management in the Graduate School of Business and Public Policy at the Naval Postgraduate School, gives the following example of how an Arab student of his requested a higher grade on one of his assignments:

STUDENT: Professor, I need to have a better grade on this paper.

PROFESSOR: Why do you believe you deserve a better grade?

STUDENT: It is very important to me that I have a better grade.

PROFESSOR: Explain to me why you deserve a better grade. Have you read my comments? Do you understand them? Use what you've learned in class to persuade me.

STUDENT: Grades are very important to me.

PROFESSOR: I can understand that, but why do you deserve a better grade? Convince me..., explain why..., give me some evidence.

STUDENT: My evidence...? [confused expression] My evidence is that I work hard, others received a better grade, and I'm very interested in a better grade. (p. 287)

Clearly, in this scenario, the professor is looking for rational arguments from the student, but the student is looking for different ways to say that getting a better grade is important to him.

***Metaphors and ornate language.*** Arabic speakers tend to use highly metaphoric language, which Westerners tend to think of as overstatement and exaggeration (Suchan, 2014; Zaharna, 2009). This use of ornate language, especially when it is accompanied by dramatic gestures and emphatic tones of voice, tends to indicate the speaker's education, knowledge, and social status, and is used to establish power and authority (Gregg, 2005). In other words, such language indicates one's literacy and mastery of thought, which is essential for persuasiveness. In the West, however, ornate language tends to be regarded as possibly inauthentic or insincere if it is used outside of art forms such as poetry, drama, and motion pictures.



**Emotion.** There is an Arab expression that shows the importance of emotion in social interactions: “Words from the heart fall in the heart, those from the tongue reward only the ear” (Suchan, 2014, p. 289). In Arab culture, emotion—conveyed in speech by tone of voice, body language, and eye contact—is a means to build interpersonal relationships and a sense of “group feeling” (Suchan, p. 289). Presenting information is considered insufficient if it is not combined with linguistic skill in emotionally connecting with others to persuade them to take some action or accept some idea (Said, 2002; Zaharna, 2009). This is important not only in business relationships, but also in politics and ordinary social affairs, both on a one-on-one basis and in group relations. As Suchan notes, “Emotion signals strong conviction, a genuine involvement with the issue, and most importantly ‘heart’” (p. 292). As Haeri (2000) notes, this makes it difficult for most Arabs, unlike any attorney in the West (but like most Americans), to be able to argue both sides of a case, since this would convey that the speaker is either uneducated or unauthentic.

In terms of leadership, in Arab culture an influential person who wishes to persuade others is not only speaking for himself or herself, but for a whole group that the individual represents. As Suchan (2014) observes:

When a senior person persuades, he or she represents not merely his or her own ideas but those of an entire social, business, and perhaps even religious network. Representing a network of people and the historical associations that are a part of that network carries significant emotional impact. (p. 289)

In the West, on the other hand, especially in technical, academic, and business-related fields, a facts-based approach communicates that one’s arguments are clear, unbiased, objective, and rational, irrespective of the social status of the speaker. Clearly, this difference of approach and attitude toward how to communicate with others persuasively has profound implications for business dealings between Saudis and Americans, in the context of Saudi Aramco and elsewhere.

The picture becomes further complicated when one considers communications between individuals from *different* collectivistic cultures, such as Saudis versus Indians and Filipinos, all of whom are amply represented in the workforce at Saudi Aramco. Unfortunately, the present writer has not been able to find any literature on that subject. An outline of the differences in the way Americans and Arabs think about persuasive communication appears in Table 2.

Table 2

*Comparison of American and Arabic Thinking About Persuasion*

<i>American Thinking</i>	<i>Arabic Thinking</i>
Knowledge provisional, contested, and searched for	Knowledge firmly established; reveals beliefs people should embrace
Knowledge constructed through common language interpretation, careful message framing, and up-front reasoning	Language contains truth and reveals Knowledge
Persuasion audience-centric: evidence framed to meet audience's concerns	Persuasion writer/speaker-centric: presentation and repetition of preexisting knowledge is proof
Claim validity based on careful, fact-based evidence	Highly metaphoric language carries and "dresses" a claim's truth to make it clear
Emotion backgrounded to not undermine objectivity and appear unreasonable	Strong emotion foregrounded to indicate commitment, involvement, and "heart"
Many forms of credibility: expertise, track record, organizational position, likeability, and the persuasion process	Social position basis for credibility: past patrilineal relationships, current social networks, number of patron-client relationships, age

Source: Suchan (2014), p. 289.

The researcher obtained data on these Arabic styles of communication in Saudi Aramco from the participants' responses to Question 11-16 of her Demographic Questionnaire (see Appendix A).

## Leadership and Multiculturalism

Bolman and Deal (1991/2013) emphasized a cross-cultural approach to management, which assumes that in today's globalized marketplace, international organizations need managers who can quickly and adeptly adapt to different cultural environments (House et al., 2004; House, Javidan, & Dorfman, 2001; Sharma, 2015).

Lisak and Erez (2015) note that “there is wide agreement that one key for global success is the ability of global organizations to select, develop, and place effective global leaders at all organizational levels” (p. 3; see also Butler, Zander, Mockaitis, & Sutton, 2012; Tung & Varma, 2008).

Snell, Snow, Davidson, and Hambrick (1998) define global multicultural teams as consisting of “individuals from different cultures working together on activities that span national borders” (p. 147). Saudi Aramco is certainly one such company. Aside from cultural diversity, multicultural teams and organizations tend to communicate online as well as in person (Gibson & Gibbs, 2006; Stanko & Gibson, 2009), a factor that was measured only indirectly in the present study, insofar as the participants evaluated communications from the top of the organization to all its branches and departments.

Lisak and Erez (2015) found that multicultural team members who have three particular qualities “are more likely to emerge as leaders of these teams than other members” (p. 4). Those three qualities are *cultural intelligence*, *global identity*, and *openness to cultural diversity*.

**Cultural intelligence.** Lisak and Erez (2015) define cultural intelligence as “an individual's capability to deal effectively in culturally diverse settings” (p. 4). They divide cultural diversity into three components: mental, motivational, and behavioral. The mental component, which one obtains from personal experience and formal education, contains

“knowledge about the norms, practices, and conventions of different cultures” (p. 5). The motivational component involves “the commitment to adapt and adjust to a diverse cultural environment” (p. 5). The behavioral component involves the ability “to exhibit appropriate verbal and nonverbal actions when interacting with people from different cultures” (p. 5).

Leaders with high cultural intelligence “manage multicultural situations, make correct cultural decisions in a timely manner..., and facilitate desirable processes and outcomes in a global context” (p. 5). Compared to individuals with low cultural intelligence, leaders with high cultural intelligence more easily develop trust with their team members and therefore fit into their teams more easily. Cultural intelligence is therefore highly prized as an attribute of leaders of multicultural teams. Such leaders are sensitive to different cultural conventions and practices, know how to maintain team loyalty, and are well motivated to resolve team conflicts.

**Global identity.** In today’s highly globalized world, many individuals have developed a sense of belonging to an international community (Arnett, 2002), which is heightened today by the internet and virtual communication, such as via Skype. “Members of multicultural teams in global organizations,” state Lisak and Erez (2015), “are motivated to overcome cultural barriers and maintain positive relationships with other team members.... This sense of belongingness to others with diverse cultural backgrounds who are working in the same global organization reflects a person’s global identity” (p. 6).

Lisak and Erez (2015) contend that leaders of multicultural teams who have highly developed global identities will tend to serve as role models for their team members, increasing the sense among them that they belong to an in-group.

**Openness to cultural diversity.** Leaders with high levels of openness to cultural diversity have positive attitudes toward individuals with cultural differences, are prepared and

eager to learn from them, and attempt to understand their perspectives (Lisak & Erez, 2015). On the other hand, individuals with low levels of openness to cultural diversity have negative attitudes toward cultural diversity, are not prepared to learn from them, and are not interested in understanding their perspectives.

Lisak and Erez (2015) contend that members of multicultural teams who have high levels of openness to cultural diversity are more likely than members with lower levels to become team leaders. They will look forward to interacting with other team members and “will regard these cultural interactions as interesting and challenging instead of threatening” (p. 6). Furthermore, these tolerant individuals will work hard to reduce cultural misunderstandings. Openness to cultural diversity is an especially important leadership characteristic in the context of international projects, such as those conducted by Saudi Aramco.

**A counter example.** One study that shows how disruptive a workplace can be when the leaders have low cultural intelligence, poor global identity, and low openness to cultural diversity was conducted by Luring (2011), who studied a subsidiary of a Danish corporation in Saudi Arabia. The subsidiary had approximately 400 workers from 14 different countries, but mainly India (251), Egypt (80), and the Philippines (37), who were managed by 16 Danish expatriates.

Luring (2011) found that the Danish managers considered it “quite difficult to communicate across cultural barriers” (p. 242). One of the problems was that workers from the various nations had different cultural assumptions than those of the supervisors. One of the workers from India, for example, observed that managers in his native country are more like “co-workers” or “colleagues,” whereas in the Danish subsidiary “a manager is a manager” (p. 242).

This difference constitutes what Fitzsimmons (2013) calls “cultural distance” between the different nationalities.

Obviously, unlike this case, if there is no physical contact between members of different nationalities, then cultural distance will not lead to conflict between them. If they come together into one space, they may still find ways to cooperate and avoid conflict. However, if there is a history of conflict between them, this creates what Fitzsimmons (2013) calls “cultural friction.” Clearly, this was the case in the Danish subsidiary, in which the Danes not only looked down on the non-Europeans, but the non-Europeans in turn looked down on the Danes.

In fact, the Danish managers actually had contempt for their Indian and Egyptian workers, referring to them as “monkeys” who were “stupid,” had “no self-esteem,” and never admitted to making mistakes (pp. 242-243). They regarded the Filipino workers, on the other hand, as competent technicians, and so they placed them in responsible technical positions.

What Luring (2011) calls “the one-way communication style” (p. 244) of the managers created a hostile environment in the workplace. Some of the non-European workers actually came to feel that a kind of “apartheid” prevailed in the company, which they quietly resisted (p. 244). To get around this, the Danes resorted to punishing the workers for poor work by, for instance, docking them a day’s wages or not paying for their families to join them in Saudi Arabia. Many of the workers then responded to this by literally stealing from the company, which only increased the Danes’ suspicion of them. This led to the Danes speaking to each other in Danish when the workers were present, which in turn increased the distrust of the workers.

Next, some of the Danes proposed setting up video cameras to spy on the workers in order to curtail the stealing, but the more reasonable Danes vetoed this idea. The situation became so tense that one of the Indian workers actually entertained the idea of the Danes

deserving to be killed: “If managers were like this in India, people would run them over with their cars and just bang them up because in India we know how to be humane. We know how to treat people” (p. 246).

At the other end of the spectrum from the Luring (2011) study, which shows a company with a multinational workforce in total disarray, Groysberg and Connolly (2013) studied 24 CEOs who led successfully diverse organizations. Each of the 24 CEOs “approached inclusivity as a personal mission” (p. 70). They desired diversity in their organizations for both business and ethical reasons. On the business side, they favored diversity in their workforces because they believed they needed it, in Groysberg and Connolly’s words, to “stay competitive” (p. 70). Or, as one of the CEOs put it, “diversity is a source of creativity and innovation” (p. 70). Also, given the globalization of business today, a company’s customers are more and more likely these days to be spread out all over the planet. As Groysberg and Connolly note, “a diverse workforce prevents an organization from becoming too insular and out of touch with its increasingly heterogeneous customer base, [so] it is crucial for a company’s employees to reflect the people they serve” (p. 70).

## **Summary**

This chapter opens with a brief history of Saudi Aramco, beginning with the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia in the 1930s, when the company was essentially an American operation, and continuing through the gradual “Saudification” of the company after the oil shock of 1973, right up to the present time, when Saudi Aramco’s workforce is thoroughly international.

Then the researcher presented an outline of Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 2014; Giles et al., 1991, 2007), which provides the principal theoretical lens through which she views her data. She began with a discussion of what communication is, and how it has

been viewed since Aristotle, who saw it as a transfer of information from a speaker to an audience. Lasswell (1948) added to this the elements of the medium of communication (speech, writing, pantomime, etc.) and the effect of the communication. Shannon and Weaver (1949) then introduced the factor of “noise,” or barriers that can interfere with communication.

Up to this point, all the models of communication were linear. Then, in the 1950s, Osgood (1952) and Schramm (1954) introduced a circular model, in which the audience contributed a response, or feedback, to the original message. This model worked well for describing interpersonal communication, but not so well for describing forms of mass communication, such as film and TV, in which there is no feedback. Schramm added the concept of “fields of experience,” which the sender and the receiver of a communication had to share to some degree in order to understand each other. McCornack (2010) redefined these “fields of experience” as “life experiences, attitudes, values, and beliefs that each communicator brings to an interaction and that shape how messages are sent and received” (p. 10).

Berlo’s (1960) model of communication focused on the “ingredients” of communication, which included the Source (or sender), the Message (or information), the Channel (or medium), and the Receiver (or audience). Berlo also related communication to social organization, noting that (a) communication creates group pressures to conform, (b) most communications are between individuals of comparable social status, and (c) knowing the roles one’s audience members play in society allows senders to make predictions about their receivers.

Robbins and Judge (2011) divided communication transfer or flow into seven parts: the source (or sender); encoding (converting thoughts into symbols, such as letters or sounds); the message (words and nonverbal cues); the channel (or medium) of communication, such as



speech or writing; decoding (translating the symbols in the message); the receiver (or audience); and feedback (responding in kind).

DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1981) divided communication into three aspects: its process, its structure, and its function. The process is the influence the sender has on the receiver's thoughts or behaviors; the structure is the medium or channel of communication; and the function is to increase clarity or reduce ambiguity between the parties.

Robbins and Coulter (2002) noted four major functions of communication, especially in an organizational context: (a) providing a release for emotional expression and fulfilling social needs; (b) controlling members' behavior; (c) motivating employees to improve their performance; and (d) helping people to make decisions.

Many theorists have noted the barriers that can interfere with communication, which come in one of five types: physical, linguistic, cultural, emotional, and personality.

Physical barriers include walls, doors, and separator screens, which compartmentalize people.

Linguistic barriers include all the different languages and dialects that people speak around the world, which can prevent communication totally or partially. There are also different forms of jargon that exist between different trades and professions, as well as between generations.

Cultural barriers include gender, religion, nationality, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and bigotry. The greater the difference between the cultures of the sender and the receiver, the greater the opportunities for miscommunication (Adler, 1991). We later discuss this at greater length under the heading of individualistic versus collectivistic cultures.

Emotional barriers to communication include anger, fear, jealousy, sadness, and other feelings that tend to make people dislike themselves and others, and impede honest, direct, and rational communication (Sharma, 2015).

Personality barriers include being overly critical of others or unable to listen attentively (Ramirez, 2012).

All of these barriers to effective communication can occur individually or together in various combinations.

The researcher then discussed the role of satisfaction in communication, particularly in relation to job satisfaction and how this is affected by various demographic variables (age, education, gender, etc.), especially in the context of the demographic diversity at Saudi Aramco.

Downs and Hazen (1977), the creators of the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire, which the researcher has used in this study of Saudi Aramco, defined communication satisfaction in the workplace in terms of how employees feel about seven dimensions or aspects of communication; satisfaction with (a) communication climate (the degree to which employees feel stimulated and motivated by the organizational environment); (b) superiors (the degree to which employees feel that their supervisors trust and listen to them); (c) organizational integration (the degree to which employees feel that they are part of the organization); (d) media quality (the degree to which employees feel that the organization's publications and memos are helpful and clear); (e) horizontal and informal communication (the degree to which employees feel comfortable in their relations with their co-workers); (f) organizational perspective (the degree to which employees feel informed about the organization's goals and performance); and (g) personal feedback (the degree to which employees feel that their supervisors understand the problems they face on the job and are evaluated by fair criteria).

Researchers have found a positive correlation between workers' satisfaction with their own communication abilities on the job and their satisfaction with the job (e.g., Pettit et al., 1997; Rubin, 1993; Sharma, 2015); and there is also a positive correlation between workers' satisfaction with their supervisor's communication skills and their own job satisfaction (Madlock, 2008; Pettit et al., 1997; Sharma, 2015; Wińska, 2010).

The present researcher then addresses the relationship between communication and demographic diversity in the workplace, which can have both advantages (e.g., increased creativity) and disadvantages (e.g., distractions). The demographic variables that are discussed include age (which can create intergenerational problems, but also opportunities for mentorship based on experience); education (the more educated the workers, the more information they require); gender (which yields cross-fertilization of ideas, but also forms of bias, since men tend to be more confrontational and direct, whereas women tend to be more compromising and indirect); income (which impacts organizational fairness and job turnover); language (which can produce barriers that lead to stress and employee turnover); length of employment (which can both increase and decrease motivation); and culture and ethnicity (for which differences can lead to both conflict and increased creativity).

As stated earlier, Communication Accommodation Theory is the principal theoretical lens through which the researcher has viewed and analyzed her findings. According to Communication Accommodation Theory (e.g., Giles & Gasiorek, 2012), when people communicate with each other, they attempt to minimize the social differences between them (convergence), maximize those differences (divergence), or keep them constant (maintenance) by both verbal and nonverbal means. In general, individuals converge toward others whom they like, respect, or who have power over them, and diverge from others whom they dislike,

disrespect, or regard as below them in power or status. Nevertheless, it is possible, within one interaction, to simultaneously converge in one way while diverging in another. In essence, Communication Accommodation Theory posits that individuals and groups accommodate to their subjective perceptions or impressions of who their interactants are, rather than to the objective reality of those persons.

Also according to Communication Accommodation Theory, there are four basic communication strategies, both inside and outside the workplace: *accommodation* (reducing or magnifying communicative differences between people); *under-accommodation* (in which the receiver of a communication perceives the sender as putting minimal positive effort into the interaction); *over-accommodation* (in which the receiver of a communication perceives the sender as overemphasizing some communicative style in order to achieve convergence); and *non-accommodation* (which includes all forms of non-adaptive communication).

Communication Accommodation Theory is then examined in the context of leadership in the workplace, beginning with Goleman's (2000) six types of leadership styles, which all have advantages and disadvantages: *coercive/commanding* (in which leaders have total authority and control over all decision-making, and subordinates have little or no autonomy, which may work well in medical or military emergencies); *authoritative/visionary* (in which leaders minimize the differences between themselves and focus on building and maintaining harmonious relationships with and among their employees so that the organizational goals are logically clear); *affiliative* (in which leaders focus on building and maintaining harmonious relationships with and among their employees, but in a top-down way); *democratic* (in which leaders obtain input or feedback from subordinates in a bottom-up way); *pacesetting* (in which leaders demand excellence from their subordinates, but the latter are motivated by their own standards of excellence, which are

just as high as those of the leader; as, for example, between the chair of an academic department and the professors of that department); and *coaching* (in which the leaders make top-down decisions, but also accept bottom-up feedback from their subordinates).

Next, the researcher reviewed differences in communication styles between people in individualistic cultures (North America and Europe) and collectivistic cultures (Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Arabia), paying particular attention to the last of these, since it is the setting for the present study. Members of individualistic cultures tend to place great emphasis and value on individual opinions, view interpersonal conflict as an unpleasant but inevitable part of life, promote self-reliance, and allow for individual diversity. Members of collectivistic cultures, on the other hand, tend to place great emphasis and value on group opinions, view interpersonal conflict as shameful, have a highly defined hierarchical communication structure, insist on social conformity, and, in business, usually need to establish trust with partners before they conduct business with them.

In the workplace, this difference between individualistic and collectivistic cultures has ramifications for decision-making. For example, in individualistic cultures, workers and managers, who are more concerned with self than others, tend to favor direct and assertive methods of resolving conflict, whereas members of collectivistic cultures (including Saudi Arabia), who are more concerned with others than self, tend to favor compromise and even withdrawal in order to “save face” rather than create embarrassment.

After briefly reviewing African, Latin American, Asian, and Western cultures, the researcher focused on leadership styles in Arabic societies, where communication, especially in relation to persuasion, has three primary characteristics: (a) the use of repetition and

paraphrasing to make a point; (b) the use of highly ornate and metaphoric language; and (c) the use of strong emotion.

Finally, the researcher reviewed the advantages of multicultural leadership styles in settings, such as Saudi Aramco, in which the workforce is composed of individuals from numerous nations, races, ethnicities, and cultures. According to Lisak and Erez (2015), such leaders tend to have three qualities: *cultural intelligence* (the ability to deal effectively in culturally diverse settings); *global identity* (a sense of belonging to an international community); and *openness to cultural diversity* (possessing positive attitudes toward individuals with cultural differences from themselves). The discussion concluded with an example of what can go wrong when these qualities are absent.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Restatement of Study Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to examine and evaluate the effectiveness of the communication strategies and tactics of mid-level leaders in the headquarters of one major company in the Middle East, Saudi Aramco, which has a multinational workforce. The research takes a quantitative approach to address the research questions, below.

### **Restatement of Research Questions**

As Creswell (2009) notes, research questions and hypotheses in quantitative studies help to focus the purpose of such studies. “Quantitative research questions,” he states, “inquire about the relationships among variables that the investigator seeks to know” (p. 132). On the other hand, quantitative hypotheses “are predictions the researcher makes about the expected outcomes of relationships among variables. They are numeric estimates of population values based on data collected from samples. Testing of hypotheses employs statistical procedures in which the investigator draws inferences about the population from a study sample” (pp. 132-133).

The research questions and hypotheses used for the present study are:

**Research Question 1:** In what order, from highest to lowest level of satisfaction, do the white-collar workers at the international headquarters of Saudi Aramco rank their supervisors for the seven dimensions of communication effectiveness?

**Null Hypothesis 1:** None of the seven dimensions of supervisor communication effectiveness will have significantly different levels of worker satisfaction.

**Alternative Hypothesis 1:** All seven dimensions of supervisor communication effectiveness will not have similar levels of worker satisfaction.

**Research Question 2:** How do the seven dimensions of supervisor communication effectiveness correlate with the demographic variables of the white-collar workers at the world headquarters of Saudi Aramco?

**Null Hypothesis 2:** None of the seven dimensions of supervisor communication effectiveness will be related to any of the workers' demographic variables.

**Alternative Hypothesis 2:** At least one of the seven dimensions of supervisor communication effectiveness will be related to at least one of the workers' demographic variables.

## **Overview of Chapter Content and Organization**

In this chapter, the researcher describes the setting to be analyzed, the population from which she drew her participants, the instruments she used, and the procedures she followed to obtain and analyze data. Human subject considerations are also discussed, including how the data are being kept anonymous and confidential, without any risk to the participants' mental or physical health.

### **Setting**

The setting studied here is Saudi Aramco's world headquarters, located in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. Today, the Dhahran headquarters has approximately 25,000 employees (Saudi Aramco, 2016c), from 80 different nations, of which approximately 15,000 are Saudis.

### **Population, Sampling Procedures, and Sample**

Creswell (2009) specifies how to describe the population that is being studied and the sampling procedure. First of all, the researcher must determine the size of the population, which in this case is the total number of workers at the headquarters of Saudi Aramco in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. The researcher also needs to indicate how she had access to that population.



Next, according to Creswell (2009) the researcher must identify whether the sampling design is single stage or multistage. In this case, the survey was conducted on only one occasion, so the sampling design is single stage.

Creswell (2009) then recommends that the researcher use a random sampling methodology, “in which each individual in the population has an equal probability of being selected.... With randomization, a representative sample from a population provides the ability to generalize to a population” (p. 148).

Additionally, Creswell (2009) recommends that the study involve “stratification of the population before selecting the sample. Stratification means that specific characteristics of individuals (e.g., both females and males) are represented in the sample” (p. 148). The researcher assessed the sample according to several demographic variables (gender, age, income, etc.). However, Creswell (2009) also recommends that the sample reflect the same proportions as the population as a whole. In other words, if 10% of the total population consists of females, ideally the sample should also be 10% female. The researcher did not request Saudi Aramco to assure these proportions for her sample because that would have required the company to spend more time than it would have been reasonable to ask for.

Finally, Creswell (2009) recommends that the researcher “indicate the number of people in the sample and the procedures used to compute this number” (p. 148).

The present researcher has followed all of these recommendations in the discussion that follows.

**Population.** The population for this study was white-collar workers in the Dhahran headquarters of Saudi Aramco, covering as many nationalities as possible in the headquarters’ several departments.

**Nationalities.** As of 2008, the most recent figures the researcher could find, Saudi Aramco had 54,441 total employees worldwide. Of these, 47,502 (87.25%) were Saudi Arabs. The remaining 6,939 (12.75%) were foreign nationals: 2,379 (4.37%) from North America; 2,232 (4.1%) from Asia, mostly from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Yemen; 1,127 (2.07%) from Europe; and 1,230 (2.26%) others, especially Egyptians (Ramady, 2010, p. 220).

**Corporate departments.** Saudi Aramco is divided into 24 departments, all of which are represented at the headquarters in Dhahran:

- *Administrative*
- Chemicals
- *Community Services*
- *Contract Advisor*
- *Downstream Strategy & Development*
- Drilling & Workover
- *Education*
- Engineering
- *Environmental Protection & Safety*
- Exploration & Production
- *Finance*
- Geoscience
- *Human Resources & Training*
- Information Technology & Systems
- *King Abdulaziz Center*

- *Management/Organizational Consultants*
- Marine & Aviation
- *Marketing*
- Petroleum Engineering
- Pipeline & Distribution
- *Project Management*
- *Public Relations*
- Refinery
- Research & Development

Of these 24 departments, the 13 in italics are the ones the researcher was most interested in because they are most related to leadership outside of a scientific or engineering context. Thus, the researcher attempted to have in her population sample workers from all 13 of those departments, which collectively have 5,558 employees (Saudi Aramco, 2015).

A significant number of the white-collar workers at the Dhahran headquarters are from countries outside Saudi Arabia—in particular, India, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Europe, and the United States.

**Sampling procedures.** This study used purposive sampling of all available white-collar workers who have worked at the company for at least two years. To determine the needed sample size for Pearson correlations, the G\*Power 3.1 software program (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009) was used. Based on a medium effect size ( $ES = .15$ ), an alpha level of  $\alpha = .05$ , the needed sample size to achieve sufficient power (.80) would be a minimum of 55

respondents (Agresti & Finlay, 2009). To obtain this statistically significant number of respondents, the researcher surveyed 100 participants.

**Sample.** With assistance from the Human Resources Department at Saudi Aramco, the researcher obtained 103 volunteer participants to complete her survey. One incentive for the employees to participate in the study was the researcher's offer to give the results of the study to the Human Resources Department, which in turn will distribute the results to any participant who is interested.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Using the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (Downs & Hazen, 1977), the researcher surveyed 103 white-collar workers at the Dhahran headquarters of the Saudi Aramco Corporation to determine their evaluation of their supervisors' communication skills. The Human Resources Department agreed to give the employees half an hour off from work to fill out the questionnaire. After the employees completed the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire, the researcher correlated the findings with the demographic variables collected by the demographic questionnaire.

The Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire measures eight dimensions of supervisor communication effectiveness. Seven of those dimensions are measured by the workers in a setting, and one is measured by the supervisors in a setting.

As defined in the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (Downs & Hazen, 1977), the seven dimensions used by the researcher are:

1. *Communication Climate* is one of the strongest dimensions, in that people first think of climate when asked about communication satisfaction. The questions in this section measure communication at the organizational and individual levels, probing whether or not the company's communication is stimulating or motivating and whether it encourages employee identification. The

questions also assess the perceived communication competence of employees and the extent to which information flow assists the working process.

2. *Relationship to Superiors* includes the components of upward and downward communication. This dimension measures the openness of superiors to subordinates as well as superiors' ability to listen. Superior's perceived trust of the employee is incorporated in two of the items.

3. *Organizational Integration* revolves around the information employees receive about their job and related items, such as policies and benefits. Also included is information about what is happening currently, what departments are doing, and personnel news. Information about such matters makes employees feel they have been integrated.

4. *Media Quality* looks at communication as it travels through several channels (e.g., publications, memos, and meetings). Employees are asked about the helpfulness and clarity of these information sources and the quantity of information.

5. *Horizontal and Informal Communication* questions the amount of activity of information networks and the accuracy of the information they contain.

6. *Organizational Perspective* refers to the information given out concerning the corporation and its goals and performance. It also encompasses knowledge about external events such as new government policies, which impact the organization.

7. The *Personal Feedback* dimension contains questions about superiors' understanding of problems faced on the job and whether or not employees feel the criteria by which they are judged are clear. (p. 1, italics added)

The dimension of the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (Downs & Hazen, 1977) *not* used by the researcher is defined by the authors as follows:

8. *Relationship with Subordinates* is only completed by those in supervisory or managerial positions. It taps receptivity of employees to downward communication and their willingness and capability to send good information upward. Superiors are also asked whether they experience communication overload. (p. 1, italics added; in the survey itself, *Relationship with Subordinates* is listed as the 7th dimension, and *Personal Feedback* is listed as the 8th dimension)

## **Human Subject Considerations**

Creswell (2009) cites numerous ethical issues that must be taken into account by the researcher before, during, and after collecting data from participants. First of all, participants

must not be put at risk in any way, physical, psychological, social, economic, or legal. Furthermore, the researcher must take into account “the special needs of vulnerable populations, such as minors (under the age of 19), mentally incompetent participants, victims, persons with neurological impairments, pregnant women or fetuses, prisoners, and individuals with AIDS” (p. 89)—none of whom were asked to participate in the present study.

To protect the privacy of the participants in this study, their identity was kept anonymous. On the Informed Consent Form, which the participants signed electronically on a commercial online survey tool website before responding to the survey, the researcher described the purpose of the study and that the Saudi Aramco employees’ participation, which would be totally voluntary, would pose no risk to them of any kind. To encourage their participation, the researcher will provide a copy of her study’s results to the Human Resources Department at Saudi Aramco, to be distributed to any participant who wishes to see them. Finally, the researcher submitted a copy of the completed dissertation proposal to the Institutional Review Board of Pepperdine University for its approval to proceed with surveying the participants. How the participants were kept safe and anonymous, and how the data were kept confidential, is described below in the Data Management section.

## **Instrumentation**

Creswell (2009) states that researchers should indicate whether the instruments used in a study have been specifically designed for the research project, were developed by someone else, or were modified from other instruments.

For the present study, the researcher used three tools, all of which were administered by an online survey tool: (a) an Informed Consent Form, which was designed by the researcher (see Appendix B); (b) a Demographic Questionnaire, which was designed by the researcher (see

Appendix A); and (c) the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire, or CSQ for short, which was designed by Downs and Hazen (1977; see Appendix C).

**The informed consent form.** This form, which was signed anonymously by electronic means on a commercial online survey tool website, asked the participants to spend between 20 and 30 minutes completing a survey about their satisfaction with their immediate supervisor's communication skills. The purpose of the study was described, and the employees were told that their participation was voluntary and their identity would be anonymous. Also, they were told that (a) they may discontinue the survey at any time without penalty; (b) their participation poses no risks to them in any way, including their employment, their mental health, and their physical health; and (c) they may receive a copy of the study's conclusions from the Human Resources Department if they wish (see Appendix A).

**The demographic questionnaire.** This brief questionnaire, devised by the researcher, asked the participants to answer sixteen questions: age; gender; nationality of the participant; nationality of the participant's supervisor; participant's level of education; primary language of the participant; primary language the participant's supervisor; participant's annual income; department in which the participant works; the duration of the participant's employment at the Dhahran headquarters of Saudi Aramco; and the frequency and persuasiveness of the supervisor's use of repetition, metaphorical language, and emotion. (For a full version of this questionnaire, see Appendix A).

**The communication satisfaction questionnaire, or CSQ.** The Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (Downs & Hazen, 1977) is a widely used instrument to survey organizations because, in the words of Okay and Okay (2009), "it assesses the direction of

information flow, the formal and informal channels of communication flow, relationships with various members of organizations and the forms of communication” (p. 55).

**Description of the CSQ.** The Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire asks workers 35 questions about their relationship with their immediate supervisor (see Appendix C). The participants answered each question by selecting one of seven responses: (a) *Very dissatisfied*; (b) *Dissatisfied*; (c) *Somewhat dissatisfied*; (d) *Indifferent*; (e) *Somewhat satisfied*; (f) *Satisfied*; and (g) *Very satisfied*.

To access the survey, the participants went to a commercial online survey tool website and completed the questionnaire online.

Each of the 35 questions on the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire relates to one of the seven dimensions of communication. Appendix C reproduces the order of the questions as they appear on the survey, to which this researcher has indicated in square brackets which dimension goes with each question. In Appendix D, this researcher orders the material in the other direction, listing the seven dimensions and the five questions that go with each.

The Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire also asks five questions of supervisors, which the researcher has *not* used so as to avoid a conflict of interest between the workers and their supervisors, since Institutional Review Boards do not wish to assume liability for disputes that may arise from surveying two sides of an issue. Those five questions for supervisors are as follows:

- C. Answer the following only if you are a manager or supervisor. Then indicate your satisfaction with the following:
1. Extent to which my subordinates are responsive to downward directive communication



2. Extent to which my subordinates anticipate my needs for information
3. Extent to which I do not have a communication overload
4. Extent to which my subordinates are receptive to evaluation, suggestions, and criticisms
5. Extent to which my subordinates feel responsible for initiating accurate upward communication (Downs & Hazen, 1977, p. 5)

***Validity of the CSQ.*** Creswell (2009) notes that, when using an existing instrument, the researcher should describe the validity “of scores obtained from past use of the instrument. This means reporting efforts by authors to establish validity—whether one can draw meaningful and useful inferences from scores on the instruments” (p. 149). *Construct validity* establishes whether the “items measure hypothetical constructs or concepts” (p. 149). *Concurrent validity* establishes whether “scores predict a criterion measure” and whether “results correlate with other results” (p. 149).

Downs and Hazen (1977), the authors of the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire, state the following about the validity of their survey:

Construct validity of the CSQ has been determined primarily through factor analysis. Crino and White (1981) administered the CSQ to 137 supervisors from five textile mills and found the eight factors C. W. Downs and Hazen (1977) developed. However, Clampitt and Girard (1988) argued for a five-factor solution.

Evidence of concurrent validity exists. CSQ factors have been found to be highly correlated with job satisfaction (Downs & Hazen, 1977), strong predictors of organizational commitment (Downs, 1991; Potvin, 1992), and related to turnover (Gregson, 1987) and need fulfillment (Kio, 1980). (p. 2)

***Reliability of the CSQ.*** Creswell (2009) notes that, when using an existing instrument, the researcher should “look for whether authors report measures of internal consistency (are the items’ responses consistent across constructs?). Design research and test-retest correlations (are

scores stable over time when the instrument is administered a second time?). Also determine whether there was consistency in test administration and scoring (were errors caused by carelessness in administration or scoring?)” (pp. 149-150).

Downs and Hazen (1977) state the following about the reliability of their survey:

Test-retest (2-week interval) reliability of the CSQ was reported at .94 (Downs & Hazen, 1977). Coefficient alpha reliabilities for the eight dimensions have been consistently high, ranging from .72 to .96 for studies in the United States (Potvin, 1991/1992) and Australia (Downs, 1991). (p. 2)

### **Approval of the Data Collection Procedures**

After obtaining permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Pepperdine University to proceed with the survey (see Appendix E), the researcher contacted the Human Resources Department of Saudi Aramco in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, sending them a copy of the proposal, along with a request to conduct the survey online via a commercial online survey tool website. Since Saudi Aramco’s headquarters has 13 departments that fit the study’s criteria for participants, the researcher attempted to recruit workers from all those departments and from all 80 nationalities represented there (Saudi Aramco, 2016c).

Once the researcher was informed by Saudi Aramco’s Human Resources Department that 103 workers had agreed to participate in the study within a 3-day period, she gave the Human Resources Department the link to the commercial online survey tool website for the workers to gain access to the online site. After the workers completed the survey, the commercial online survey tool website forwarded the data to the researcher for analysis.

### **Data Management**

The participants’ answers on the Informed Consent Form, the Demographic Questionnaire, and the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (Downs & Hazen, 1977) will be stored by a commercial online survey tool website in a secure electronic format. Since the

website does not ask for the participants' name, e-mail address, IP address, or any other identifying information, the participants will remain anonymous throughout the process, and their responses will be kept strictly confidential.

When the researcher is not working with the data, she keeps them stored in a locked cabinet. This is an extra precaution, beyond keeping the identities of the participants anonymous. Five years after the dissertation is completed, the researcher will destroy all the data.

### **Data Analysis**

In this study, the *dependent variables* are each of the seven dimensions of the communicative effectiveness (see Appendix D) of the mid-level leaders at the international headquarters of Saudi Aramco; and the *independent variables* are the demographic characteristics of the participants (see Appendix A). The researcher initially tabulated the data by using standard summary statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages). Employing a general data analysis approach, Research Question 1 was examined using a repeated measures ANOVA model, while for Research Question 2, Pearson correlations were used.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine and evaluate the effectiveness of the communication strategies and tactics of mid-level leaders in one major multinational company with a sizable multinational workforce, Saudi Aramco. Survey responses from 103 participants were included.

Table 3 displays the frequency counts for selected variables. Table 4 displays the descriptive statistics for the ratings of supervisor communication excellence sorted by highest mean. Table 5 displays the psychometric characteristics for the eight summated scale scores. Table 6 displays the repeated measures ANOVA model for the supervisor communication effectiveness dimensions to answer Research Question 1. Tables 7 and 16 display the Pearson correlations comparing the seven communication dimensions with 10 demographic variables to answer Research Question 2.

The ages of the respondents ranged from 20 to 69 years (*Mdn* = 34.50 years). Most (77.7%) were male. About three-quarters of the sample (75.7%) were Saudi Arabian, and 71.8% of the supervisors were also Saudi Arabian. All but 16.5% of the sample had at least a bachelor's degree, with 31.1% of the sample also having at least one advanced degree. The primary language for most participants (73.8%) was Arabic, and their supervisor's primary language was most commonly Arabic (68.0%). The income for the participants ranged from \$10,000 to \$40,000 (37.9%) to over \$150,000 (10.7%) with the median income being \$70,000. The duration of time worked for the organization ranged from 2 to 35 years (*Mdn* = 13.00 years).

Table 3

*Frequency Counts for Selected Variables (N = 103)*

Variable	Categories	n	%
Age <sup>a</sup>	20–29	25	24.3
	30–39	24	40.8
	40–49	21	20.4
	50–69	15	14.6
Gender	Female	23	22.3
	Male	80	77.7
Own Nationality	Saudi Arabia	78	75.7
	Other Nationalities	25	24.3
Nationality of Supervisor by Participant	Saudi Arabia	74	71.8
	Other Nationality	29	28.2
Level of Education	Less Education	17	16.5
	Bachelor's degree	54	52.4
	Master's degree	28	27.2
	Doctoral degree	4	3.9
Primary Language	Arabic	76	73.8
	English	12	11.7
	Other	15	14.5
Supervisor Language	Arabic	70	68.0
	English	12	11.7
	Other	21	20.3
Income <sup>b</sup>	\$10,000–\$40,000	39	37.9
	\$50,000–\$90,000	35	34.0
	\$100,000–\$150,000	18	17.3
	Over \$150,000	11	10.7
Duration <sup>c</sup>	2–5 years	27	26.2
	6–10 years	23	22.3
	11–15 years	22	21.4
	16–20 years	17	16.5
	21–35 years	14	13.6

<sup>a</sup>Age: *Mdn* = 34.50<sup>b</sup>Income: *Mdn* = \$70,000.<sup>c</sup>Duration: *Mdn* = 13.00 years.

Table 4 displays the descriptive statistics for six ratings of supervisor communication excellence sorted by the highest mean. These ratings were based on a seven-point metric (1 = *Least favorable rating* to 7 = *Most favorable rating*). The most favorable rating was for item 15, “How often does your supervisor communicate to you by showing emotional commitment to what he or she is saying?” ( $M = 4.44$ ). The least favorable rating was for item 13, “How often does your supervisor communicate to you by using metaphorical language?” ( $M = 4.19$ ).

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics for the Ratings of Supervisor Communication Excellence Sorted by Highest Mean (N = 103)*

Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
15. How often does your supervisor communicate to you by showing emotional commitment to what he or she is saying?	4.44	1.53
16. How persuasive is your supervisor in communicating to you by showing emotional commitment to what he or she is saying?	4.39	1.59
12. How persuasive is your supervisor in communicating to you with repetition?	4.36	1.51
11. How often does your supervisor communicate to you by repeating points from different perspectives?	4.31	1.66
14. How persuasive is your supervisor in communicating to you by using metaphorical language?	4.21	1.49
13. How often does your supervisor communicate to you by using metaphorical language?	4.19	1.43

*Note.* Ratings based on seven-point metric: 1 = *Least favorable rating* to 7 = *Most favorable rating*.

Table 5 displays the psychometric characteristics for the seven supervisor communication dimensions, as well as the supervisor communication excellence scale score, which were calculated by Pearson correlations of items 11 to 16 on the Demographic Questionnaire. All eight scales had Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients of at least  $\alpha = .89$ . This suggested that all the scales had acceptable levels of internal reliability (Agresti & Finlay, 2009).

Table 5

*Psychometric Characteristics for the Summated Scale Scores (N = 103)*

Psychometric Characteristic	Number of Items	M	SD	Low	High	$\alpha$
Relationship to Superiors <sup>a</sup>	5	4.65	1.36	1.00	7.00	.93
Horizontal and Informal Communication <sup>a</sup>	5	4.59	1.22	1.00	7.00	.90
Organization Integration <sup>a</sup>	5	4.59	1.22	1.00	6.80	.89
Media Quality <sup>a</sup>	5	4.52	1.31	1.00	7.00	.93
Communication Climate <sup>a</sup>	5	4.44	1.28	1.00	7.00	.93
Organizational Perspective	5	4.44	1.23	1.00	7.00	.89
Personal Feedback <sup>a</sup>	5	4.44	1.30	1.00	7.00	.92
Supervisor Communication Excellence <sup>b</sup>	6	4.32	1.23	1.00	7.00	.89

<sup>a</sup>Scale based on a seven-point metric: 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

<sup>b</sup>Scale based on a seven-point metric: 1 = *Least Favorable* to 7 = *Most Favorable*.

### Answering the Research Questions

Research Question 1 was, “In what order, from highest to lowest level of satisfaction, do the white-collar workers at the international headquarters of Saudi Aramco rank their supervisors for the seven dimensions of communication effectiveness?” The related null hypothesis was, “None of the seven dimensions of supervisor communication effectiveness will have significantly different levels of worker satisfaction.”

To answer this question, Table 6 displays the results of the repeated measures ANOVA model comparing the seven level-of-satisfaction dimensions for supervisor communication effectiveness sorted by highest satisfaction level. The highest dimension of satisfaction was relationship to superiors ( $M = 4.65$ ). The lowest dimension of satisfaction was for communication climate ( $M = 4.44$ ). The results of the repeated measures ANOVA model was significant ( $F [6, 612] = 3.06, p = .006$ ). Subsequent Bonferroni post hoc tests found dimension two, relationship to superiors ( $M = 4.65$ ) to be significantly higher than dimension one,

communication climate ( $M = 4.44$ ) at the  $p = .009$  level. All of the pairs of means were not significantly different from each other. This combination of findings provided support to reject null hypothesis one and to support alternative hypothesis one.

Cohen (1988) suggested some guidelines for interpreting the strength of linear correlations. He suggested that a weak correlation typically has an absolute value of  $r = .10$  ( $r^2 =$  one percent of the variance explained), a moderate correlation typically has an absolute value of  $r = .30$  ( $r^2 =$  nine percent of the variance explained), and a strong correlation typically has an absolute value of  $r = .50$  ( $r^2 =$  25 percent of the variance explained). Therefore, for the sake of parsimony, this Results Chapter will primarily highlight those correlations that were of at least moderate strength to minimize the potential of numerous Type I errors stemming from interpreting and drawing conclusions based on potentially spurious correlations.

Table 6

*Repeated Measures ANOVA Comparison for Level of Satisfaction Dimensions for Supervisor Communication Effectiveness (N = 103)*

Dimension	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
2. Relationship to Superiors	4.65	1.36
5. Horizontal and Informal Communication	4.59	1.22
3. Organization Integration	4.59	1.22
4. Media Quality	4.52	1.31
7. Personal Feedback	4.44	1.30
6. Organizational Perspective	4.44	1.23
1. Communication Climate	4.44	1.28

*Note.* Scales based on a seven-point metric: 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*. Repeated Measures ANOVA Test:  $F(6, 612) = 3.06$ .  $p = .006$ . Bonferroni post hoc test results:  $2 > 1$  ( $p = .009$ ); all other pairs of means were similar.



Research Question 2 was, “How do the seven dimensions of supervisor communication effectiveness correlate with the demographic variables of the white-collar workers at the world headquarters of Saudi Aramco?” The related null hypothesis was, “None of the seven dimensions of supervisor communication effectiveness will be related to any of the workers’ demographic variables.” As stated previously, Tables 7 to 16 display the Pearson correlations between the seven communication dimensions and 10 demographic variables. For the resulting 70 correlations, 33 were significant at the  $p < .05$  level, with 24 of the correlations of at least moderate strength using the Cohen (1988) criteria.

Table 7 displays the Pearson correlations between the seven communication dimension scores and the participants’ educational level. All seven correlations were significant and positive. Three of the correlations were of moderate strength using the Cohen (1988) criteria. Specifically, the educational levels of the respondents were positively related to the relationship with superiors dimension ( $r = .34, p < .001$ ), the organization integration dimension ( $r = .32, p < .001$ ), and the organizational perspective dimension ( $r = .33, p < .001$ ).

Table 7

*Pearson Correlations Between the Communication Dimension Scores with Education (N = 103)*

Communication Dimension	Education	
Relationship to Superiors	.34	****
Organizational Perspective	.33	****
Organization Integration	.32	****
Communication Climate	.29	***
Horizontal and Informal Communication	.28	***
Personal Feedback	.25	**
Media Quality	.23	*

*Note.* Scales based on a seven-point metric: 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .005$ . \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 8 displays the Pearson correlations between the seven communication dimension scales and the supervisor communication excellence scale. All were significant positive correlations, with all correlations being considered strong relationships using the Cohen (1988) criteria.

Table 8

*Pearson Correlations Between the Communication Dimension Scores and Supervisor Communication Excellence Scale (N = 103)*

Communication Dimension	Excellence Scale
Communication Climate	.68 ****
Relationship to Superiors	.68 ****
Organization Integration	.63 ****
Media Quality	.64 ****
Horizontal and Informal Communication	.60 ****
Organizational Perspective	.59 ****
Personal Feedback	.67 ****

*Note.* Scales based on a seven-point metric: 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .005$ . \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 9 presents the responses to Question 1 on the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (Downs & Hazen, 1977), which asked the participants how satisfied they were with their job.

Table 9

*Job Satisfaction of the Participants (N = 103)*

Degree of Satisfaction	<i>n</i>	%
Very Satisfied:	21	(20.4%)
Satisfied:	45	(43.7%)
Somewhat Satisfied:	20	(19.4%)
Indifferent:	6	(5.8%)
Somewhat Dissatisfied:	4	(3.9%)
Dissatisfied:	4	(3.9%)
Very Dissatisfied:	3	(2.9%)

Table 10 displays the Pearson correlations between the seven communication dimension scales and the job satisfaction rating. All were significant positive correlations, with all correlations being considered strong relationships using the Cohen (1988) criteria.

Table 10

*Pearson Correlations Between the Communication Dimension Scores and Job Satisfaction*

(*N* = 103)

Communication Dimension	Job Satisfaction
Relationship to Superiors	.60 ****
Communication Climate	.59 ****
Personal Feedback	.58 ****
Organization Integration	.55 ****
Horizon and Informal Communication	.54 ****
Media Quality	.50 ****
Organizational Perspective	.50 ****

*Note.* Scales based on a seven-point metric: 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .005$ . \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 11 displays the Pearson correlations between the seven communication dimension scales and the level of satisfaction rating. All were significant positive correlations, with all correlations being considered moderate strength relationships using the Cohen (1988) criteria.

Table 12 to Table 17 display the Pearson correlations for the seven communication dimension scores with six demographic variables (age, gender, nationality match, language match, income, and duration of time with the company). For the resulting 42 correlations, five were significant at the  $p < .05$  level, but none were of moderate strength using the Cohen (1988) criteria. This combination of findings in Table 12 to Table 17 provided support to reject Null Hypothesis 2 and retain Alternative Hypothesis 2.

Table 11

*Pearson Correlations Between the Communication Dimension Scores and Level of Satisfaction**(N = 103)*

Communication Dimension	Level of Satisfaction <sup>a</sup>
Communication Climate	.47 ****
Personal Feedback	.46 ****
Organization Integration	.44 ****
Organization Perspective	.43 ****
Media Quality	.39 ****
Relationship to Superiors	.39 ****
Horizon and Informal Communication	.36 ****

*Note.* Scales based on a seven-point metric: 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

<sup>a</sup>Satisfaction Level: 1 = *Gone Down*, 2 = *Stayed the Same*, 3 = *Gone Up*.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .005$ . \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 12

*Pearson Correlations Between the Communication Dimension Scores and Age (N = 103)*

Communication Dimension	Age
Relationship to Superiors	.06
Organization Integration	.03
Organization Perspective	.00
Personal Feedback	-.01
Communication Climate	-.03
Horizon and Informal Communication	-.04
Media Quality	-.10

*Note.* Scales based on a seven-point metric: 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .005$ . \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 13

*Pearson Correlations Between the Communication Dimension Scores and Gender (N = 103)*

Communication Dimension	Gender <sup>a</sup>
Organization Integration	-.11
Relationship to Superiors	-.18
Organization Perspective	-.18
Personal Feedback	-.19
Communication Climate	-.21
Media Quality	-.22

*Note.* Scales based on a seven-point metric: 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

<sup>a</sup>Gender: 1 = *Female*; 2 = *Male*.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .005$ . \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 14

*Pearson Correlations Between the Communication Dimension Scores and Nationality Match with Supervisor (N = 103)*

Communication Dimension	Nationality Match <sup>a</sup>
Horizon and Informal Communication	-.11
Organization Integration	-.13
Relationship to Superiors	-.13
Organization Perspective	-.14
Personal Feedback	-.16
Communication Climate	-.18
Media Quality	-.18

*Note.* Scales based on a seven-point metric: 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

<sup>a</sup>Nationality Match: 0 = *No*; 1 = *Yes*.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .005$ . \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 15

*Pearson Correlations Between the Communication Dimension Scores and Language Match with Supervisor (N = 103)*

Communication Dimension	Language Match <sup>a</sup>
Horizon and Informal Communication	-.02
Organization Integration	-.03
Organization Perspective	-.03
Relationship to Superiors	-.04
Personal Feedback	-.05
Communication Climate	-.10
Media Quality	-.10

*Note.* Scales based on a seven-point metric: 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

<sup>a</sup>Language Match: 0 = *No*; 1 = *Yes*.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .005$ . \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 16

*Pearson Correlations Between the Communication Dimension Scores and Income (N = 103)*

Communication Dimension	Income
Relationship to Superiors	.25 **
Horizon and Informal Communication	.22 *
Organization Integration	.20 *
Organization Perspective	.16
Communication Climate	.14
Personal Feedback	.14
Media Quality	.04

*Note.* Scales based on a seven-point metric: 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .005$ . \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 17

*Pearson Correlations Between the Communication Dimension Scores and Duration of Employment (N = 103)*

Communication Dimension	Duration
Relationship to Superiors	.13
Organization Integration	.12
Horizon and Informal Communication	.09
Organization Perspective	.04
Communication Climate	.03
Media Quality	.00
Personal Feedback	.00

*Note.* Scales based on a seven-point metric: 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .005$ . \*\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

In addition to collecting data about the seven dimensions of communication satisfaction from the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (Downs & Hazen, 1977), the researcher also obtained data about specific questions on the questionnaire that are of interest to us.

For example, to B6, “Extent to which the organization’s communication makes me identify with it or feel a vital part of it,” the results were as follows in Table 18. Just under half (51, or 49.5%) were in the satisfied category (Likert 5, 6, or 7), roughly a fifth (22, or 21.4%) were in the unsatisfied category (Likert 1, 2, or 3), and the greatest number (30, or 29.1%) did not care one way or the other, or were indifferent (Likert 4).

Table 18

*Identification with the Organization (N = 103)*

No. of Individuals	Average Likert Score
8	7
17	6
26	5
30	4
15	3
4	2
3	1

To B7, a component of Dimension 4, Media Quality, “Extent to which the organization’s communications are interesting and helpful,” the results were as follows in Table 19. Just under half (49, or 47.6%) were in the satisfied category, roughly a fifth (22, or 21.4%) were in the unsatisfied category, and again the greatest number (32, or 31.5%) were indifferent.

Table 19

*Interest or Helpfulness of Communications (N = 103)*

No. of Individuals	Average Likert Score
9	7
13	6
27	5
32	4
11	3
5	2
6	1

To B8, a component of Dimension 2, Relationship to Superiors, “Extent to which my supervisor trusts me,” the results were as follows in Table 20. Well over half (59, or 57.3%) were



in the satisfied category, approximately a sixth (18, or 17.5%) were in the unsatisfied category, and approximately a quarter (26, or 25.2%) were indifferent. Thus, there is clearly a great deal of trust between the employees and the supervisors at the international headquarters of Saudi Aramco.

Table 20

*Extent of Supervisor Trust (N = 103)*

No. of Individuals	Average Likert Score
13	7
18	6
28	5
26	4
8	3
7	2
3	1

To B12, a component of Dimension 2: Relationship to Superiors, “Extent to which my supervisor is open to ideas,” the results were as follows in Table 21. Again, well over half (58, or 56.3%) were in the satisfied category, approximately a fifth (22, or 21.4%) were in the unsatisfied category, and another approximate fifth (23, or 22.3%) were indifferent. Thus, the majority of employees at the international headquarters of Saudi Aramco believe that their supervisors are open to ideas.

Table 21

*Supervisor's Openness to Ideas (N = 103)*

No. of Individuals	Average Likert Score
14	7
19	6
25	5
23	4
13	3
5	2
4	1

In summary, this study used the responses from 103 participants to examine and evaluate the effectiveness of the communication strategies and tactics of mid-level leaders in one major multinational company with a sizable multinational workforce, Saudi Aramco. Alternative Hypothesis 1 (*All seven dimensions of supervisor communication effectiveness will not have similar levels of worker satisfaction*) was supported (see Table 6). Alternative Hypothesis 2 (*At least one of the seven dimensions of supervisor communication effectiveness will be related to at least one of the workers' demographic variables*) was also supported (Tables 7 to 17). In Chapter 5, these findings will be compared to the literature, conclusions and implications will be drawn, and a series of recommendations will be suggested.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **How the Results of This Study Compare to the Review of Literature**

Many of the results from this study's survey confirmed positions stated by various theorists and researchers in the Review of Literature chapter, but some did not. In the present chapter, the researcher will consider both kinds of results, and then conclude with some recommendations for future research.

For example, in communication accommodation theory, there are three levels of communication:

- *Convergence*: minimizing the difference between parties in communication
- *Divergence*: maximizing the difference between parties in communication
- *Maintenance*: keeping the difference between the parties constant

In the present study, most of the results were in the moderate to weak range, which means that the employees are not satisfied or unsatisfied, but are on the maintenance level.

Numerous studies have found that there is a positive correlation between workers' satisfaction with their own communication abilities on the job and their satisfaction with the job (e.g., Pettit et al., 1997; Rubin, 1993; Sharma, 2015). However, the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (Downs & Hazen, 1977) does not measure workers' satisfaction with their own communication abilities, but rather their satisfaction with their supervisors' communication abilities.

In a study of various business organizations, using the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (Downs & Hazen, 1977), Chang (2006) found that, of the seven dimensions of employee communication satisfaction, the strongest correlations were with Communication Climate, Personal Feedback, and what he calls Supervisor Communication, by which he presumably means Relationship to Superiors. In Saudi Arabia, the present researcher's results

only agreed with the last of these. That is, Relationship to Superiors ranked highest, but it was followed by Horizontal and Informal Communication and Organization Integration (see Table 4).

However, Chang (2006) also found that demographic variables were poor predictors of levels of communication satisfaction, and that was the case in the present study, too, in which it turned out that *none* of the demographic variables describing the participants had strong correlations with any of the seven dimensions of communication satisfaction measured by the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (Down & Hazen, 1977). Only seven of those variables (education, age, gender, nationality match, language match, income, and duration of time with the company) had *any* significant correlations with the seven dimensions of communication satisfaction, and the strength of all those correlations, with the exception of one demographic variable (education), was weak by Cohen's (1988) standards—that is, below .30.

### **Education**

In Chapter 2, it was noted that Gunbayi (2007) found that the higher one's level of education, the lower one's evaluation of the communication in the workplace, since more educated individuals tend to require more information than lesser educated individuals. However, our data for the employees at the international headquarters of Saudi Aramco did not support this pattern. In fact, education was the one demographic variable that showed any statistically significant correlation with *any* of the seven dimensions of communication satisfaction, although the strength of the correlations was only moderate by Cohen's (1988) standards—that is, above .30.

The three dimensions of communication satisfaction that had a positive correlation of .30 or above with education were: Relationship to Superiors (.34), Organizational Perspective (.33), and Organization Integration (.32). Thus, the employees at Saudi Aramco were moderately

satisfied that they are listened to and trusted by their supervisors, that they understand the goals of the corporation, and that they feel part of the larger organization (see Table 7).

We also noted in Chapter 2 that as an individual's level of education increases, so does his or her writing and oral communication skills, which usually translates into increased job satisfaction (e.g., CollegeAtlas, 2015; Ünsar, 2014), as opposed to communication satisfaction. This pattern was more or less confirmed by the results of the current survey. That is, with the exception of employees with the Associate's Degree and the Bachelor's Degree, the more education the participants had, the more satisfied they were with their job (see Table 22).

Table 22

*Average Level of Job Satisfaction at Saudi Aramco by Education (N = 103)*

No. of Individuals	Level of Education	Average Likert Score
4	Doctoral Degree	6.00
28	Master's Degree	5.86
46	Bachelor's Degree	5.15
5	Associate's Degree	4.40
16	High School Degree	5.56
2	Technician	5.50
1	No Degree	2.00
1	Not Sure	2.00

## Income

As was noted in Chapter 2, employees' satisfaction with their pay is directly related to their perception of organizational fairness and to their job turnover (Jung & Yoon, 2015). When workers believe that they are treated fairly by their employers, that increases their commitment to the workplace (Tekleab et al., 2005).

At the international headquarters of Saudi Aramco, income in fact had the second highest correlations, after education, with the seven dimensions of communication satisfaction (see Table 16). However, the strength of all those correlations, by Cohen's (1988) standards, was between moderate and weak. The three dimensions of communication satisfaction that the participants ranked highest were Relationship to Superiors (.25), Horizontal and Informal Communication (.22), and Organization Integration (.20).

Unlike the literature, which predicts a positive correlation between income and job satisfaction (e.g., Bakan, 2013), there was no discernible pattern in the job satisfaction of the participants at Saudi Aramco by income (see Table 23). Individuals at the lowest end of the income spectrum (\$10,000) averaged 6.00 for job satisfaction, but individuals toward the top end (\$150,000) also averaged 6.00. Some of the averages in the table were distorted by outliers. For example, in the \$30,000 category, most of the participants had a score of 4, 5, or 6, but there was one 1 and one 2, which dropped the average. Similarly, in \$40,000+ category, almost all the participants had a score of 4, 5, or 6, but one had a score of 2, which lowered the average. Of course, none of these averages are statistically significant.

Table 23

*Income Distribution at Saudi Aramco's World Headquarters (N = 103)*

No. of Individuals	Annual Income	Average Likert Score
12	\$10,000	6.00
9	\$20,000	4.67
12	\$30,000	4.50
8	\$40,000	4.88
10	\$50,000	5.80
8	\$60,000	5.25
8	\$70,000	6.13
6	\$80,000	5.50
3	\$90,000	5.33

(continues)

No. of Individuals	Annual Income	Average Likert Score
7	\$100,000	6.43
2	\$110,000	5.50
1	\$120,000	6.00
3	\$130,000	5.67
1	\$140,000	7.00
5	\$150,000	6.00
8	\$150,000+	5.38

## Age

In the West, as we noted in Chapter 2, there are numerous differences in job satisfaction of employees by age, plus there are positive and negative ways that older and younger employees view each other (e.g., Giles & Gasiorrek, 2010; Giles et al., 2008). In the Middle East, however, these age differences do not necessarily apply. In the world headquarters of Saudi Aramco, in any case, age differences played no significant role in communication satisfaction (see Table 12).

Part of the reason that age plays such an insignificant role in the attitude of Saudi workers is derived from the fact that there is much less generational conflict in that country, as in most eastern cultures, than there is in western cultures. Furthermore, 85.4% of the workforce at the international headquarters of Saudi Aramco is in the 20 to 49-age range, so there is not much intergenerational difference to begin with (see Table 24).

Table 24

*Distribution of Workers at Saudi Aramco by Age (N = 103)*

Age	Number	Percent
20s	25	(24.27%)
30s	41	(39.81%)
40s	22	(21.36%)
50s	14	(13.59%)
60s	1	(0.97%)

Although there were no significant correlations between age and communication satisfaction among the employees at Saudi Aramco, with the exception of the participants in their forties, the older they were, the higher was their satisfaction with their job (see Table 25).

Table 25

*Average Level of Job Satisfaction at Saudi Aramco by Age (N = 103)*

Age	Average Likert Score
20s	5.52
30s	5.56
40s	5.32
50s	5.79
60s	7.00

## Gender

As noted in Chapter 2, gender diversity has been studied more than any other demographic variable (Jimeno-Ingrum, 2007). Among the advantages of gender diversity in the workplace are the cross-fertilization of ideas that derive from the different social and political environments in which men and women are raised, which encourage diverse values and attitudes (Jimeno-Ingrum, 2007; Milliken & Martins, 1996). One disadvantage of gender diversity in the workplace is that men tend to occupy higher positions than women do, and therefore supervisors and employees tend to expect greater performance from men than from women and respect men's ideas and opinions more than they respect the ideas and opinions of women (C. M. Lee, 2007).

In many nations, there are different standards for appropriate behavior by males and females, including the way the two genders tend to resolve conflicts. American males have been conditioned to communicate in aggressive and confrontational ways, whereas American females



have been conditioned to be nurturing and passive and receptive (Holt & DeVore, 2005). Furthermore, American men tend to rate aggressive behavior more favorably than do American women (Holt & DeVore, 2005; Renwick, 1977).

In the world headquarters of Saudi Aramco, however, the correlations between gender and employee satisfaction with supervisors' communication skills were mostly insignificant, and the only dimensions of communication satisfaction that had any statistical significance, although their strength was weak (see Table 13), were Organization Perspective (–.22) and Personal Feedback (–.21).

The female participants were somewhat more satisfied than the males, as can be seen in Table 26.

Table 26

*Average Level of Job Satisfaction at Saudi Aramco by Gender (N = 103)*

Gender	No. of Individuals	Average Likert Score
Males	80	5.45
Females	23	5.83

### **Duration of Employment**

We noted in Chapter 2 that diversity in length of employment leads to increased technical innovation (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Jimeno-Ingrum, 2007). That is, employees with greater lengths of employment have greater experience and knowledge about the workplace, which they can share with employees with shorter lengths of employment (Jimeno-Ingrum, 2007; Milliken & Martins, 1996).

However, at the international headquarters of Saudi Aramco, duration of employment at the company had no significant correlations with any of the seven dimensions of communication

satisfaction, and the strengths of the correlations they do have are extremely weak (.00 to .13; see Table 17).

Interestingly, there is little difference between the participants who worked at Saudi Aramco for five years or less (4.93) and those who worked for the company for 21 to 25 years (4.83). Also, from 6 years (5.78) to 20 years (5.78), there was virtually no difference. Most satisfied of all, however, were the participants who had been at the company the longest, 31 to 35 years, (6.25; see Table 27).

Table 27

*Average Level of Job Satisfaction at Saudi Aramco by Duration of Employment (N = 103)*

Duration of Employment (years)	No. of Individuals	Average Likert Score
0–5	27	4.93
6–10	23	5.78
11–15	22	5.77
16–20	18	5.78
21–25	6	4.83
26–30	3	5.33
31–35	4	6.25

## Nationality

As noted in Chapter 2, national diversity can promote conflict in a workplace setting because the employees may react negatively to the cultural and linguistic differences between them (Holt & DeVore, 2005; Ting-Toomey et al., 2000). On the other hand, national diversity can lead to enhanced creativity (Diamond, 1996; Jimeno-Ingrum, 2007).

In the international headquarters of Saudi Aramco, however, national diversity had no statistically significant correlations with the seven dimensions of communication satisfaction,

and the strengths of the correlations that did occur were weak ( $-.11$  to  $-.18$ ), as can be seen in Table 14.

In an organization with workers and supervisors from so many different nations (see Table 28 and Table 29), it is surprising that the employees consider national background virtually irrelevant to the quality of communication in the workplace. Although the numbers are statistically insignificant, the most satisfied participants were from Greece and Mexico, and the least satisfied by far was one man from New Zealand. On the other hand, the supervisors who were the most popular because they had the most satisfied workers were from the United States and China, whereas the supervisors who were the least popular were from Algeria and Pakistan.

Table 28

*National Origin of the Employees at Saudi Aramco's World Headquarters (N = 103)*

Nation of Origin of Employees	No. of Individuals	Average Likert Score
Greece	1	7.00
Mexico	1	7.00
Canada	2	6.50
Algeria	1	6.00
Belgium	1	6.00
France	1	6.00
Italy	1	6.00
UK	2	6.00
Saudi Arabia	80	5.58
United States	4	5.50
Egypt	1	5.00
Jordan	1	5.00
Lebanon	1	5.00
Pakistan	2	4.50
India	3	4.33
New Zealand	1	1.00

Table 29

*National Origin of the Supervisors at Saudi Aramco's World Headquarters (N = 103)*

Nation of Origin of Supervisor	No. of Employees	Average Likert Score
United States	5	6.60
China	2	6.50
Saudi Arabia	78	6.22
UK	1	6.00
France	5	5.80
India	7	5.29
Canada	2	5.00
Lebanon	1	4.00
Algeria	1	1.00
Pakistan	1	1.00

### **Language**

As noted in Chapter 2, language barriers frequently create misunderstandings in the workplace because of subtle cues that may be missed, and this can lead to difficulties between employees and between managers and employees (Dawson et al., 2014). Furthermore, when language barriers in a workplace are significant, they can lead to absenteeism, stress, burnout, and turnover (Gray & Laidlaw, 2004). Moreover, if employees have a poor command of the primary language spoken in a workplace, they are likely to be disadvantaged when it comes to career advancement (Castro et al., 2006).

However, everyone at Saudi Aramco, irrespective of their first language, speaks fluent English, which explains why the correlations between the seven dimensions of communication satisfaction and the language spoken by the participants were both statistically insignificant and weak (–.02 to –.10; see Table 15).

Although, once again, these numbers are statistically insignificant, the participants who were most satisfied with their jobs speak Greek and Italian, and the least satisfied speak Hindi and Urdu (see Table 30).

Table 30

*Average Level of Job Satisfaction at Saudi Aramco by Language of the Employees (N = 103)*

Language	No. of Individuals	Average Likert Score
Greek	1	7.00
Italian	1	7.00
Chinese	2	6.00
French	2	6.00
Arabic	81	5.51
English	13	5.38
Hindi	2	3.50
Urdu	1	2.00

### **Arabic Styles of Persuasion**

Although the participants did not rate national background or commonality of language as significant in their degree of communication satisfaction with their supervisors, they did place some significance on what researchers describe as Arabic styles of persuasion. Suchan (2014), for example, as we noted in Chapter 2, describes how communication in Arabic cultures, especially in relation to persuasion, has three primary characteristics: (a) the use of repetition and paraphrasing to make a point; (b) the use of highly ornate and metaphoric language; and (c) the use of strong emotion. For the participants in the present study, the order of importance was a little different, with emotion ranking first, repetition ranking second, and metaphoric language ranking third. Nevertheless, the differences between these three characteristics were slight, with the frequency of metaphoric language, at the bottom, getting a mean score of 4.19, and the frequency of emotional language, at the top, getting a mean score of 4.44 (see Table 4). On a

Likert scale of 1 to 7, all six scores, measuring the frequency and the persuasiveness of the three characteristics, were clearly of only moderate significance to the participants, three-quarters of whom are Saudis.

### **Supervisor Excellence**

The differences in significance in the participants' ranking of the seven dimensions of communication satisfaction with their supervisors were also very small, with Relationship to Superiors ranking first with a mean score of 4.65 and three dimensions (Communication Climate, Organizational Perspective, and Personal Feedback) ranking last with a mean score of 4.44 (see Table 5). Clearly, there is not much difference between these scores, all of which are moderate on a Likert scale of 1 to 7.

Similarly, the Supervisor Communication Excellence score of 4.32, calculated from the answers to items 11 to 16 on the Demographic Questionnaire, is moderate—even lower, in fact, than any of the scores for the seven dimensions of communication satisfaction, although the difference is statistically negligible.

There was a high correlation between all seven of the dimensions of communication satisfaction and the participants' level of job satisfaction (see Table 10). These correlations are not only statistically significant and strong, but their degree of accuracy is extremely high ( $p < .001$ )—that is, the chances of the numbers being inaccurate is only 1 in 1,000.

If we compare our data to Goleman's (2000) six styles of leadership, we find mixed results, for the two dimensions of communication satisfaction that most relate to his categories are Communication Climate, which measures the supervisors' motivational skills, and Relationship to Superiors, which measures the supervisors' listening skills, both of which relate to Goleman's Affiliative, Coaching, and Democratic leadership styles. As it happens,

Relationship to Superiors ranked highest among the seven dimensions, whereas Communication Climate ranked lowest. Nevertheless, the difference between them on the 7-point Likert scale was small (Relationship to Superiors, 4.65; Communication Climate, 4.44), and both scores are only in the moderate range. Thus, at Saudi Aramco, we can conclude that the employees regard their supervisors as moderately supportive and open to suggestions.

Merten and Gloor (2009) found that employees prefer face-to-face communication over communication via email, and the data from the present study tend to confirm this. For example, Relationship to Superiors (Dimension 2), which measures supervisors' listening skills, ranks higher than Media Quality (Dimension 4), which measures the satisfaction with mostly written documents (see Table 6).

As noted in the Introduction to this study, there are differences between individualistic and collectivistic cultures that can affect communication (House et al., 2004). However, as stated earlier, the challenges faced by mid-level supervisors of multinational workers have been studied extensively in individualistic Western cultures, but no one to date has studied these challenges in collectivistic Middle Eastern cultures. Thus, the researcher's findings in this area are unique. Question B6 of the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire (Downs & Hazen, 1977), which tests for the survey's Dimension 1, Communication Climate, addresses this issue: "Extent to which the organization's communication makes me identify with it or feel a vital part of it." The results are shown in Table 18.

Since the responses of most of the participants are bunched toward the middle range (Likert 3, Somewhat dissatisfied; Likert 4, Indifferent; and Likert 5, Somewhat satisfied), clearly the white-collar workers at the headquarters of Saudi Aramco are moderately satisfied with the

degree to which they feel themselves to be a vital part of the organization—a factor that is highly important in a collectivistic society like Saudi Arabia.

Dimension 2, Relationship to Superiors, ranked at the relatively satisfied end of the Likert scale in terms of the supervisors' trust of the workers (Question B8, see Table 20) and the extent to which the supervisors are open to ideas (Question B12, see Table 21). For B8, 58 participants (56.3%) were in the satisfied range; and for B12, 55 participants (53.4%) were in that range. This would indicate that more than half of the workers regard their supervisors, in Goleman's (2000) terms, as more democratic than coercive.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations for Future Practice and Future Study**

To some extent, the researcher was disappointed that most of her results were statistically insignificant, many of the correlations were weak, and most of the responses of the participants fell into the mid-range of the Likert scale. Thus, the communication satisfaction of the employees at Saudi Aramco is neither very satisfactory nor very unsatisfactory, which makes it difficult to draw conclusions about how to improve the communication in the workplace setting.

Nevertheless, on the pragmatic side, the researcher intends to give the results of her study to the Human Resources Department at the world headquarters of Saudi Aramco. Hopefully, the company will examine those results to determine ways to make supervisor-employee communications more effective and more satisfying to both sides—perhaps by supplementing the objective approach of the present study with in-depth interviews and focus groups. Furthermore, the company could hire communication specialists to conduct training programs and workshops to improve communication and leadership skills in the organization.

On the academic and theoretical side, the researcher—or other researchers—could study other companies in the Middle East to compare the results with those obtained for Saudi Aramco,



in order to determine how generalizable those results are, at least for companies in the Middle East.

Also, this researcher or others could study nonprofit or governmental organizations in the Middle East to see if those differ significantly from private profit-making organizations like Saudi Aramco.

Because the international headquarters of Saudi Aramco only employs people from 80 of the 195 (41%) countries around the world, the results of this study may not be generalizable to companies that employ individuals from the other 115 (59%) of the world's nations.

Certainly, on a personal level this researcher has learned an enormous amount about communication theory and how to conduct statistical surveys. Thanks to this doctoral project, she feels prepared to begin a professional career in academia.

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## APPENDIX A

### The Demographic Questionnaire

*Please answer the following 10 questions:*

1. Age: 20-29 \_\_\_\_\_ 30-39 \_\_\_\_\_ 40-49 \_\_\_\_\_ 50-59 \_\_\_\_\_ 60-69 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender: M \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_
3. Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Nationality of your supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Level of education: H.S. degree \_\_\_\_\_ Bachelor's degree \_\_\_\_\_  
Master's degree \_\_\_\_\_ Doctoral degree \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
6. Your primary language: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Your supervisor's primary language: \_\_\_\_\_
8. Annual income: \$10,000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$20,000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$30,000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$40,000 \_\_\_\_\_  
\$50,000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$60,000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$70,000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$80,000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$90,000 \_\_\_\_\_  
\$100,000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$110,000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$120,000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$130,000 \_\_\_\_\_ \$140,000 \_\_\_\_\_  
\$150,000 \_\_\_\_\_ More than \$150,000 \_\_\_\_\_
9. The department of the headquarters in which you work:  
Administrative \_\_\_\_\_ Community Services \_\_\_\_\_  
Contract Advisor \_\_\_\_\_ Downstream Strategy & Development \_\_\_\_\_ Education \_\_\_\_\_  
Environmental Protection & Safety \_\_\_\_\_ Finance \_\_\_\_\_  
HR & Training \_\_\_\_\_ King Abdulaziz Centre \_\_\_\_\_  
Management/Organizational Consultants \_\_\_\_\_ Marketing \_\_\_\_\_  
Project Management \_\_\_\_\_ Public Relations \_\_\_\_\_
10. The duration of your employment at the Dhahran headquarters of Aramco:  
2 years \_\_\_\_\_ 3 years \_\_\_\_\_ 4 years \_\_\_\_\_ 5 years \_\_\_\_\_  
6-10 years \_\_\_\_\_ 11-15 years \_\_\_\_\_ 16-20 years \_\_\_\_\_ 21-25 years \_\_\_\_\_  
26-30 years \_\_\_\_\_ 31-35 years \_\_\_\_\_ 36-40 years \_\_\_\_\_
11. How often does your supervisor communicate to you by repeating points from different perspectives?  
Very Seldom  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Often
12. How persuasive is your supervisor in communicating to you with repetition?  
Very Unpersuasive  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Very Persuasive

13. How often does your supervisor communicate to you by using metaphorical language?

Very Seldom							Very Often
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

14. How persuasive is your supervisor in communicating to you by using metaphorical language?

Very Unpersuasive							Very Persuasive
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

15. How often does your supervisor communicate to you by showing emotional commitment to what he or she is saying?

Very Seldom							Very Often
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

16. How persuasive is your supervisor in communicating to you by showing emotional commitment to what he or she is saying?

Very Unpersuasive							Very Persuasive
1	2	3	4	5	6		7

## APPENDIX B

### The Consent Form

You are hereby invited to participate in a web-based online survey on which factors in mid-level leaders' communication behavior are most and least important to the multinational workers in Saudi Aramco? This is a research project being conducted by Susan Al-Shammari, a student at Pepperdine University in Los Angeles. It should take between 20 and 30 minutes to complete, so you should experience no fatigue or boredom. Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason. The results of the study will be given to the HR Department of Saudi Aramco, which in turn will distribute them to any participant who is interested. There are no foreseeable risks to your mental or physical health involved in participating in this study, either to your employment or your life in general. Your survey answers will be sent to a link at SurveyMonkey.com, where data will be stored in a password-protected electronic format. Survey Monkey does not collect identifying information such as your name, email address, or IP address. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below. You may print a copy of this consent form for your records. Clicking on the "Agree" button indicates that

- You have read the above information.
- You voluntarily agree to participate.
- You are 18 years of age or older.

☐ Agree

☐ Disagree

## APPENDIX C

### The Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire

Introduction: Most of us assume that the quality and amount of communication in our jobs contribute to both our job satisfaction and our productivity. Through this study, we hope to find out how satisfactory communication practices are and what suggestions you have for improving them. We appreciate your taking time to complete the questionnaire. It should take 20 to 30 minutes.

Your answers are completely confidential, so be as frank as you wish. This is not a test—your opinion is the only right answer. Do not sign your name; we do not wish to know who you are. The answers will be combined into groups for reporting purposes.

1. How satisfied are you with your job? (check 1)

1. Very satisfied
2. Satisfied
3. Somewhat satisfied
4. Indifferent
5. Somewhat dissatisfied
6. Dissatisfied
7. Very dissatisfied

2. In the past 6 months, what has happened to your level of satisfaction? (check 1)

1. Gone up
2. Stayed the same
3. Gone down

3. If the communication associated with your job could be changed in any way to make you more satisfied, please indicate how. *Answer every question in terms of your satisfaction with the communication skills of your immediate supervisor. For example, for question 1, evaluated your satisfaction with the way your supervisor informs you about your progress on the job.\**

A. Listed below are several kinds of information often associated with a person's job. Please indicate how satisfied you are with the amount and/or quality of each kind of information by typing a number between 1 and 7 to the left of each question, using the following scale:

Very Dissatisfied							Very Satisfied
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

1. Information about my progress in my job. [Dimension 3: Organizational Integration]<sup>†</sup>

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\*The sentences in italics were added by the present researcher to customize the questionnaire for the specific purposes of this study.

<sup>†</sup>The present writer has placed the communication dimension related to each question in square brackets.

2. Personal news [Dimension 7: Personal Feedback]
3. Information about organizational policies and goals [Dimension 6: Organizational Perspective]
4. Information about how my job compares with others [Dimension 7: Personal Feedback]
5. Information about how I am being judged [Dimension 7: Personal Feedback]
6. Recognition of my efforts [Dimension 3: Organizational Integration]
7. Information about departmental policies and goals [Dimension 3: Organizational Integration]
8. Information about the requirements of my job [Dimension 3: Organizational Integration]
9. Information about government action affecting my organization [Dimension 6: Organizational Perspective]
10. Information about changes in our organization [Dimension 6: Organizational Perspective]
11. Reports on how problems in my job are being handled [Dimension 7: Personal Feedback]
12. Information about benefits and pay [Dimension 3: Organizational Integration]
13. Information about our organization's financial standing [Dimension 6: Organizational Perspective]
14. Information about accomplishments and/or failures of the organization [Dimension 6: Organizational Perspective]

B. Please indicate how satisfied you are with the following (circle the appropriate number at right).

1. Extent to which my superiors know and understand the problems faced by subordinates [Dimension 7: Personal Feedback]
2. Extent to which the organization's communication motivates and stimulates an enthusiasm for meeting its goals [Dimension 1: Communication Climate]
3. Extent to which my supervisor listens and pays attention to me [Dimension 2: Relationship to Superiors]
4. Extent to which the people in my organization have great ability as communicators [Dimension 1: Communication Climate]
5. Extent to which my supervisor offers guidance for solving job-related problems [Dimension 2: Relationship to Superiors]
6. Extent to which the organization's communication makes me identify with it or feel a vital part of it [Dimension 1: Communication Climate]
7. Extent to which the organization's communications are interesting and helpful [Dimension 4: Media Quality]
8. Extent to which my supervisor trusts me [Dimension 2: Relationship to Superiors]
9. Extent to which I receive in time the information needed to do my job [Dimension 1: Communication Climate]
10. Extent to which conflicts are handled appropriately through proper communication channels [Dimension 1: Communication Climate]
11. Extent to which the grapevine is active in our organization [Dimension 5: Horizontal and Informal Communication]
12. Extent to which my supervisor is open to ideas [Dimension 2: Relationship to Superiors]
13. Extent to which horizontal communication with other organizational members is accurate and free flowing [Dimension 5: Horizontal and Informal Communication]
14. Extent to which communication practices are adaptable to emergencies [Dimension 5: Horizontal and Informal Communication]
15. Extent to which my work group is compatible [Dimension 5: Horizontal and Informal Communication]
16. Extent to which our meetings are well organized [Dimension 4: Media Quality]

17. Extent to which the amount of supervision given me is about right [Dimension 2: Relationship to Superiors]
18. Extent to which written directives and reports are clear and concise [Dimension 4: Media Quality]
19. Extent to which the attitudes toward communication in the organization are basically healthy [Dimension 4: Media Quality]
20. Extent to which informal communication is active and accurate [Dimension 5: Horizontal and Informal Communication]
21. Extent to which the amount of communication in the organization is about right [Dimension 4: Media Quality]

C. Answer the following only if you are a manager or supervisor. Then indicate your satisfaction with the following:

1. Extent to which my subordinates are responsive to downward directive communication
2. Extent to which my subordinates anticipate my needs for information
3. Extent to which I do not have a communication overload
4. Extent to which my subordinates are receptive to evaluation, suggestions, and criticisms
5. Extent to which my subordinates feel responsible for initiating accurate upward communication (Downs & Hazen, 1977)

## APPENDIX D

### The 7 Dimensions of the Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire by Question

#### **Dimension 1: Communication climate**

*This is one of the strongest dimensions, in that people first think of climate when asked about communication satisfaction. The questions in this section measure communication at the organizational and individual levels, probing whether or not the company's communication is stimulating or motivating and whether it encourages employee identification. The questions also assess the perceived communication competence of employees and the extent to which information flow assists the working process.*

*The questions associated with this dimension include:*

Question #B2. Extent to which the organization's communication motivates and stimulates an enthusiasm for meeting its goals.

Question #B4. Extent to which the people in my organization have great ability as communicators.

Question #B6. Extent to which the organization's communication makes me identify with it or feel a vital part of it.

Question #B9. Extent to which I receive in time the information needed to do my job.

Question #B10. Extent to which conflicts are handled appropriately through proper communication channels.

#### **Dimension 2: Relationship to Superiors**

*This dimension includes the components of upward and downward communication. This dimension measures the openness of superiors to subordinates as well as superiors' ability to listen. Superior's perceived trust of the employee is incorporated in two of the items.*

*The questions associated with this dimension include:*

Question #B3. Extent to which my supervisor listens and pays attention to me.

Question #B5. Extent to which my supervisor offers guidance for solving job-related problems.

Question #B8. Extent to which my supervisor trusts me.

Question #B12. Extent to which my supervisor is open to ideas.

Question #B17. Extent to which the amount of supervision given me is about right.

#### **Dimension 3: Organizational Integration**

*This dimension revolves around the information employees receive about their job and related items, such as policies and benefits. Also included is information about what is happening currently, what departments are doing, and personnel news. Information about such matters makes employees feel they have been integrated.*

*The questions associated with this dimension include:*

Question #A1. Information about my progress in my job.

Question #A6. Recognition of my efforts.

Question #A7. Information about departmental policies and goals.

Question #A8. Information about the requirements of my job.

Question #A12. Information about benefits and pay.

#### **Dimension 4: Media Quality**

*This dimension looks at communication as it travels through several channels (e.g., publications, memos, and meetings). Employees are asked about the helpfulness and clarity of these information sources and the quantity of information.*

*The questions associated with this dimension include:*

Question #B7. Extent to which the organization's communications are interesting and helpful.

Question #B16. Extent to which our meetings are well organized.

Question #B18. Extent to which written directives and reports are clear and concise.

Question #B19. Extent to which the attitudes toward communication in the organization are basically healthy.

Question #B21. Extent to which the amount of communication in the organization is about right.

#### **Dimension 5: Horizontal and Informal Communication**

*This dimension questions the amount of activity of information networks and the accuracy of the information they contain.*

*The questions associated with this dimension include:*

Question #B11. Extent to which the grapevine is active in our organization.

Question #B13. Extent to which horizontal communication with other organizational members is accurate and free flowing.

Question #B14. Extent to which communication practices are adaptable to emergencies.

Question #B15. Extent to which my work group is compatible.

Question #B20. Extent to which informal communication is active and accurate.

#### **Dimension 6: Organizational Perspective**

*This dimension refers to the information given out concerning the corporation and its goals and performance. It also encompasses knowledge about external events such as new government policies, which impact the organization.*

*The questions associated with this dimension include:*

Question #A3. Information about organizational policies and goals.

Question #A9. Information about government action affecting my organization.

Question #A10. Information about changes in our organization.

Question #A13. Information about our organization's financial standing.

Question #A14. Information about accomplishments and/or failures of the organization.

#### **Dimension 8: Personal Feedback**

*This dimension contains questions about superiors' understanding of problems faced on the job and whether or not employees feel the criteria by which they are judged are clear.*

*The questions associated with this dimension include:*

Question #A2. Personal news.

Question #A4. Information about how my job compares with others.

Question #A5. Information about how I am being judged.

Question #A11. Reports on how problems in my job are being handled.

Question #B1. Extent to which my superiors know and understand the problems faced by subordinates.



## APPENDIX E

### IRB Approval



Pepperdine University  
24255 Pacific Coast Highway  
Malibu, CA 90263  
TEL: 310-506-4000

#### NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: November 10, 2017

Protocol Investigator Name: Susan Al-Shammari

Protocol #: 17-08-600

Project Title: HOW CAN MID-LEVEL LEADERS IN MULTINATIONAL CORPORATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST COMMUNICATE MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH THEIR MULTINATIONAL WHITE-COLLAR WORKERS? A STUDY OF THE SAUDI ARAMCO CORPORATION

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Susan Al-Shammari:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at [community.pepperdine.edu/irb](http://community.pepperdine.edu/irb).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair