Copyright Undertaking

This thesis is protected by copyright, with all rights reserved.

By reading and using the thesis, the reader understands and agrees to the following terms:

1. The reader will abide by the rules and legal ordinances governing copyright regarding the use of the thesis.

2. The reader will use the thesis for the purpose of research or private study only and not for distribution or further reproduction or any other purpose.

3. The reader agrees to indemnify and hold the University harmless from and against any loss, damage, cost, liability or expenses arising from copyright infringement or unauthorized usage.

If you have reasons to believe that any materials in this thesis are deemed not suitable to be distributed in this form, or a copyright owner having difficulty with the material being included in our database, please contact lbsys@polyu.edu.hk providing details. The Library will look into your claim and consider taking remedial action upon receipt of the written requests.
An Exploratory Study on
Teamwork and Team Communication
in an Integrated Team for Young People in Hong Kong

Ho Wing Cheong

MA in Social Work

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

May 1997
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must express my wholehearted thanks to my dissertation supervisor, Ms. TING Wai Fong, for her continuous support and insightful advice on the research topic. I also extend my deepest appreciation to Dr. TSANG Nai Ming and my second examiner, Dr. Henry MOK for their advice at the stage of research proposal.

Special appreciation must also be extended to the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups for allowing me to conduct this research in one of its service units. Moreover, I also highly appreciate the staff members of the service unit joining this research, especially the four respondents of the indepth interviews for their patience and active participation.

I also gratefully thank my wife, Annie, for her continuous encouragement and the technical and emotional support during the lengthy research period. I must also express my appreciation to my two kids, Ariel and Audrey, for their patience of staying with me when I was busily engaged in this research project.
Abstract of dissertation entitled:

An exploratory Study on Teamwork and Team Communication in an Integrated Team for Young People in Hong Kong

submitted by HO Wing Cheong

for MA in Social Work
at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in May 1997.

This study provides an alternative approach for studying teamwork in local social work context. Other than examining the technology of teamwork process, this study investigates the personal dimension of communication in teamwork using a lifeworld perspective. It focuses on the interpretation of meaning of teamwork and team communication from the perspective of team participants. The quality of team communication in daily practice of teamwork, based on their interpretation of meaning of team communication, are examined. The barriers of team communication are also identified.

A qualitative research design of case study is employed to study the team communication in a newly formed integrated team in Hong Kong. It is a naturalistic inquiry which provides a rich description on the research topic. Qualitative data collection methods of indepth interview, participant observation and document review are used to secure indepth analysis into the feeling aspect of team participants. The trustworthiness of this qualitative approach has been discussed. The four criteria for trustworthiness of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability are assessed.
From the findings of this research, it is noted that the rationality on teamwork of the participants is mainly cultivated from their personal experience and the limited training on the technocratic approach of teamwork. Teamwork is perceived as an instrument to achieve the task function of the team. The task dimension of team direction and team structure always overshadows the participants’ concern on the sentimental dimension of emotional support. The observations of role crystallization, subject-object relations and fatalistic view on teamwork are noted. The quality of team communication is greatly influenced by the context of teamwork. For instance, the sincerity in team communication is adversely affected by the structural consideration of team structure. It is therefore noted that the power dimension of teamwork is a structural constraint in team communication. Other barriers for team communication such as the personal factors and the perception on the work context are also identified.

It is recommended from this research that a paradigm shift for team communication should be considered to contrast the traditional technocratic approach in teamwork. A duality approach which emphasizes the balance consideration on both structural dimensions for the system and interpretation of meaning to people for the lifeworld should be adopted. Empowerment practice in team communication and decentralization of teamwork function are encouraged. Moreover, the importance of self reflection for team communication from all team participants including team leader, team member, supervisor, colleague and subordinate are suggested. Lastly, the application of western concept of teamwork in local context should be further examined, and an indigenous model of teamwork should be developed.
TABLES OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS I

ABSTRACT II

TABLE OF CONTENTS IV

LIST OF DIAGRAMS VII

LIST OF TABLES VIII

ABBREVIATIONS IX

Chapter One: Introduction 1
1.1 Formation of Integrated Team for Young People in Hong Kong 1
1.2 Importance of Teamwork in Integrated Team 2
1.3 Rationale for this Research 3
1.4 Organization of the Report 4

Chapter Two: Literature Review 5
2.1 The Concept of Team and Teamwork 5
2.2 Teamwork in Business Sector 6
2.3 Study of Teamwork in Human Service Organizations 7
2.4 Constraints of Applying Teamwork in Social Work Context 8
2.5 Teamwork and Communication 10
2.6 Local Studies on Teamwork 12
2.7 Teamwork and Lifeworld 13
2.8 Research Framework 15

Chapter Three: Research Methodology 19
3.1 Research Objectives 19
3.2 Operational Definition 19
3.3 Research Design 20
3.3.1 An exploratory study 20
3.3.2 A qualitative case study design 20
3.3.3 Sampling method 22
3.4 Data Collection 24
3.4.1 Indepth interview  
3.4.2 Document review  
3.4.3 Participant observation  
3.5 Data Analysis  
3.6 Special Considerations for this Research  
3.6.1 Role conflict of researcher  
3.6.2 Trustworthiness of the research  

Chapter Four: Rationality on Teamwork  
4.1 Introduction to the Sampled Case  
4.1.1 The integrated team and selected sub-team  
4.1.2 Description of the respondents of indepth interview  
4.2 Teamwork as an instrument  
4.2.1 Task dimension  
4.2.2 Sentimental dimension  
4.2.3 Knowledge base of teamwork  
4.3 Discrepancy between Ideal and Reality of Teamwork  
4.4 Role Crystallization  
4.5 Subjectivity in Team Role  
4.6 Fatalistic View on Teamwork  

Chapter Five: Quality of Team Communication  
5.1 Discrepancy between Ideal and Reality of Team Communication  
5.2 Assessment of Quality of Team Communication  
5.2.1 Comprehensibility claim  
5.2.2 Truth claim  
5.2.3 Righteous claim  
5.2.4 Sincerity claim  
5.3 Possibility of Mutual Understanding in Team communication  
5.3.1 Understanding is instrumental in itself  
5.3.2 Understanding is mutual  
5.3.3 Understanding is not necessarily desirable  
5.3.4 Understanding is affected by personal factors  
5.3.5 Understanding is affected by structural factors  

Chapter Six: Barriers in Team Communication  
6.1 Power and Team Communication  
6.1.1 Communication with supervisor
6.1.2 Communication with colleague 61
6.1.3 Communication with subordinate 62
6.1.4 Effect of team structure on team communication 64
6.1.5 Domination in team communication 65

6.2 Personal Self as Cultural Heritage 68

6.3 Team Communication in Context 69
6.3.1 Importance of teamwork in sub-team 69
6.3.2 Work context compared with social life 70
6.3.3 Context as social work profession 72

Chapter Seven: Conclusion and Implications 75
7.1 Summary of Findings 75
7.2 Implications 78
7.2.1 Re-examination of Western concept of teamwork in local context 79
7.2.2 Paradigm shift in the study of teamwork 79
7.2.3 Decentralization of teamwork function 80
7.2.4 Self reflection for team communication 80
7.2.5 Empowerment practice in team communication 81
7.2.6 Areas for future research 81
7.3 Concluding Remarks 82

Bibliography 83

Reference
Appendix 1: Interview Guide for Indepth Interview (Both English and Chinese version) 89
Appendix 2: Abstraction from a Verbatim Report (Both English and Chinese version) 93
Appendix 3: Organizational Structure of the Integrated Team 99
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Demographic Data of the Respondents  33
## LIST OF DIAGRAMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diagram 1:</th>
<th>Research Framework for Team Communication</th>
<th>17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diagram 2:</td>
<td>Relationship among Respondents</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagram 3:</td>
<td>A Lifeworld Model in Team Communication</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Case A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASWO</td>
<td>Assistant Social Work Officer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Case B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Case C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C&amp;Y</td>
<td>Children and Youth Centre</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Case D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Author</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Integrated Team</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSW</td>
<td>Outreaching Social Work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSW</td>
<td>School Social Work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWA</td>
<td>Social Work Assistant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WW</td>
<td>Welfare Worker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter One:  

Introduction

1.1 Formation of Integrated Team for Young People in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, services for young people have been developed for more than thirty years. Three different types of youth service, namely children and youth centre service (C&Y), outreaching social work service (OSW) and school social work service (SSW), have been the mainstream service for young people after the enactment of the Green Paper of Development of Personal Social Work Among Young People in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Government, 1977). In 1994, the Government reviewed the operation of the existing children and youth services and made recommendations for integrating the services to provide a more integrative approach to service delivery. With the implementation of the recommendations of the Report on Review of Children and Youth Centre Services (Hong Kong Government, 1994a), ten integrated teams (IT) providing services for young people were formed in Hong Kong in the experimental stage of 1994 and 1995.

According to the Implementation Guide to Report on Review of Children and Youth Centre Services (Hong Kong Government, 1994b:8), the basic service principles of an integrated team are as follows:

- concept of person-oriented service- gear to the developmental needs of its target group to enhance a well-balanced personal growth;
- strengthen social work professional input- exercise their social work knowledge and skills to provide continual and comprehensive services with the clear direction of meeting the young people’s wholesome needs;
- responsive to community needs- due consideration should be given to social changes, trend of youth needs and district characteristics, so as to enable service
units to formulate appropriate work focus.

More than ten social work staff members from various youth service settings are grouped together into a team so as to provide more comprehensive services to young people. It is, in fact, a drastic organizational change for the staff to develop an integrated service delivery model which is vastly different from the existing models.

1.2 Importance of Teamwork in Integrated Team

The formation of an integrated team is a new challenge for the practitioners of youth services. It involves i) the restructuring of the administrative structure and organization arrangements for the existing services, ii) the conceptualization of integrated service and its service delivery system and iii) the art of involving the practitioners with diversified interest and expertise to work cooperatively under the same roof. Nevertheless, the Implementation Guide to Report on Review of Children and Youth Centre Services only provides vague and broad principles for the operation of integrated team. There are no clearly spelt out operational arrangements and service directions which can guide the operations of the new service. To this end, the practitioners are facing much challenges from all frontiers simultaneously.

To face this new challenge, the total involvement of all staff members in this adventure will be the most essential step in this formative stage of a new service. With the experience of the researcher as a mid-level social work administrator for more than ten years and being the supervisor in one of the newly developed integrated teams, the importance of developing teamwork among staff members is recognized. This coincides with the frontline experience shared by other colleagues in forming integrated service in Hong Kong.
1.3 Rationale of this Research

Based on the experience of being a social work administrator for more than ten years, the researcher recognizes the importance of teamwork. In this study, it attempts to provide a more comprehensive review on the issues affecting the quality of communication in teamwork, especially from the staff’s perspective. This study is also characterized by its contextual analysis of the beginning stage for an organizational change in forming an integrated service team for young people.

In the context of teamwork in integrated team, communication is the process in which team members contribute their personal self so as to achieve mutual understanding among the group of members in the team. As different from other casework settings which allow independent working style of social worker, the importance of communication in integrated team is obvious because it demands for higher interdependency among staff in providing integrated services. Moreover, the consensus of staff in developing a new working approach, which is not clearly defined by the Government, is essentially important and that communication is a must.

A critical examination of team communication process from the perspective of the participating staff will be the focus of this research. In particular, the present research differs from other technocratic approach to study teamwork in that the perspective of the individual staff members, being the crucial component of a working team, in perceiving the meaning of teamwork will be the central focus of this study.

Based on the actual experience in the formation process of a local integrated team, this empirical study aims at examining the issues of teamwork during the formation period of a new integrated team, as a process of organizational change. The
actual design of the administrative re-arrangements and the conceptualization of integrative service will not be addressed in this study.

1.4 Organization of the Report

The present chapter attempts to provide the background of integrated team and the rationale for studying teamwork and its important component of team communication in the context of integrated team in this research. In the following chapters, the details of the research will be clearly reported. The current development of the concepts of teamwork and team communication will be presented in chapter two. It also examines the evolution of these concepts in human service organizations with the insights from the scientific management trend in business management field. Chapter three will then introduce the research methodology. Special attention will be made on the details of research design together with the considerations of selection of research method. The major findings of the research are then illustrated in chapter four to chapter six. The findings are arranged and discussed according to the research framework. In chapter four, the rationality on teamwork from staff perspective is presented in order to illustrate their construction of meaning to teamwork in the context of integrated team. In chapter five, staff’s perception of the discrepancies between ideal and reality of team communication are introduced. The actual practice of team communication will be studied with reference to the quality of communication. Then, the identified barriers in team communication will be discussed in chapter six. In the last chapter, concluding remarks from the research findings and implications of this research will be suggested for further discussion.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of team and teamwork

Teamwork is "joint action by a group of people, in which each person subordinates his individual interests and opinions to the unity and efficiency of the group; coordinated effort" as defined by the New Twentieth Century Webster's Dictionary (Skidmore, 1983:150). In his classical works on teamwork, Brill (1976, p.22) defined teamwork as:

"a team is a group of people each of whom possesses particular expertise; each of whom is responsible for making individual decision; who together hold a common purpose; who meet together to communicate, collaborate, and consolidate knowledge, from which plans are made, actions determined and future decisions influenced."

Team has also been defined by Larson and LaFaso (1989, p.19) as:

"A team has two or more people; it has a specific performance objective or recognizable goal to be attained; and coordination of activity among the members of the team is required for the attainment of the team goal or objectives"

Eight characteristics (Larson and LaFaso, 1989) for achieving effective teams are identified which include a clear, elevating goal; a results-driven structure; competence of team members; unified commitment; a collaborative climate; standards of excellence, external support and recognition; and principled leadership.

Together with other discussions on teamwork (Skidmore, 1983, Lason and
LaFasto, 1989, Brill, 1976), we can see the characteristics of teamwork as:

- it involves a group of people
- it is made up of individuals who bring to teamwork individual personalities and attributes
- members are targeting to achieve common purpose
- it is task oriented
- it involves team members to communicate, collaborate and consolidate knowledge
- all levels of staff participate in administration
- it involves critique in which team accepts the expression of doubt, reservations, and criticism from members; and also involves coordination in which members have the skills to mesh their efforts to accomplish their purpose and objectives (Moxley, 1989:70).

2.2 Teamwork in Business Sector

The concept of teamwork has been widely applied in management sector, especially in the business field. The significance of team as an approach in organization study is identified in business (Paradise, 1991). The concept of teamwork and team building gradually develops into more specific disciplines of organizational development (OD, being a specific term in management field) and human resource management in management studies. Specific strategies, such as human resource strategy\(^1\) and OD interventions\(^2\), are derived from teamwork and

---

\(^1\) Please refer to more detail introduction on human resource strategy by Walker, 1992.

\(^2\) Please refer to more detail introduction on OD interventions by French and Bell, 1990.
team building as the tools and techniques for improving the effectiveness of a working team. And many organizational studies have been devoted to study the effectiveness of an organization using various techniques.

2.3 Study of Teamwork in Human Service Organizations

The importance of teamwork in human service organization as Garner has noted (1994, p.3) "When teamwork is absent, the consequences for clients, students, and patients are frustration, inefficiency, inconsistency, and even serious mistakes."

The concept of evolving team in human service is the development of practice wisdom but not with a well tested theoretical background as described by Brill (1976, p.15):

"Based on the fundamental idea of division of labor ... the concept of teamwork is evolving into a dynamic, multifaceted entity, the complicated nature and demands of which we are only beginning to examine and understand. Our use of teams has been based on learning about relating to and working with people, derived from experience and folk knowledge rather than a body of tested theories and principles."

After reviewing the literature on teamwork as an evolving concept in human service, it is noted that much of the discussions on teamwork in human service are based on practice experienced but having no empirical support.

However, teamwork has been widely applied as a technique and skill in human service administration (Lonsdale, Webb and Briggs, 1980, Payne, 1982, Skidmore, 1983, Edwards and Yankey, 1991, Garner and Orelove, 1994). For example, under
the competing value framework, the application of teamwork techniques is an essential element of the human relations skills for achieving toward human commitment. It is one of the four quadrants of the effective human services management skills. To this end, much efforts have been devoted to the technical aspect for improving the effectiveness of human service administration, especially in interdisciplinary teamwork. And it is observed that teamwork has been a technical approach for social work administration in these two decades.

In an analysis of OD and social work, Resnick and Menfee give a positive assessment for applying the distinctive tools and methods of this business management devices developed from teamwork in social work profession.

"This analysis provides support for including OD as a separate and distinct practice specialty within the profession of social work. Incorporating OD technologies into the practice domain of social work and into social work education will provide the social work administrator with important tools and methods for effectively planning and managing change in the human service agency." (Resnick and Menfee, 1994)

2.4 Constraints of Applying Teamwork in Social Work Context

Although the technocratic application of teamwork in OD has become one of the most important skills in human service administration, many limitations have been identified. The impediments to teamwork include specialization in the helping professions, organizational structure, role ambiguity and incongruent expectations, and authority and power structures (Garner and Orelove, 1994); the endemic tensions

---

3 See the application of teamwork approach as human relations skills in Edwards and Yankey (1991).
of struggling for control, providing efficient versus high-quality service and balancing client needs and team members needs (Perkins, Shaw and Sutton, 1990); the barriers of educational preparation of team members, role ambiguity and incongruent expectations and status differentials, authority and power structures, and leadership styles (Garner, 1988). It is noted that the application of techniques of teamwork in human service like social work is much bounded by the above contextual characteristics of this profession.

Unlike the practice wisdom approach to studying teamwork in social work profession, there are more empirical studies on evaluating the effectiveness of OD in organization studies of business field. However, there is little systematic evidence about its efficacy. For instance, findings of Porras & Berg's investigation (1978) of thirty-five empirical studies on the application of OD did not support the assumption that the most important effect of OD is to make people happier and more satisfied.

Some studies even found the negative aspects of team building which is the most significant intervention strategy of OD. In a study of a lopsided team building intervention, the destructive impact of team building intervention was revealed. Boss & McConkie (1981) noted that a confrontation-team-building intervention was highly successful in building the supervisors into a cohesive, trusting, and unified group. However, the team became the most important variable, with little consideration given to the rest of the organization. As a result, the whole organization was severely crippled and had to be completely rebuilt. In another study, the problem of regression after team building intervention was noted (Boss, 1983). Specifically, it was found that the effect of team building fading out after the participants return to their home organization.
In an empirical analysis of team building research (Meuse & Liebowitz, 1981), it was further noted that there was a lack of rigorous research methods in evaluating teamwork. It is because many people believe that team building and all other OD interventions do not fit the traditional, empirical-testing paradigm. And the impact of OD interventions in general is at an individual rather than organizational level and thus makes it difficult to evaluate its effectiveness.

After reviewing the current development of team development interventions in OD and in social work, Iles and Auluck (1990) noted the following important observations:

"many practitioners focus more directly on task issues rather than issues of personal growth of team members ... A 'successful' intervention is now more likely to be measured in terms of increased work effectiveness rather than in purely personal terms." (Iles and Auluck, 1990)

They concluded by suggesting that on top of the technology and strategies devised, special attention should be given to the people dimension of the on-going process of team building:

"Attention also be given to the ways team members communicate with each other, and to relationships between subgroups within working teams, whether based on task or identity. Particularly important here are power / status differences and their influence on team effectiveness." (Iles and Auluck, 1990)

2.5 Teamwork and Communication

As reviewed in previous section, it is observed that the study of teamwork in
social work often focuses on work/task issues rather than personal issues, and 'successful' team development intervention is more likely to be measured in terms of increased work effectiveness rather than in human dimension. Among the three variables of task-oriented, people-oriented and organizational variables for innovative team performance (Thamhain, 1990), less attention has been devoted to the people-oriented one. Issues such as team design, organization support, leadership (Perkins & Abramis, 1990), power structure (Payne, 1982), team process (Moxley, 1989) are the main concerns in team building.

It is strange to note that the discussion on communication in teamwork is scarce after reviewing the literature on social work administration, although communication process has been a significant component in the helping process of social work. Even if the people-oriented variable of communication is raised, it just concerns with the mechanics of communication (Brill, 1976:64-65) and communication elements such as message, communicator and method (Payne, 1982). The five Cs approach to effective communication of Fulmer (Skidmore, 1983:181) also only touches on the message itself which states the clarity, completeness, conciseness, concreteness and correctness of the message of communication in social work administration. It is, however, difficult to identify relevant materials on the quality of communication and the communication process in the literature review process.

While teamwork is treated just as the means to achieve organization objectives, the in-depth consideration on the human aspect and the quality of communication are neglected. Recently, the application of the knowledge from business sector in human services is obvious. Together with the increasing demand on accountability of human services, Norman & Keys (1992) noted that "the irresistible force meets the
immovable object". That is, the application of organization developing, being an irresistible force, becomes unavoidable in public social service field which is an immovable object always resists changes. Much emphasis has been made to urge for applying the techniques and strategies of organization development into social work services (Resnick & Menefee, 1994; Bargal & Schmid, 1992). This trend of emphasizing the development of the intervention methods, technologies and change process but neglecting the human factors of team members in communication process, will further foster the technocratic and instrumental functioning in teamwork.

In this research, the concept of communication in teamwork involves both the verbal and non-verbal communication elements. It is the expression of the personal self of the participants in sharing their own ideas and opinions for achieving mutual understanding under the context of a work team. Communication is not simply an instrument for achieving the work tasks but it is essential for building up the mutual understanding among the participants during the process of teamwork. The readiness and participation of team participants in the communication process will also be the important components being investigated in this research.

2.6 Local Studies on Teamwork

In reviewing local literature on teamwork, Tang (1987) attempted to study the application of teamwork on outreaching social work service in Hong Kong based on the General Systems Theory. He also reviewed the paradox in the use of team approach and development of teamwork in the social work profession and noted that the internal processes and factors facilitating or inhibiting teamwork in social work teams remained unexplored. Much of his efforts were devoted to examine the teamworking, team functioning and team structuring. The five subsystems of
teamwork, such as goals and value, technological, psychosocial, managerial and structural subsystem, were studied. Other administrative issues of teamwork, such as supervisory functions (Chiu Cheung, 1990) and teamwork leadership (Tam, 1992) were also examined from the perspective of the supervisor. No studies on communication in teamwork, especially from the perspective of the team participants has been conducted in local context.

2.7 Teamwork and Lifeworld

Study of teamwork should be related to the context of social development. Recently, it is described that the society has developed into a postmodern era. The complexity, unpredictability, uncertainty and contingency are some of the characteristics of the postmodern era. With reference to these characteristics, the technocratic and instrumental rationality in social work practice is being queried (Howe, 1994; Parton, 1994). Pozatek (1994) further calls for “the adoption of a therapeutic position of uncertainty so that social workers may approach their work with clients in a way that is respectful of the complexity of each client’s life”. It is a new position in which social workers are pushed to make more effort to understand a client’s experience. With the new trend of concern in the use of language, interpretation and the importance of understanding in encounter in social science study in 1990's (Yuen, 1993), the original technocratic and positivistic views on knowledge are being challenged and are expected to be broadened. In fact, it also provides the space for criticizing the emphasis on the effectiveness and procedural dimensions of teamwork as the main stream of studying teamwork in 1970's and 1980's. With the increasing importance of the hermeneutic approach in social work practice, the depth of understanding and meaning in communication become the focus of study for social work encountering (Sherman, 1987).
In this research, the concept of lifeworld identified by Habermas should be introduced. In his Theory of Communicative Action, Habermas uses the term "Lifeworld" to indicate the background of an enormous fund of non-explicit, taken-for-granted notions, which have great influence on the interpretation of explicit utterances.

Though this Lifeworld has great influence on the endless range of interpretive activities which constitute social life, we cannot become conscious of it as a whole and sum it up in a series of neat propositions. There is always a horizon behind a horizon. Agents draw on their common Lifeworld to seek shared understanding about something in the objective, social or subjective world. (Brand, 1990:34)

However, with the evolution of the system, specifically, the economic and administrative systems, in modern societies, a phenomenon of "colonization of the Lifeworld" appears as:

Social evolution as a process of the coming about of the System on the basis of the rationalization of the Lifeworld, the increasing complexity of the System and rationality of the Lifeworld and the disjunction between these two, and finally, the invasion of core Lifeworld areas by systemic mechanisms. (Brand, 1990:40)

The invasion of Lifeworld by System is an obvious phenomenon in nowadays' social environment. It is also true in the study of teamwork. The interpretation of meaning on teamwork from the lifeworld perspective of team participants is always neglected and only the systemic mechanisms for team process are being addressed.
The study of lifeworld in teamwork refers to the interpretive activities of team participants during the communication process in teamwork in this research. This lifeworld perspective studies from the angle of the inner world or the subjective world of team participants. The ways how they make meaning to the concept of teamwork and team communication will be the foci of this research.

2.8 Research Framework

Based on the preceding section on literature review and the work experience of researcher, some observations on way how teamwork being studied are noted. Firstly, focus of teamwork is more on the task, procedure, technique rather than on the personal and human dimension. Secondly, study of teamwork focuses more on effectiveness and productivity but less on what the team participants perceive and their interpretation of meaning of teamwork. Thirdly, it is more on outcome rather than process. And finally, it is usually from the angle of the team leader but less from the members.

In view of these observations, therefore communication, but not the procedures and techniques of teamwork, will be the main focus of this study. Specifically, this study will examine how team participants make meaning or interpret the external world. With these meanings and interpretations, the actual practice of team communication in the context of a local integrated team is examined.

It is a study based on a local teamwork experience which recognizes the importance of understanding and sharing of meaning for teamwork as well as constructing a consensus in the conceptualization of integrated service among the
social work practitioners.

A research framework of lifeworld approach (Luis and Ting, 1996) is applied to contrast the system perspective. Lifeworld can be understood as a characterization of social domain in contrast to system which has four distinct characteristics as identified by Luis and Ting. Firstly, a system is a highly specialized organization aimed at certain functions, while a lifeworld is a more generalized and informal grouping. Secondly, lifeworld is the world of ordinary meanings and everyday activities, which owes its genesis to primordial trust in others and is sustained by the experience of confidence in other. Thirdly, a lifeworld is not to be understood as a web of norms and structures external to the actors, instead autonomy is ascribed to the actors who construct social reality using an ensemble of mundane practices and routines. Lastly, a lifeworld is social rather than private, where actors share “inner time” and “tune in” to one another, where social discourses emerge as a range of possible statements for identification of self and others (Luis and Ting, 1996).

With this lifeworld approach, the human dimensions of communications, being less attended in previous studies, will be examined in details under the context of integrated team. Special attention will be made on the ways the participants interpret and make meaning on teamwork and team communication. With the insights from these, it is further assumed that the quality of daily practice of team communication is affected based on the actors’ conceptual framework on teamwork.

To clearly present the conceptualization of research framework based on the lifeworld approach, the following diagram summarizes the key issues to be studied in this research:
MEANING OF TEAMWORK
Knowledge on teamwork  Conception of teamwork

MEANING OF TEAM COMMUNICATION
Power dimension  Role expectation

QUALITY OF TEAM COMMUNICATION IN PRACTICE

Diagram 1: Research Framework for Team Communication

The research framework is based on the observations from the literatures and the researcher's personal experience in working with social work team. The quality of team communication in practice is determined by the participants' interpretation of meaning of team communication, which also depends on their rationalization of the meaning of teamwork. To study the meaning of teamwork, the researcher will examine the knowledge base of teamwork of the team participants and their personal conception on teamwork. For the meaning of team communication, the intervening factors of power dimension and role expectation will be involved as its importance has been discussed by other academics (Garner and Orelove, 1994).

To examine the quality of team communication in actual practice which is governed by these interpretations of meaning of team communication and teamwork, the four validity claims of comprehensibility, righteous, truth and sincerity of Habermas (Outhwaite, 1994) will be used as a framework for data analysis. Comprehensibility represents that the expression or meaning of the sender can be comprehended both by the sender and receiver in a shared language. Righteous is the appropriateness of the messages being communicated. The truth of the messages being communicated depends on whether the message itself happens in reality. For
sincerity, the participants genuinely express their meaning in communicating with others. According to Habermas, the four validity claims should be achieved in order to have mutual understanding among the participants or an ideal speech situation. In this study, these validity claims are employed to study the feasibility of dialogical understanding in communication.

"Acts of linguistic communication, Habermas argues, presuppose four validity-claims: that what we say is comprehensible, that it is true, that it is right, i.e. that there is a normative basis for the utterance, and that it is a sincere (wahrhaftig) expression of the speaker's feelings. The 'background consensus' between speaker and hearer includes the fact that they implicitly make these claims and could if necessary justify them ... Finally Habermas claims that we can only distinguish, as a matter of principle, between a genuine and a false consensus if we presuppose the possibility of an unconstrained dialogue to which all speakers have equal access and in which only the 'force of the better argument prevails'. This is what he calls the 'ideal speech situation'." (Outhwaite, 1994:40)

In this study, team participants will include two ladders of relationship between team leader and team members with administrative relationship, and also between supervisor, colleague, and subordinate with supervisory relationship.
Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Research Objectives

i. To provide an in-depth analysis on the understanding and interpretation of the meaning of teamwork and team communication from the perspective of staff in the context of an integrated team for young people in Hong Kong;

ii. To assess the quality of team communication with reference to the staff’s interpretation of meaning to teamwork and team communication;

iii. To identify the contextual barriers for team communication.

3.2 Operational Definition

For clarity, some of the terminology being used in this study, are defined operationally as shown below:

i) Team communication is the presentation of the personal self of the participants in sharing their own ideas and opinions for achieving mutual understanding under the context of a work team;

ii) Teamwork is the total involvement of all participants in concerted effort, with reference to their interpretation of meaning of the external context of the team, in contributing to the development of the integrated team;

iii) Team participants are all of the participants in the team irrespective of their positions;

iv) Team leader and team member are the paired relationship with administrative relationship;

v) Supervisor and sub-ordinate are the paired relationship with supervisory
relationship;

vi) Colleagues are the participants either of the same or different ranking who have no direct supervisory relationship.

3.3 Research Design

3.3.1 An exploratory study

The present study attempts to provide an indepth analysis of the interpretation of meaning of teamwork and team communication from the perspective of the team participants. Being exploratory in nature, it means to provide a beginning familiarity with the topic of teamwork from the lifeworld perspective. It is a new attempt to the study of teamwork as it uses the framework of lifeworld perspective under the mainstream of technocratic approach in studying teamwork. Unlike other descriptive or explanatory studies which consider a lot on the representativeness and generalizability, this exploratory study will only give hints and insights into the research question rather than providing a definite answer for the discussion topic (Rubin and Babbie, 1993:107). With its exploratory nature, this study does not have any preset hypothesis to be verified. This exploratory study is also a naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) because it meets the characteristics of the naturalistic paradigm. The lifeworld approach in studying teamwork is characterized with using natural setting and human instrument as proposed in naturalistic paradigm.

3.3.2 A qualitative case study design

The selection of research method is determined by the specific research questions, instead of personal prejudice of the researcher. In this study, respondents should be allowed to voice out their in-depth understanding and viewpoints on the research topic. This is a research of phenomenological / interpretive nature to explore
the respondents' subjective experiences and interpretation of meaning to the external world. It has the characteristics of verstehen for a qualitative inquiry as it is attempted to understand the respondents from their own perspective.

An important phenomenological principle in qualitative research is the German term verstehen, which means "understanding." Qualitative inquiry involves the attempt to understand those whom we observe from their own perspective— to understand their feelings, their views of reality, and the special meanings of what we observe to them. (Rubin and Babbie, 1993:362)

As noted, this study fits the three characteristics of qualitative inquiry, they are, quality of capturing the individual's point of view, examining the constraints of everyday life and securing rich descriptions. A qualitative research design is therefore a suitable choice.

As described by Yin (1984), qualitative case study method is the best choice for an exploratory study. In this research, it matches the three conditions for case study method: being a 'how' type questions, which does not require control over behavioral events, and focuses on contemporary events. Firstly, this research is to explore how the respondents interpret the meaning of teamwork and team communication in this study. Secondly, the researcher himself does not have the direct control on how the respondents interpret the meaning. And lastly, it focuses on the contemporary interpretation and current practice of team communication by the respondents. To this end, a qualitative research method of case study, among the various research designs, is adopted to generate more in-depth understanding on the

---

4 Please refer to the differences between quantitative and qualitative research of Denzin and Lincoln (1994).
3.3.3 Sampling method

The case being studied is a newly formed integrated team in which the researcher is now working and is the supervisor of the team. To select a case for this study, the balance between the possibility of in-depth analysis and the objectivity of the researcher's role in the study has been carefully examined. It was finally resolved that the chosen case should be able to provide more opportunity for the researcher to dig out the in-depth feeling and perception of the respondents on the topic. Under the limitation of time and resources, the integrated team in which the researcher worked as a supervisor was selected as the case for study.

In the selected integrated team, there were twelve social work staff. Three sub-teams each focuses on the respective services in youth counselling, youth development, and community network for young people were set up in the integrated team (Please refer to the team structure in Appendix 3).

This research was launched in the designated integrated team, and all of the staff members of the integrated team were involved in data collection process. Nevertheless, in order to have a more in-depth understanding of the research topic, a few respondents were selected to participate in in-depth interviews. A purposive sampling technique was used in which all the four staff members in one of the sub-teams were selected to be the respondents of the in-depth interviews.

There are several reasons for selecting this group of respondents. Firstly, this was the only sub-team with balanced number of trained staff at different ranking, that is, two in Assistant Social Work Officer (ASWO) grade with bachelor degree training
in social work, and two in Social Work Assistant (SWA) grade with diploma level training in social work. This composition can provide different combinations of relationship among members, such as supervisory relationship and collegial relationship with no supervisory function. Secondly, this sub-team did not have non-trained staff at welfare worker (WW) grade. In this study, the social work context is the main area for investigation and therefore it is more appropriate to identify social work trained staff to be the respondents of this study. Thirdly, the combination of the two grades of social work staff in this sub-team provides the greatest variety of combinations of work relationship among team participants. One ASWO being the sub-team leader and the other three being team members. At the same time the team leader was the supervisor of the two SWAs. Both the two ASWOs and two SWAs were having the relationship of being colleagues. These combinations of relationship provide the best venue for analyzing their interpretation of team communication from different angles of being leader, member, supervisor, colleague and subordinate.

**Diagram 2: Relationship Among Respondents**

Fourthly, study on one sub-team will allow the respondents to focus more on the operation of a sub-team instead of looking at the whole integrated team. The
impact for the researcher being the supervisor of the integrated team simultaneously can be minimized as the respondents will attend to the dynamic of sub-team only.

3.4 Data Collection

In-depth interview is the major data collection method being employed in this study. Moreover, other supplementary data collection methods of document review and participant observation are also used.

3.4.1 In-depth interview

In-depth interviews were conducted with the respondents. A semi-structured interview guide was designed based on the research framework. In the interview guide (Please refer to the appendix 1), the following four main areas were included to guide the discussion:

i) the understanding and interpretation of meaning of teamwork and team communication,

ii) the assessment of the quality of team communication,

iii) the contextual barriers of team communication,

iv) demographic data of the respondents.

A pilot test had been conducted to examine its content clarity of the interviewing guide. One of the trained social work staff from other sub-team, whose working experience was similar to the selected sub-team, was interviewed with the interviewing guide. Both the contents and techniques of interview were discussed with the respondent of the pilot test. After the pilot test, the interview guide was modified with the feedback according to the respondent.
With the modified interviewing guide, data collection with respondents lasted from September of 1996 to March of 1997. Each respondents had been interviewed individually for two to three times. All interviews were held in an enclosed interviewing room to minimize distractions from external environment. Each interview lasted for one and a half to two hours so as to avoid respondents fatigue.

In the first interview, the respondents were briefed the logistics of the research. Open-end questions according to the interviewing guide were raised to solicit the viewpoints of the respondents. During the interview process, flexibility was allowed to change the sequence of the questions and even to raise follow up questions with the immediate responses of the respondents. The respondents were allowed to elaborate their ideas, especially on their interpretation of meaning to the discussion topics. The interviews were recorded by tape recorder for further data analysis. Interviewing notes were taken during the interviews so as to catch the main points of the respondents.

Written records for data collection were prepared for the data analysis process. The tape records gathered from the indepth interviews were then transcribed into verbatim reports (Please refer to the abstraction from a verbatim report in Appendix 2) which served as the raw data for further analysis. In order to preserve the original messages from the respondents, the interview verbatim reports were transcribed as accurate as possible.

3.4.2 Document review

With the accessibility to the document of mother organization and the selected integrated team, the researcher can review the documents of the service unit relating
to the research topic. During the process, the researcher assessed the Government policy papers on the formation of integrated team, the organization’s documents on integrated team, the working papers of forming the integrated service in the selected integrated team, and operational papers, such as the meeting minutes, of the selected sub-team. The researcher made reference to these documents for data analysis and triangulation in later stages of the study.

3.4.3 Participant observation

Participant observations were made during the research period. The whole integrated team in which all staff members of the team including the researcher himself were the subjects being observed. Observations were made on their communication pattern during team meetings, informal gathering and daily interactions. Field notes were taken to record the data during the observations. Since the researcher is also a participant, being the supervisor of the team, a participant-as-observer role (Rubin & Babbie, 1993) was clearly spelt-out to the staff members during the process. To take the advantage of being a participant in the study, the researcher can assess the informal interaction in the integrated team. This can hardly be achieved if the study is launched in other service teams. This is also the reason why the researcher chose his own integrated team as the case for this study.

3.5 Data Analysis

According to McCracken’s understanding of the long interview method of qualitative research, a qualitative inquiry can be organized into a “four-step” pattern that shows their sequence and the nature of their interaction. He noted that the last step of data analysis, or what he called “the discovery of analytic categories”, is most demanding and least examined aspect of a qualitative research process (McCracken,
A five stages analysis framework was designed by McCracken as shown below:

Stage one: judges individual utterances with little concern for their larger significance;
Stage two: to extend the observation beyond its original form until its implications and possibilities are more fully played out;
Stage three: observations are once again developed on their own accord and in relation to other observations;
Stage four: judgment to sort out important and valuable pieces of observations to organize the themes hierarchically;
Stage five: to take the themes from each interview and see how these can be brought together into theses.

In this study, McCracken’s analysis framework for discovery of analytic categories has been applied to analyze the data of the indepth interviews, together with the data collected from participant observation and document review.

For the indepth interviews, individual case analysis for each respondents was studied and then cross-case analysis for the four respondents was made to find the commonality and differences of each respondents so as to seek for the rich description on the discussion topics. Special attention has been paid to the interpretation of the meaning of teamwork and team communication from different angles of various role of team leader, team member, supervisor, colleague and sub-ordinate. Grouping of data was made along the tentative dimension, which has been defined in the research framework, of role expectation and power which are the essential human dimension
as reviewed in literature.

Data from the verbatim reports of the indepth interview, field notes of the participant observations and notes from documents review were then further analyzed. Triangulation was conducted among these different sources of data to verify the accuracy of the observations.

All the data were then recategorized and reorganized and the main themes that emerged are further re-organized and presented in the following three chapters.

3.6 Special Considerations for this Research

In this study, the following special considerations are made:

3.6.1 Role conflict of researcher

It is noted that there will be role conflict for the researcher as being the supervisor of the integrated team at the same time. Of course, it is beneficial for the researcher to dig into the communication issues easily in a more in-depth way and to be more accessible to the informal gatherings among the staff. This is, in fact, the methodological limitation as the respondents may have some reservations when discussing the communication barriers. For instance, the respondents will be sensitive to those topics related to the power structure where supervisory relationship is the core concern. In order to resolve the difficulties raised, several precaution measures were made. Firstly, one sub-team was selected as the core unit of analysis to reduce the direct influence from the supervisor. Secondly, the researcher clearly briefed respondents on the details of the study and seek their consent. The participant-as-observer role was stated clearly so as to minimize the avoidance of respondents.
Thirdly, adequate measures were made to ensure that the respondents would not be penalized by reviewing any negative comments towards the researcher, who was also their supervisor. This can be done with the support from the mother organization, a senior officer was assigned to be the arbiter for any queries or disputes arising from this study.

Fortunately, it was reflected from the respondents after the interviews that their articulation during the interview process had not been affected much by the role conflict of researcher.

3.6.2 Trustworthiness of the research

Being a case study, the observations of this study were limited to the context of one case in an integrated team only. It will, of course, create the problem of generalizability for the research findings from the perspective of traditional positivistic research methodology. However, it is the purpose of this exploratory study to give more insights and indepth observations to the research topic for further study rather than providing a definite answer to the research question. The problem of generalization is less dominating in this qualitative research design. And in fact, the issue of generalization is not the crucial consideration with the naturalistic research paradigm.

Taking the characteristics of naturalistic inquiry, a naturalist also seriously considers the trustworthiness of a research design. Four equivalent criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability should be addressed as contrast to those conventional criteria of internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity of the positivistic research methodology (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).
In this research special attention has been made to ensure its trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggests three techniques for increasing the probability of high credibility of prolonged engagement, persistent observation and triangulation. Taking the advantage of participant observation, prolonged engagement and persistent observation are allowed in this research to ensure the credibility of the research findings. For triangulation, although it is impossible to triangulate the data from different investigators in this master level dissertation research project, the discussions on the data and observations with the dissertation supervisor provide an opportunity of peer debriefing for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:308). Moreover, the data can also be triangulated with multiple sources of data from respondents, other team members and documents and also with multiple methods of participant observation and indepth interview.

Transferability of research findings are ensured by the thick description of data in the following three chapters of data analysis. The researcher presents rich description on the observations. This serves the naturalists task “to provide the data base that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers”, but not “to provide an index of transferability” as stated by Lincoln and Guba (1985:316).

For confirmability, the issue of subjectivity of the researcher in analyzing the data is addressed. In a case study in which the researcher was also taking a change agent role in the organization (Kahn, 1993), the active self reflection of the researcher in the research project is noted. Thus in this study, the researcher actively reviews his own perspective during the whole research process. The reflection on the personal self of the researcher can ensure the awareness of his own perception and influence on
the actual practice of team communication. The researcher is not totally isolated from the context but is one of the participants in it. The reader of this report should consider the perspective of the researcher in this research and even to their own perspectives.

In this chapter, the research methodology is introduced. A naturalistic research approach method is to investigate the lifeworld aspect of team communication from the perspective of team participants. A case study design with in-depth interview, document review and participant observation techniques is used. Special considerations on the role conflict of researcher and the trustworthiness of this research are also discussed.
Chapter Four: Rationality on Teamwork

4.1 Introduction to the Sampled Case

4.1.1 The integrated team and selected sub-team

The integrated team (IT) under studied started its operation in January of 1995. It was restructured from a former children and youth centre (C&Y) and part of an outreaching social work team (OSW) operated by the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups. At the experimental stage for developing integrated team service, each integrated team can develop its own approach for service delivery. The sampled integrated team mainly provides youth counselling service, youth development service and community network service for young people through its three sub-teams. The integrated team is managed by a Supervisor (in capital letter to represent it as the title of the post), that is the researcher, who is responsible for the overall operation of the team. There are eighteen staff members employed in the whole team. Besides the Supervisor, there are five Assistant Social Worker Officers (ASWO), one Senior Social Work Assistant (SSWA), four Social Work Assistants (SWA), two non-trained Welfare Workers (WW) and five supportive staff of clerical staff and workmen. The staff team maintained stable after its establishment.

The selected respondents for indepth interview come from one of the three sub-teams in the integrated team. The work focus of this sub-team is to develop community network systems for young people and to respond to youth related issues in the community. This is an innovative approach for youth service in Hong Kong that applies the societal level intervention strategies. There are four social work staff and all of them were invited to participate in the indepth interview.
4.1.2 Description of the respondents of indepth interview

The demographic data of the four respondents are listed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Name</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ranking</td>
<td>ASWO</td>
<td>ASWO</td>
<td>SWA</td>
<td>SWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of service in social work profession</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>7 years (2 years as SWA)</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services joined</td>
<td>OSW, IT</td>
<td>CD, C&amp;Y, IT</td>
<td>OSW, IT</td>
<td>C&amp;Y, IT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience as team leader</td>
<td>Yes in this IT</td>
<td>Yes in C&amp;Y</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct supervisor</td>
<td>Supervisor (Researcher)</td>
<td>Supervisor (Researcher)</td>
<td>Case A</td>
<td>Case A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to join IT</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Demographic Data of the Respondents

The names of all respondents will be kept anonymous and pseudonym A, B, C and D is used. Most of the respondents are female, except A. All of them are experienced in social work profession with four to ten years of working experience after their professional training. They are all experienced in youth services of OSW.
and C&Y, and all of them joined this IT voluntarily. Both A and B, at the ranking of ASWO, has the experience of being a team leader whereas C and D are always the members in their working teams.

The position relationship among the respondents, being an important variable under the power dimension to be examined in this study, should be introduced clearly. A is the team leader of the sub-team and B, C and D are the sub-team members. A is the supervisor of the C and D; both A and B are under the direct supervision of the Supervisor, the researcher. B, C and D are colleagues to each others.

Being the members of the sub-teams, all of the respondents regarded their sub-team positively. Aiming at developing the new service direction for IT, they considered the performance of their sub-team was very good and got much job satisfaction. All of the respondents considered the relationship among members was very good and it was a best team they had ever met. D even described the sub-team was "a dreamy combination"\(^5\), that is, all members can match with each others in an ideal condition. They suggested that there was good discussion atmosphere and they could communicate easily in the sub-team.

4.2 Teamwork as an Instrument

In order to study their positive assessment to the sub-team, it is essential to study their interpretation of the meaning of the concept of teamwork. Some of the common elements of teamwork suggested by the respondents are shared objectives,\

\(^5\) A term used by D to denote the ideal combination of members in their sub-team. Such composition is believed to be found only in a dream.
the structure, a group of people working together, the leadership role and team morale. According to the respondents, the concept of teamwork should serve both task dimension and sentimental dimension.

4.2.1 Task dimension

For the task dimension, it was suggested that the function of teamwork is mainly for achieving the tasks of a team. For example, there should be suitable division of work among team members or appropriate team structure so as to enable job completion. Shared objectives are essential in which all members can move toward the same direction. Moreover, the leadership role is important as he was expected to be an axle to lead the direction of whole sub-team. To provide the direction, A further suggested that teamwork in social work should be “belief-driven” because of the unique characteristics of social work profession which require strong commitment of the practitioners guided by social work belief. The importance of teamwork was also described as “needs-driven” depending on the developmental stages of the team. That is, there are stronger demand for some specific tasks of teamwork at the beginning stage of team formation. The respondents quoted the tasks like planning exercise for formulating the work focus of sub-team to be crucial and essential.

4.2.2 Sentimental dimension

The relational aspect of having mutual understanding among members and open communication was strongly urged by the respondents. The emotional needs for support and concern when achieving the assigned job was essential. For instance, B asserted that:

---

6 A specific term used by A to characterize social work with its emphasis on the belief system of humanitarianism.
There should be mutual understanding. All members should act actively to develop team morale. Team morale can only be developed with full participation from all members.

C also urged for the support from other team members during the interview:

That is the feeling of being supported by other team members. After the job is assigned, it is sometimes necessary to get support from the team rather than just reporting the job in team meetings. There should be personal relationship among the members, in which feelings of safety are fostered to allow open discussions and sharing of difficulties. It is difficult to achieve the objectives if the members feel insecure and being mistrusted by other members.

The sentimental dimension was also regarded as essential in achieving the planned task. It was suggested that through open communication and mutual understanding, the main target was just to accomplish the task itself.

4.2.3 Knowledge base of teamwork

In analyzing the knowledge base for the concept of teamwork, it is noted that teamwork was just treated as an instrument for achieving the objectives of the team. The knowledge on teamwork was mainly obtained from their professional training which stresses on the skills and techniques for achieving the expected function of team. It is noted that most respondents considered the way to achieve teamwork was through the formalized task function of team leader. A explained his limitations of applying teamwork due to inadequate training which stressed on technocratic dimensions only:

What I have learned about teamwork in my training is just to consider the effectiveness of the team. However, the acquired techniques of
strengthening the communication through different kinds of meeting arrangements and strategies seems to be inadequate for me to ensure mutual understanding in the team.

4.3 Discrepancy between Ideal and Reality of Teamwork

Although the sub-team was recognized as a "dreamy combination", there are discrepancies between the expected and perceived teamwork according to the respondents. To investigate the discrepancies, they consistently held a more pragmatic view and would not expect an Utopia in teamwork. Thus they could assess their sub-team as an ideal one because of their pragmatic expectation. B had a realistic expectation on teamwork as:

I will also consider teamwork, but I will not take an absolute position to expect on teamwork. Teamwork cannot be over idealistic, and I cannot expect to have an Utopia in it, especially in communicating among members.

According to the expectations of the respondents, teamwork should provide support to them both in task dimension and sentimental dimension. For the task dimension, the team direction driven by social work "belief" should be shared among members. And technical support such as providing the strategies for achieving shared objectives should be available. For these areas, team leader was expected to have more responsibility in providing the direction and helping the members in achieving the objectives. For the sentimental dimension, adequate emotional support during the process of accomplishing the tasks were expected. C simply described the sentimental aspect of teamwork as:
That is the feeling of being supported by the team.

And D also emphasized the feeling of being together in teamwork:

It is more important to have the feeling of working together, in which all of us are willing to do and willing to communicate.

There should also be good and harmonious working relationship among members so that they could discuss openly and genuinely as stated by A:

I expect to have win-win relationship among members, that is no one will lose in the team.

Based on their expectations, it is however, noted that both the task and sentimental dimensions could not be fully achieved in reality. Although the sub-team developed its direction, the members shared different interpretations towards it. This coincides the following observations abstracting from the participant observation notes taken at one of their sub-team meeting:

There are great discrepancies on the strategies and ultimate goals for achieving the concept of parent networking. Some of the members of the sub-team seriously attack the proposal presented by D for developing a parent network which has been discussed and shared among members in previous meeting.

The discrepancies on perceiving the shared team direction among members were also pointed out by D during the indepth interview:

Our sub-team should further clarify its direction, although it has been stated
in the planning meeting. In fact, all members share different expectations on the “pace”\textsuperscript{7} of achieving the team direction. Someone is faster and others are slower. I think I am just a follower.

Besides task dimension, the respondents suggested there were also discrepancies in sentimental dimension. Members were busily engaged in their assigned duties and no formal opportunities for them to share and cooperate, especially at the later stage of team formation. Like other natural networks, support is not necessarily provided in reality (Walker, 1985). It was reported by B that the emotional support was much weaker than rational support in the sub-team:

After the tasks are divided among members, there is no chance for cooperation ... Even if it is necessary to request for support, we will always seek rational support instead of emotional support ... in the discussion, we will only discuss the task rather than express our needs for emotional support.

In sum, the reality of teamwork is not an ideal situation as perceived by the respondents. However, all of them positively regarded their sub-team as an ideal one as compared with their previous working experience. This demonstrates the practical or pragmatic orientation of the respondents towards teamwork.

4.4 Role Crystallization

A clear phenomenon of role differentiation among team participants is noted. Although all respondents urged for mutual responsibility in teamwork, they, including the leader himself, expected the leader to take a more significant and leading

\textsuperscript{7} The term of “pace” is used by D to describe the different degree of achieving team direction as expected by members.
role in teamwork. A, being the sub-team leader, assumed he had to take a more active role in fostering teamwork:

Mathematically, among the four team participants, I think I should take up at least 40% of the responsibility in teamwork, whereas the remaining 60% be shared equally among the other three members. For my 40%, I think I should attend to the formulation of team direction which is "belief driven", the development of relationship among members and the technical devices such as the arrangements of sub-team meeting. For other members, I think they just need to have open and committed attitude.

The inconsistency of expectation also appeared from members' angle. At the beginning, they considered that all participants, not only the leader, were responsible for developing teamwork. However, the only way suggested by them in achieving teamwork rested on the task functions performed by leader. Both B and D expressed their expectations to the leader as:

B: I think leader should take a tighter (active) role in teamwork. He should have strong leadership to link up the members. According to the division of work, there should be somebody to lead and there should not be shared leadership in the sub-team.

D: Team leader should act like the axle of a car, he should clearly apprehend the workload, working style and personality of the members and should further regulate among members.

The respondents fixed their own positions in the team through the process of role identification, in which they defined their own role and the roles of their counterparts according to the team structure. A phenomenon of "role
crystallization⁸ is observed which is characterized by the fixation of team participants on their position in the team. With the fixation, the members cannot and will not present an expected balance and mutual role in the formation of teamwork. The leader is assigned the role to take the main responsibility, especially the task dimension of leading the direction and taking the planned actions strategically to team building. B defined her own role and the role of sub-team leader as follows:

Being a team member, we will have our expectation on the leader, expect him to do more and take an active role. Therefore, if he does not call for meeting to discuss the difficulties in our work, I will not do it also. The only thing is just to continue with my own busy workload.

D also limited her own role in the sub-team in view of her expectation on sub-team leader:

Teamwork can be fostered. It can be developed by the planned actions with appropriate strategies. Of course this can be done. It is the responsibility of the leader ...(If there are problems in sub-team) I think I will ask the leader to do more to link up the team and to request for more chance to cooperate. (But will do nothing herself)

The passive behavior of team members and active role of sub-team leader was clearly presented in sub-team meetings. This can be supported by the following quotation from the participant observation notes in team meeting.

In a meeting to discuss the involvement of sub-team in a community project, it is difficult to determine whether to join or to withdraw. Suddenly, the meeting cannot proceed further and no one would suggest a solution. All of them just wait and see, until finally, A, being the leader, intervenes by

---

⁸ This concept is developed from the "conceptual crystallization" of Dr. Francis Lee in a study on the perception of youth workers in under different work settings of OSW, C&Y, and SSW in Hong Kong (Lee, 1997).
suggesting to postpone the meeting.

It is clear that role crystallization is an obstacle for teamwork as the participants are limited by the perception of their own role in the team. The ideal of mutual involvement and support becomes invisible under role crystallization.

4.5 Subjectivity in Team Role

Following the concept of role crystallization, it is obvious that the respondents located themselves rigidly in a fixed position of the team. The fixed identity defined the subject-object relations among the team participants. For the members, they always defined their position as being an object at the lower position of the team where they were being manipulated and controlled by the subject or the leader at the higher position. For the leader, he also assumed his sole responsibility for developing teamwork. This can be reflected by the reaction of being requested to assess the teamwork of sub-team, A mainly evaluated his performance of team leadership instead of an overall assessment to the functioning of teamwork in his sub-team. That is, he presented himself as the subject of the team whereas other members became an object to be led or manipulated by the leadership function.

For the discussion of the subjectivity in team role, it is important to assess the impact of Chinese culture. In defining the relationship between the Emperor and his followers, the followers also perceive themselves being an accessory of the Emperor and will even sacrifice themselves for the benefits of the Emperor. Obviously, the followers are lacking a subjective position in relation to their boss. Although it is

9 Please refer to the concept of suppression of self of Chinese character of the famous Chinese sociologist, Sun (1992, pp.205-270)
not the main theme of this study to review the position relationship between the boss and sub-ordinate in Chinese society, it is worthwhile to note the subtle influence of cultural heritage in work relations. Being a member, B showed her reservation in taking the leadership role of sub-team leader:

I don’t know what will the leader think if I take up his leadership role. Will he be unhappy? I will worry about this. I think this is what a Chinese will consider or, perhaps, it is the Chinese character.

Not only for the leader and member, subject-object relation is even more obvious among supervisor and supervisee. Being a sub-team leader himself, A revealed his interpretation of the relationship with his supervisors:

It is reasonable for me to request the support and assistance from my supervisor, so as to prove that he is my supervisor. Otherwise, he will consider to losing “face”\(^{10}\) before his subordinate.

The consideration of “face” is an indicator to demonstrate the relationship between supervisor and supervisee. Being a supervisee, one will always treat his supervisor with more respect and will honour his higher position. The subject-object relation is clearly presented among the relationship between supervisor and supervisee.

To work through the subject-object relation among leader and member, or among supervisor and supervisee, it is necessary to redefine the subject-object relations to subject-subject relations. In the subject-subject relations, both the leader

---

\(^{10}\) “Face” is a Chinese concept described by Sun (1992, pp.154-157). People will observe the face of the one they are communicating because it is the face which shows the expression of emotion. It is then essential to “give the face” to those in superior position.
and members become the subjects in teamwork and they can present their own position to participate in the team process. In the in-depth interview, A suggested he would like to strengthen the personal self in the interaction with supervisor by saying that:

I would expect to expand the subjectivity of the self so as to confront with the structural demands on my role of being a supervisee.

Being a subject, all members can redefine their position in the team. They will not just wait and request the leader to do more for teamwork, instead they can act out to take some active steps to foster teamwork by themselves, what is expected to be done by the leader can also be done by members.

4.6 Fatalistic View on Teamwork

It is consistently observed that all respondents held a fatalistic view on teamwork. Regarding their positive assessment to their sub-team, they all just considered it as a good fortune to have this group of people in their sub-team rather than the conscious effort for developing teamwork. They raised several factors which they thought were the prerequisite for achieving teamwork, such as whether the members are open-minded; whether they were devoted and committed; whether they were ready to discuss and communicate, and whether the style and personality could be compatible with each others.

One respondent (B) suggested the Chinese concept of “yuen”\(^\text{11}\) in

\(^{11}\) “Yuen” is a Chinese term to describe the relationship in which people come together just by chance.
discussing teamwork. She would try to maximize the opportunity to work with colleagues because she believed it is "yuen" which brought them together to work as a team.

We can work together in this centre because of "yuen"... we should treasure this opportunity and don't be regretful after the relationship is terminated.

Facing the challenge of taking up a more active role as a leader, A expressed his frustration in teamwork with reference to this fatalistic viewpoint:

Although I do not incline to the concept of fatalism, I experience much frustration in my work which makes me feel that teamwork is determined by fate and the contextual situation. It (teamwork) can hardly be fostered by planned actions.

With the fatalistic viewpoint, the leader was facing much pressure of being a leader who was expected to take up a more aggressive role to develop teamwork. However, it was experienced that the achievement of teamwork mainly rested on some uncontrollable factors such as composition of team members and their readiness to participate. It is the dilemma in which team leader is working with something which is beyond his control.

In this chapter, the interpretation of meaning of teamwork from the respondents provides a clearer picture for us to grasp their behavioral pattern for their participation in teamwork. To conclude, there are several significant observations on their interpretations of meaning of teamwork. Firstly, teamwork is only perceived as an instrument to achieve specific work tasks, though the participants are consciously aware of the importance of both sentimental and task
dimensions of teamwork. The instrumental perspective on teamwork is mainly cultivated with the limited knowledge based on the technocratic approach of studying teamwork in social work training. Secondly, the participants experience great discrepancy between the ideal and the reality of teamwork. Considering that it is impossible to achieve the ideal situation for teamwork, the participants hold a more pragmatic orientation towards it. They will lower their expectation to teamwork so as just to achieve the task dimension but to neglect the sentimental dimension. Thirdly, the phenomenon of role crystallization is noted in which the participants are fixated at their own position in the team through the process of role identification. Fourthly, the subject-object relations among the two different levels of position relationship between leader and member; and supervisor and supervisee are identified. Lastly, the team participants hold the fatalistic view on teamwork. Teamwork is perceived to be limited by the uncontrollable factors of people and composition of membership.
Chapter Five: Quality of Team Communication

Based on their rationality on teamwork, the participants presented their expected role in interacting with others team members. This chapter attempts to review the pattern of team communication in the sub-team being studied.

5.1 Discrepancy between Ideal and Reality of Team Communication

According to the respondents, there were some characteristics of ideal team communication. C expected to have open communication in which members acted according to their speech:

Communication should be open. One important indicator is whether all participants can act according to their speech and there is no hidden agenda among them.

B also shared similar expectation on team communication in which she described the failure in team communication as:

I can only suggest what is failure team communication. I think if the communication is dominated by somebody and others will not voice out their idea freely, it is a failure.

A gave a more comprehensive description on the ideal situation of team communication as:

Ideal team communication should have three features, they are firstly, self-disclosure, both the superiors and subordinates will present their personal views. The second is to be open-mind, that is “do I really want to listen and
to know what the others think?". And the last one is willingness to change, or "do I really want to change myself?"

In reality, the respondents considered team communication was not as perfect as they expected, although they did not think there was much communication failure in their sub-team. In their sub-team, they claimed to have the experience of open communication although it did not always happen. Nevertheless, openness in team communication was the most questionable aspect as suggested by the respondents. Some dynamics in team communication appeared as shown in the following quotations from the indepth interviews.

A: At the beginning stage of our interaction, there were not much differences among us and we could discuss easily and genuinely. However, some dynamics of interaction, in which the members are holding different positions in the debate, appeared at later stage. This will affect our communication pattern, we will choose to communicate more with those sharing similar position but less with others.

D: There are differences between working relationship and other social relationship, especially those negative feeling which I will not disclose in work setting.

C: It is not easy to achieve mutual understanding, there are different people in the group who have different personalities and some of them even have some hidden agenda which affect their openness.

With reference to their perception of reality of team communication, it is noted that respondents also held a pragmatic view towards their expectation on team communication. Specifically, their expectation on team communication was framed within the contextual understanding of teamwork.
Under the contextual terms, there were several factors identified by the respondents which affected team communication. Firstly, openness of the members was limited by their perception that the work context was greatly different from other social life context. Secondly, position relationship as a structural consideration also imposed constraints on open communication. Lastly, the personal factors of personality and personal style of individual team participant in interacting with others were also considered to be the significant factors. Further analysis of these factors will be presented in the next chapter.

5.2 Assessment of Quality of Team Communication

To examine the quality of communication in the sub-team, the four validity claims for achieving ideal speech situation of communication (Brand, 1990) are employed as a reference for analysis. According to Habermas, an ideal speech situation appears when the four validity claims of comprehensibility, righteous, truth, and sincerity are fully achieved. In this study, the respondents were requested to identify a scenario in which team communication failed in their sub-team so as to solicit their contextual assessment. The following will present their remarks on team communication corresponding to the four claims.

5.2.1 Comprehensibility claim

Being a profession with diverse theoretical base, the respondents evaluated that there was various ability of staff in grasping different social work theories. In the sub-team, both A and B were more aggressive in promoting the community approach to youth social work service. They shared similar ideology and working approach in their daily practice whereas C and D were the new comers of this work approach. The problem of poor communication sometimes appeared because someone could not
comprehend the discussion materials. It was reported that those staff at lower rank or having no formal social work training would have more difficulties in comprehension. B pointed out the problem in communication arising from the difficulties of other members in following the discussion:

I think the problem of comprehension is obvious, it is because our discussion is sometimes out of the ability of other staff. If they do not ask and not understand, it is difficult to continue with our work.

D showed her own limitations on grasping the ideas in the discussion and this would make it difficult for her to participate in it:

Sometime I cannot comprehend their ideas immediately, I have many questions about that, which must be clarified at later stage. I am slower than others to grasp these ideas and I do not fully understand.

Being a trained social worker, on the other hand, D also recognized the difficulties of other non-trained staff in understanding their professional standpoints in team communication:

To the caretakers (workmen), I am eager to explain more to them because I think they do not understand what we are doing now.

Following this, it is noted that the context of professional social work discipline itself creates the troubles for achieving the comprehensibility claims in team communication.

5.2.2 Truth claim

The respondents assessed there was no problem in the truth claim in team
communication. All of them considered that they would not query the truthfulness of materials being discussed. Instead they only shared different perspectives towards the discussion topics as presented by B:

It is not the problem of truthfulness, not the issue of absolute truth.

5.2.3 Righteous claim

For the righteous claim, the contextual factors of position influence and role expectation affected their assessments on team communication. One of the respondents suggested that the appropriateness of giving a job request to the subordinates could be legitimized by the power dimension in team structure. Both parties involved could accept the order due to the position power of the supervisor as described by A:

It is an issue of righteous, the power dimension and position ladder must be considered for a sub-ordinate staff to evaluate the appropriateness of a request from the supervisor. If not the direct supervisor, it is much difficult to request him to do so ... it is a process of legitimacy.

The background of the participants is also a contextual factor affecting the perception of righteousness in team communication. For a diploma level trained social worker and a non-trained welfare worker, even if they are unfamiliar with the concept of the work approach employed by the sub-team, often the trained staff is more expected to be able to grasp the concept. In discussing the performance of other staff of the integrated team in following the community approach of their sub-team, B blamed a trained social work staff who failed to perform the role as a trained worker:
I think this is a reasonable request (to grasp the concept of community approach). Even the welfare worker can have acceptable performance, then I think it is appropriate to request more from the diploma trained SWA. I think she should be able to understand it.

It is obvious from this quotation that the consideration of appropriateness in team communication is contextual bounded in which the role expectation on other participants is included.

5.2.4 Sincerity claim

Among the four validity claims, there are more queries in the sincerity claim. They raised the issues that trust among themselves affected the sincerity of communication in the sub-team. B identified the problem of sincerity as:

No one will raise the question even if they have .... I think it is the problem of both sides. If you don’t know you can ask or we can clarify with you if you don’t know. But both of us do not take action ... such problem of sincerity is closely related to the trust among us.

D shared similar observation in which team participants failed to voice out their own ideas in the integrated team:

In the meeting of the whole IT, I observed that some members had different views but never spelt out. However, I note from their actual practice that they really present another picture of work ... perhaps they feel unsafe to voice out their ideas

Besides trust, there were several reasons affecting the sincerity in team communication as suggested by the respondents. Firstly, team participants would be more sincere in communication if they had confidence over the discussion topic. That
is, one could involve more actively in the discussion if he was familiar with the topic. Secondly, the Chinese personality of conflict avoidance was obvious. Some members did not voice out their ideas in order to avoid having conflicts with others. Thirdly, irrational defensive behavior in team communication sometimes appeared as response to negative evaluations towards counterparts. For example, sub-team member might query whether the counterpart was committed to do the job.

Among the four validity claims of communication, there are different levels of problems in actual communication process under the contextual situation of the sub-team. The issue of comprehensibility is significant in social work profession as there is a great variety of theories. However, it can easily be dealt with through continuous clarification and discussion. On the other hand, the problems of sincerity and righteous are more complicated because other personal or structure considerations are involved. More indepth analysis should be made to those factors affecting these two areas of communication quality.

5.3 Possibility of Mutual Understanding in Team Communication

Before further studying the factors that affect team communication, the respondents' interpretation of mutual understanding in team communication deserves our attention. Basically, the respondents all agreed with the importance of understanding in their sub-teams. It was treated as the basic element for an ideal situation of team communication. However, as described, it could only be achieved conceptually less likely happened in real life experience. According to them, there were several remarks worth mentioned:
5.3.1 Understanding is instrumental in itself

In team communication, mutual understanding does not occur in a vacuum. Understanding itself is just an instrument to achieve some expected functions of team participants. It is task oriented and has its own strategic function in fulfilling the purposes of the participants. To examine the orientation for understanding his subordinating staff, A stated its function as:

It is purposeful and instrumental to understand my subordinates. It is just to let me be a good supervisor, to understand their potential and limitation, so as to allow me to perform my role as a supervisor.

Based on their different purposes to be achieved in mind, the participants of teamwork always predict the consequences of their performances during the communication and in turn it affects the genuineness of communication.

5.3.2 Understanding is mutual

To achieve mutual understanding, all parties involved should be ready to participate. However, personal consideration of whether to be understood sometimes makes mutual understanding impossible, as presented by A:

Compared with communication, understanding is more bi-directional, that is whether both of us want to understand others. Sometimes, I think we do not want to be understood by others.

5.3.3 Understanding is not necessarily desirable

It is astonishing to find that mutual understanding was not always welcome by team participants. The respondents had reservations for achieving an ideal situation of understanding because of their assessment on its negative impacts. This is
supported by a negative experience of D:

I have a negative experience of having an understanding relationship with my supervisor. Both the supervisor and myself are understanding to each other, my supervisor will not feedback to me even if she has negative comments about my work.

A also posed his reservation on mutual understanding under the context of teamwork:

In management term, there should be no problem if the staff performs well and with good understanding between the supervisor and supervisee. However, when the performance of supervisee is bad, it is difficult for the supervisor to push him if they fully understand\(^\text{12}\) each other. Thus I wonder whether it is good to have understanding in teamwork.

The negative assessment of understanding in teamwork will adversely affect the readiness and willingness to open up oneself in the communication process which requires mutual involvement.

5.3.4 Understanding is affected by personal factors

Other personal factors intervene in achieving understanding in team communication. C simply suggested the influence of personality and personal style:

It is difficult to achieve mutual understanding in the team, it is because there are members of different personality and style.

The difficulty of understanding a person was identified by B:

\(^{12}\) The meaning of understanding here includes the tolerance of the negative aspects of supervisee.
It is more difficult to understand a person than to understand a concept. To understand a person is to understand his personality, whether he is ready to accept or to understand others. It (understanding of person) can only be strengthened through sharing of expectation and perception of others.

Understanding in team communication is situational depending on the combination of members. The respondents considered that the deterministic factor of fate in team composition was uncontrollable and therefore understanding could appear by chance but could not be fostered purposefully.

5.3.5 Understanding is affected by structural factors

Besides personal factors, understanding is limited by the structural factors of power. The "power distance"\textsuperscript{13} was identified by A as an intervening factor for achieving understanding in sub-team:

I think the power distance will affect the achievement of understanding, or the opportunity for understanding. The greater the power distance, the more difficult it is to understand or to be understood.

In this chapter, the reality of team communication is introduced under the structural context of the sub-team being studied. There are great discrepancies between the reality and the ideal situation expected by team participants. To make themselves more comfortable, it is noted that team participants will lower their expectation on team communication and take a more pragmatic view on it. Moreover, the quality of team communication is assessed based on the four validity claims for

\textsuperscript{13} A specific term used by A to denote the distance in formal power among team participants. A supervisor at higher rank will have greater power distance with the subordinates than a lower rank supervisor.
ideal speech situation of communication devised by Habermas. It is found that there are difficulties in comprehension of the various theories in social work, but this can still be tackled by more discussion and clarification. The issues of righteousness and sincerity become more crucial because they are complicated with the personal and structural factors in team communication. The meaning and interpretation of mutual understanding by the respondents has also been discussed. The possibility of mutual understanding is questionable because of undesirability as perceived by team participants. Understanding in teamwork is much complicated with the consideration of the structural elements. Both the supervisor and supervisee will evaluate the impact of the team structure and the factor of power distribution when communicating with others. Further discussion on the impact of these structural elements will be presented in next chapter.
Chapter Six: Barriers in Team Communication

Based on their knowledge and rationality on teamwork, the respondents formulated their perspective in team communication. In the previous chapters, respondents have identified three significant factors which hinder open communication in teamwork. Among them, the intervening factor of power is the most obvious structural factor that affects the quality of team communication. Other cultural factors also influence the personal style of individual staff in the team. Lastly, special consideration on the context of team communication is also raised. An in-depth discussion on these factors will be presented in this chapter.

6.1 Power and Team Communication

There are different types of power appeared in a work team, including the formal power of position power and informal power of charismatic power. To study the impact of formal power, respondents were invited to examine their perception of their interaction with reference to their relative position in the sub-team. Three different types of position of supervisor, colleague and subordinate have been identified for respondents' comments. A is the sub-team leader and the supervisor of C and D, and the researcher is the supervisor of A and B. Colleague is a working relationship which has no supervisory element, though the colleagues can be of different rankings. For example, B, C and D are colleagues although B is in a higher rank as compared with C and D. Subordinate is the one who is being supervised or at a lower position in the integrated team. The supportive staff, such as the clerical staff and caretakers, are also treated as the subordinates of social work staff, although they are not directly under their supervision. That is, they are the subordinates of C and D, and all these staff are at the same time being the subordinates of A.
6.1.1 Communication with supervisors

It is a common observation that all respondents had much reservation in communicating with supervisors. They would try to maintain a distance with supervisors purposefully. Both B and D asserted that:

B said: To the supervisor, you will consider not to disclose too much about yourself.

D said: I will keep a distance with my supervisor, whereas the interaction with colleagues and subordinates will depend on whether we are compatible with each other.

Even being a mid-level supervisor himself, A also considered to speak less to his supervisor:

Among the three categories, I will be most open to subordinates, I will speak to them with least consideration. To colleagues, I can also speak out but depends more on their reaction. If they don’t accept my point, I will speak less. To supervisor, I have much consideration whether it is appropriate to speak. Something I will speak to him, others I will not. This is my practice wisdom.

In examining why they maintained a distance with supervisor, the respondents mainly explained by their interpretation and perception of the role of supervisor. The perception was formulated in response to the position of being a supervisor. Just as A said:

It is difficult to chat with supervisor. They are always very serious. Even in chatting, they always present to be serious and more knowledgeable than you. I think they always want to present as supervisor with his 'super-
vision' ... I have met many supervisors, I consider they are more protective if they are at higher position. Perhaps, I will also treat my subordinate like this.

Both C and D described how they interacted with supervisor as follows:

C: Unlike other staff, I will always consider supervisors are not sincere in communicating their message ... I even wonder the sincerity of my supervisors in making the decision is for their own convenience in job assignment but neglecting the needs of staff ... There will have more direct influence on my work from the supervisors whereas colleagues and subordinates will not have such impact.

D: This is how I evaluate the supervisor. For example if he invites me to a dinner in official capacity (related with work), I will not join. I will evaluate it as a political dinner in which he just wants to achieve something purposefully.

The impact of position power in supervisory relationship is noted to be the most obvious one among the three categories. Communication is negatively affected since the subordinates are always considering what the supervisor is thinking and his formal position power is being imposed in the communication process. B clearly stated the influence of power in team communication as:

Structure can be a factor, somebody will generalize the supervisor to be unbelievable. Then he will have more reservation which in turn affect the sincerity of communication.

A presented the difference in interacting with supervisor and subordinate with the consideration of their ranking in sub-team:

With the consideration of ranking, I will consider the "face" of the
supervisor, the colleague also should have "face", but the subordinate will consider less on "face" matter so the subordinate can be more open. Ranking is inter-linked with "face".

Besides the position power of the supervisor, other personal factors such as his own personality and leadership style also affects the way how the subordinates interact with him as noted from D:

Not only the position of supervisor, I think his leadership style and personality is also very important, such as whether he is administrative oriented or being supportive.

6.1.2 Communication with colleague

Without the impact of supervisory relationship, it was assessed that communicating with colleague was much easier than with supervisor. There was no problem in comprehension of colleague's message because they had similar training background and shared belief in social work profession. However, interaction was more situational depending on the "yuen" or the compatibility of personal factors such as personality and style. This is supported by the way how C considered two different colleagues at the rank of ASWO and SWA:

I don't think position, that is whether he is ASWO or SWA, plays an important part in team communication. In fact, good interpersonal relationship is more important than position difference.

Similar observations were made by A and B:

A: At the beginning, I think it is easiest to express to colleagues sincerely. He/she can understand me the most and will not be affected by the position
we hold.

B described how to related with other colleagues at SWA rank: Our relationship is better because we don’t have direct supervisory relationship, it is easier and more comfortable to communicate.

Nevertheless, the communication will further be complicated by competition among colleagues involved, especially among those at the same ranking. Staff members will compare among themselves which in turn affects the sincerity of the interaction. This coincides with the observation of A:

The issue of staff dynamic and office politics appears. If you (colleague) do not trust me, it is more difficult for me to lead the team ... The competition among colleagues is greater than between supervisor and subordinate.

Competition will be even more severe if they are sharing similar scope of work. For example, if two of them are responsible for some community projects, they will have more competition than those who mainly provide casework. B described the competition with other colleagues both at ASWO rank.

Comparing with A, my relationship with other ASWOs (in other sub-team, who are mainly providing counselling service) is better because our work nature is different and boundary is clear. Therefore we have less conflict and problems and the relationship is also better.

6.1.3 Communication with subordinate

Referring to the quotations in the preceding paragraphs, the communication with subordinates is seen to be the easiest from the perspective of the supervisor. The supervisor will consider less to interact with subordinate. For example, there is no
need to consider the "face" of subordinate, and the supervisor is more open to communicate with them. Moreover, it is possible to touch on aspects of subordinate's private life in communication which will never occur when communicating with supervisors.

However, communication with sub-ordinate is not simply for reaching mutual understanding, it is also an instrument for fulfilling the task of being a supervisor as stated by A:

It is purposeful and instrumental to understand my subordinates, it is just to enable me to be a good supervisor, to understand their potential and limitation, so as to allow me to perform my role as a supervisor.

Further to the different training background, the respondents reported having difficulties in communicating with subordinates because they sometimes could not grasp the complicated social work concept during the discussion. In evaluating the ability of the subordinates, B stated that:

Concerning the theoretical aspects, I found it is difficult for the subordinate staff to grasp the ideas. I understand that they are not quite familiar with the new concept, however, I cannot accept that the diploma trained SWA is worse than the non-trained welfare worker in following our sub-team direction.

It can be noted that communication with subordinate is also complicated by role crystallization, a concept discussed in chapter four. In their interaction, clear expectation on individual staff is defined by their assigned role in the sub-team. For example, a trained staff should be more capable than a non-trained welfare worker. Besides the role expectation, the supervisor is also sensitive to the appropriateness of
communicating a message to his subordinate. Being a supervisor, he must find the way to legitimize his instruction to his subordinates. The formal supervisory relationship is a significant source of power for a supervisor to assert his status over the subordinates as presented by a mid-level supervisor, A:

It is a righteous issue, the power dimension and position ladder must be considered for a subordinating staff to evaluate the appropriateness of a request from the supervisor. If I am not the direct supervisor, it is more difficult to request him to do so ... it is a process of legitimacy

Being a member in teamwork, a participant sometimes acts as a supervisor and subordinate simultaneously. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that there are contrasting expectations from the respondents on the specific role in the team. For instance, one will be self-protective to his supervisor but expects a supervisor to be open to his subordinate. These contrasting expectations are induced by the structural factors such as position, role and legitimacy of power in the context of teamwork. The participants always consider that the supervisor has some hidden agenda because of his position of being supervisor. Just like this example, the subordinate will query the motivation of the supervisor in understanding him just to assert his role of being a supervisor. He believes that the supervisors are manipulating subordinates with position power. Therefore, he will be self-protective to supervisor but expects his supervisor to be open to him. Under the context of teamwork, the quality of communication will be distorted by these contrasting expectations and interpretation of power relationship.

6.1.4 Effects of team structure on team communication

Team structure, being an essential device for teamwork, was assessed by the respondents to have negative impact on team communication. With the
distribution of power in team, competition and power struggle became unavoidable. Power also created office politics which adversely affected the trustful and open communication among members. A described the impact of team structure on team communication:

Some elements of team structure invite power in a team. For example, to have staff of same ranking in a team will create oppression and power struggle ... and this is common in teamwork ... I consider team structure is the balance of power in a team, being an active but pessimistic way of recognizing needs for distributing of power.

Under the specific context of the integrated team being studied, C noted the negative impact of its team structure (for the team structure in this integrated team, please refer to appendix 3 of this report):

For the structure of this IT, it is rather bureaucratic in which there are two levels of supervisors above me. This structure will reduce the opportunity for interaction (power distance will reduce the chance for communication and understanding) ... This is the limitation of the system, bureaucracy will negatively affect our team communication.

Being a useful device in the technocratic approach of teamwork, team structure itself creates negative impact on the quality of team communication in actual practice.

6.1.5 Domination in team communication

Open and domination free communication was the ideal of team communication, according to the respondents. However, in reality, the respondents still reckoned there were different levels of dominance in this sub-team which were
described as “a dreamy combination”. In this sub-team, the sub-team leader was alert in reducing the impact of the position power and the members agreed that there was no obvious domination arising from position power within the sub-team. This can be supported by the assessment of C on the leadership of the leader:

Being a sub-team leader, A has to take the role to lead our team, it is better to have a leader to take up this role ... I don't think there is oppression in this sub-team, it is a “dreamy combination” as I said before ... there is no oppression, he (A) will not push us because he is the leader.

However, team members were sensitive to have and even to urge for the dominating ideas and direction, such as promoting the community approach in sub-team. In fact, the domination of ideas in leading the team was requested from team members. It was recognized that it was the position function of sub-team leader in providing the inspiration for the team direction, and in fact A was being urged by other member to be more directive in leading the sub-team. There is a dilemma here in which members preferred to have domination free team communication on the one hand, and to have clear direction for the team from the leader on the other. C expressed this ambivalent attitude towards the domination of sub-team leader:

I think there is domination in sub-team, from different levels of supervisors. Perhaps, it is the personal style of A. He leads the team with his dominating idea in promoting community approach. He will provide the resources to help you which make you think that he makes the decision and then you carry it out ... I think it (domination) is neutral because we need clear direction in our team but if it is related with those arguments concerning different value base then the feeling will not be so good.

Even if there was certain degree of domination in the sub-team, the
members did not react negatively to it. It is perhaps really because of the composition of team members is a "dreamy combination". However, supplemented by field observation in sub-team meeting and their informal interaction, it is noted that the leadership style of the sub-team leader can allow more open communication among members. It is consistent with the comment of B on the leadership style of sub-team leader as being an informal leader.

Although there is formal structure, the formal leader does not perform his role formally.

The structural arrangement of the sub-team is another factor which reduces the image of being a powerful authority figure of sub-team leader as noted from B:

In our IT with the Supervisor to oversee its overall operation, sub-team leader is only a professional leader but not an administrative leader. This will reduce the importance of sub-team leader in decision making. All the final division rests with the Supervisor but not sub-team leader.

Besides the formal power of position power, the influence of other informal power is also the source of dominance in sub-team. Knowledge in social work profession itself is an example of informal power being identified by B:

If there is domination, it is just the domination of knowledge but not domination of power, the members cannot join the discussion because they don't know the discussion topic.

A also suggested the personal influence of individual staff as another source of informal power in the sub-team:
The is no position power distance for the colleagues, however, there are other power distance of personal influence and charisma.

6.2 Personal Self as Cultural Heritage

As stipulated in the above discussion, it is observed that both structural and personal factors affect the quality of team communication. To improve the quality of team communication, it is not a simple task just to have structural intervention in the team structure. It is also necessary to attend to the personal factors that influence the members. To understand more on the personal factors, the cultural dimension of being a Chinese in team communication should be attended.

According to role identification in teamwork, the respondents had great reservation in taking up the role of their counterparts in order not to overshadow the leader. It is related to the Chinese conception of relating to their superiors as discussed in paragraph 4.5 (p.42) as presented by the quotation of B:

I don't know what will the leader think if I take up his leadership role. Will he be unhappy? I will worry about this.

On the other hand, the collectivism of Chinese character provides a more compromising attitude and easier environment for fostering harmonious team communication. It is the Chinese characteristics of seeking peaceful and non-conflicting interpersonal relationship\(^{14}\). In explaining the interaction pattern with other team participants, C presented the typical Chinese character for avoiding conflict:

---

\(^{14}\) Sun (1992) provides a detailed description on the Chinese character of chasing for peaceful and harmonious interpersonal relationship among the Chinese.
From my personal view, I am not a person to have conflicts with other, instead I will try to compromise. Therefore I will not have enemy in my work and can achieve understanding easily.

It is not the objective of this research to examine the influence of Chinese culture on team communication. However, the above section provides a brief account for demonstrating the importance of the cultural impact on the individual actors in team communication. Being nurtured under Chinese culture in Hong Kong, our personal self is the carrier of its cultural heritage. Thus, the cultural dimension should also be addressed in order to improve the quality of team communication in work context.

6.3 Team Communication in Context

In this study, the respondents clearly identified the contextual factors affecting their performance as a participant in the sub-team. This factor has not been identified in the literature review and is not included in the research framework. This section attempts to review the respondents' interpretation to this missing factor. Team participants developed their own framework for understanding the meaning of work context. Their behavior in team communication was then guided by these understanding of work context.

6.3.1 Importance of teamwork in sub-team

The respondents unanimously acknowledged the importance of teamwork in their sub-team as stated in the introductory chapter. Being a newly formed team for developing a new service approach in youth service in Hong Kong, all staff members
should share the objectives in developing the community approach which is a new experience in youth work in Hong Kong. Moreover, the work nature of the sub-team in providing jointly organized community projects required tighter cooperation among members. It greatly differs from other social work setting that emphasizes individual work approach and requires less teamwork. The characteristics of the work nature of this sub-team were described by A as:

In my sub-team, I think teamwork is extremely important. We are inclined to a community approach which is not totally accepted by other colleagues. Therefore, we ourselves, must be committed to the approach and promote it to others. This job cannot be achieved by one or two members, we must do it together ... It is an environmental factor, the service nature itself defines the importance of teamwork. It is more difficult to actualize teamwork in Family Service Centre and OSW setting because the workers are all busily engaged in their casework service. Our IT and sub-team are in different context. As it requires us to have more joint projects, we must work together, and thus can facilitate our teamwork approach.

Being a sub-team in a newly formed integrated team in Hong Kong, it is the contextual demand for the sub-team to focus more on achieving teamwork. It is the environmental context that facilitates the development of teamwork.

6.3.2 Work context compared with social life

The respondents consciously differentiated the pattern of interaction between the work context and social life context. D simply stated that there were differences in discussion topics:

There are different discussion topics in work relations and social relations. The social relationship is less serious and the work relationship is more serious.
There was also great difference in the relationship with a colleague and a friend as identified by C:

It is easier to understand a friend in social life than a colleagues in work context. Friends can be understood with continuous exploration and interaction, but colleagues are limited by many other variables.

In work context, they assumed that it was only an arena for accomplishing the work tasks. It is therefore task oriented. This is why B limited the work context as an arena for accomplishing task but not for sharing.

Time is not used to share our feeling in work. We are fully occupied by our work and we have no time to share.

Moreover, there is competition and measurement involved in work context which is absent in social life with peers and family members as noted by B:

Calculation is involved in work setting which does not appear in private life with family members. More competition, interest and conflict are involved in work than in private life. For the family members, they will eventually protect you but it will not occur in work relations. Also there is no conflict of interest among friends.

With this concept in mind, they expected to interact with other team participants in a specific pattern. They must be serious in work and the emotional dimension should be covered up in team communication. Therefore, they will seek rational support more than emotional support in actual practice, although it is essential to have emotional support. In explaining why she did not request for
sentimental support in work setting, B said that:

I think there is no time and opportunity to share the feeling, it is not allowed to do so in work setting ... the environment, atmosphere and time are all not suitable for us to voice out our feeling on work. Moreover, it also depends on how we perceive the work. Although I am not saying that work is cold and not concerned with feeling, the feeling is greatly different (from social life). It can be more relax in sharing with friends but should be serious in work ... Even if it is necessary to request for support, we will always seek for rational support instead of emotional support ... in the discussion, we will only discuss the task more than expressing our needs for emotional support.

Taking this interpretation of meaning of the work context, the participants developed specific pattern of interaction which was different from those in social life. This pattern, in turn, influenced the quality of team communication in practice.

6.3.3  Context as social work profession

In professional practice, staff members are not only governed by the demands arising from the structure and work context but also by the demands of the profession. Social workers are driven by the ideology and value embedded in social work profession. C was sensitive to the requirements of social work profession as follows:

In our work, we will consider the expectation of being a social worker and the image of social work profession. If we perform unsatisfactorily, it will also create negative image to social work profession ... that is, we are not only satisfying the expectation of supervisor but also satisfying the expectation and image of a social worker.
The ideology of social work also became the impetus for the staff to work in the sub-team. Social work value itself is the driving force of the team participants to work through the structural demand arising from the team structure. For instance, a respondent, D, raised that she would not sacrifice the rights to voice out her opinions to the supervisors. It was mainly because she was a social worker and taking the role of empowering the clients, then she must empower herself under the power constraint of team structure.

I will not consider the position of those who suggest the idea but the reasoning of the idea itself. If I have alternative views, I surely would suggest my viewpoints. At this stage of my work (having ten years of working experience of being a social worker), if I cannot express myself when my opinions are being oppressed, how can I bargain for other people. If I do not believe this, I think I cannot continue with my work.

One of the respondents, C, suggested that there was less competition in social work profession as compared with business sector where the concept of teamwork and management theories oriented.

It is difficult to achieve mutual understanding. It is difficult to have mutual understanding in social work but it is even more difficult in the business field ... It is relatively easier to achieve understanding in social work field.

The social work context suggested here provides a favorable environment for achieving team communication as contrast to other barriers identified in this chapter. It allows team participants to act according to the professional value instead of just observing the structural demands arising from team structure and position power.
In this chapter, the barriers in team communication have been identified. It is noted that the power dimension is the most significant constraint for team participants. With their interpretation on the different positions in sub-team, the participants have different interaction patterns with supervisor, colleague and subordinate. Open and domination free communication in team communication cannot be achieved in reality under such contextual constraint of power dimension. Besides the power dimension, the cultural factor for developing the personal self of individual participants in team communication has been discussed. It reminds us the importance of cultural dimension alongside the systemic intervention strategies under the technocratic approach in teamwork. Lastly, the interpretation of the work context itself also affects the quality of team communication. The participants are consciously aware of the difference of work context and social life context, and they act differently according to their conception on work context.
Chapter Seven: Conclusion and Implications

7.1 Summary of Findings

Teamwork, a western concept, is based on the study of technology for leading a work team. In this research, it attempts to provide an alternative approach to analyze the lifeworld of those involved in teamwork. It provides an in-depth analysis for studying how people make meaning of teamwork and team communication in local context rather than a system analysis. With the insights from the respondents in this exploratory study, an understanding framework on the meaning of teamwork and team communication is constructed. It is noted that the actual daily practice of team communication is guided by this understanding framework of the team participants. The framework, which has been revised from the original research framework, is presented in the following diagram:

![Diagram 2: Lifeworld Model in Team Communication](image)

Diagram 2: Lifeworld Model in Team Communication
The framework provides a comprehensive understanding on the actual practice of team communication. It is a framework with three interrelated components: meaning of teamwork, meaning of team communication and actual practice of team communication.

In formulating the meaning of teamwork, the participants mainly rely on their knowledge base and previous conception on teamwork. With the limited knowledge from the training on social service administration, social workers in social work team perceive teamwork as an instrument. It only helps in formulating team objectives, team structure and the techniques of team process.

Although the importance of both task dimension and sentimental dimension are recognized, they devote themselves more on the fulfillment of work task in the team. The demand for emotional support is suppressed while only the desire for rational support is expressed. Together with the phenomenon of role crystallization, the team participants tend to fixate or restrict their own role in team operation and also interact with other participants according to their identified role. With their fixated role expectation in teamwork, the subjectivity in the team is weakened. They, especially the members, mainly perceive their position as an object to be monitored by the team leader. The subjectivity can be strengthened only with their reflection and awareness of their own role or functioning in the team especially as a professional social worker. Lastly, the fatalistic view on teamwork is also a significant conception which imparts upon the achievement of teamwork. Specifically, teamwork is much constrained by the prerequisite factors such as team composition, compatibility of personality and working style that can hardly be manipulated by themselves.

Based on these meanings of teamwork, the participants further look into the
contextual factors of the team for formulating their meaning of team communication process. Three areas of considerations for team communication have been identified which guides their actual practice in daily team communication process. These considerations are the power dimension, personal self as cultural heritage and team communication in context. For the power dimension, the discrepancies in the interpretation of meaning for communicating with supervisor, with colleague and with subordinate clearly illustrate their consideration of power distribution in the team. These discrepancies coincide with their assessment on the effect of team structure and domination in team communication. Other than the structural consideration of power, the individual's personality and style are the situation domain for team communication which are culturally bounded. Moreover, the consciousness and awareness of the specific meaning of work context also poses contextual difficulties for achieving mutual understanding in team communication.

With all these interpretations of meaning of teamwork and team communication in mind, the actual practice of team communication of the participants is clearly defined. Team communication is operating under the systemic and technological devices designed purposefully according to our knowledge on teamwork. It is noted in this study that the achievement of mutual understanding in team communication becomes a myth if these interpretation of meaning are not attended to. To assess the quality of communication in team communication with reference to the four validity claims for an ideal speech situation of communication, it is noted the claims of sincerity and righteous are facing much challenges under this contextual analysis.

These three components are closely linked with each others and forming a repetitive cycle in which team communication is determined by the interpretation of
meaning of both teamwork and team communication, whereas the interpretation is at the same time determined by the experience of the practice of daily team communication. To improve in team communication, the intervention in both the interpretation of meaning and practice of team communication are the two essential components to be tackled simultaneously.

To sum up, team communication is not simply a technical process but a complicated process of both the system and lifeworld should be attended. The meanings of teamwork and team communication to the participants are always missing in the technocratic approach to teamwork. Besides the knowledge for skills of team building and structural design of teamwork, the personal dimension of the interpretation of meaning to teamwork and team communication with reference to its context should also be addressed. To be more specific, team communication is a contextual bounded activities which involves the power structure, the cultural dimension and the specific work context. To develop an ideal approach for team communication for the local social work field, cultural sensitivity in applying the western concept of teamwork knowledge in Hong Kong, a Chinese society, should be further addressed.

7.2 Implications

This exploratory study is not attempted to construct an indigenous model of teamwork approach in Hong Kong. It only aims to reveal some of the missing dimensions in addressing the development of teamwork based on the contextual experience of a social work team in Hong Kong. Based on the limitations of the research design and the uniqueness of the case, the findings of this study cannot necessary be able to generalize to other service settings. However, with the indepth
analysis of the real life experience of the local practitioners, this study provides the insights for examining the topics of teamwork in local context. Based on these insights, and some concrete implications are also proposed in the following paragraphs:

7.2.1 Re-examination of western concept of teamwork in local context

In a Chinese society like Hong Kong, the influence of both Chinese and western culture creates an environment of mixed culture. The traditional Chinese culture is no longer the only heritage of Hong Kong. Being a British colony for over a hundred years, Hong Kong not only yielded a great prosperity and rapid economic development, it also adopts the great impact of western culture, and the people in Hong Kong become a mixture of Chinese and Western ideology. Further to the economic and social development, there are great impacts to the social structure such as the family system and the relationship among people. With these specific characteristics, the application of the western concept of teamwork under the local context should have its limitations. To this end, it is necessary to re-examine the feasibility of applying the concept with reference to the cultural heritage of Hong Kong. Indigenous model of teamwork should be developed according to the cultural dimension and characteristics of the local context.

7.2.2 Paradigm shift in the study of teamwork

Contrast to the technocratic approach in teamwork, it is essential to have a paradigm shift in the study of teamwork. A duality approach which emphasizes the balance consideration on both structural dimensions for the system and interpretation of meaning to people for the lifeworld should be adopted. More indepth analysis to the process and how people make meaning out of the teamwork process can facilitate the development of an indigenous model as suggested in the preceding paragraph. The effectiveness of teamwork can further be evaluated by the communication process but
not the outcomes.

7.2.3 Decentralization of teamwork function

For the structural dimension, it is essential to review the power dimension in team communication. The redistribution power among members and leaders, and among supervisor, colleague and sub-ordinate should be allowed. This can be achieved structurally with the decentralization of teamwork function to all members involved. However, as shown clearly in this study, these changes cannot be achieved completely by the structural intervention because the way how the participants perceive the communication process greatly affects the presentation of their own role in the team. The duality of intervention should also be attended to, in addition to the restructuring in power dimension, all participants should also re-orientate their role perception consciously so as to present not only as an object but a subject in team communication process.

7.2.4 Self reflection for team communication

For the lifeworld perspective, the awareness of the participants in their interpretation of meaning in the team communication process is extremely important for strengthening their subjectivity in the team. It is therefore important to arouse the awareness and consciousness of all the leader, members, supervisor, colleague and sub-ordinate in redefining their own importance in the team. Although it is understood that the influence of the structural impact of power cannot be removed completely in practice, the more sensitive and aware the participants are to their own reaction and response to the barriers of contextual consideration and power, the more possible for them to release themselves from the constrains that created. For instance, if team participants are aware of their suppression of the demand for emotional support in work context, it is important for them to be more sensitive to address to their emotion
in work relations. Other alternative mechanisms for releasing or displacing their emotion should be developed so as to strengthen teamwork.

7.2.5 Empowerment practice in team communication

Following the personal reflection and restructuring of power in team, it is further suggested that the team should take an empowerment oriented teamwork approach in which all participants are empowered to work cooperatively and be able to voice out independently.

It is, however, strange to note that the concept of empowerment only appears in the literature of teamwork in business sector, but not in social work administration literature (Mohrman, 1995; Beaumariage & Shunk 1991; and empowerment pyramid of Roman, 1993) in which the personal worth of staff is being recognized. Gutierrez, Maye and Delois (1995) noted that there are ways in which social work administrative practices can created an organization culture that can support empowerment practice at service delivery level. However, further study on the development of empowerment practice in social work administration itself should be a new arena for further exploration, especially with the contextual support of the humanity culture in social work profession.

7.2.6 Areas for future research

This is an exploratory study and further study on related areas are needed to provide a more comprehensive picture of this research topic. First, with the limitation of time and resources, this study is only limited to a unique experience of teamwork in local context which demands for greater consideration in teamwork, there should have more local studies on the participants' interpretation of the meaning of teamwork and team communication in other service settings. Second, the cultural
dimension should further be addressed to identify the cultural difference in perception of teamwork and team communication. Third, the possibility of applying empowerment practice in social work administration should be further examined with rigorous research methodology in the local context.

7.3 Concluding Remarks

To conclude, this research provides a new direction for studying teamwork in social work administration. With the characteristics of complexity and uncertainty in a postmodern society, the conventional technocratic approach to teamwork no longer be adequate enough to response to the ever changing factors in teamwork. This research attempts to apply a lifeworld perspective for studying the personal dimension of interpretation and rationalization from the angles of team participants. It provides an alternative perspective for us to understanding the actual operation of teamwork which is greatly affected by the way how team participants view the context of teamwork. This is an empirical experience based on the local context of a newly formed youth service team, the transferability of these findings to other service settings depends on the compatibility of the contextual environment. In sum, it is expected that this study can provide new insights for a paradigm shift of the technocratic approach to the study of teamwork in human service organizations.
Bibliography


Chiu Cheung, S.Y., 1990. *Implications of the Team approach on Supervisory Functions: a Study of Children and Youth Centres in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong.


Management. USA: NASW Press.


APPENDIX I

Interview Guide for Indepth Interview
(English version)

1. Rationality on teamwork

1.1 What do you know about teamwork?
1.2 How to achieve teamwork?
1.3 Which aspects of your work do you think teamwork is important?
1.4 What kinds of activities in your team are aiming at fostering teamwork?
1.5 Do you think you are actively participating in your sub-team? Why?
1.6 Please evaluate the teamwork of your sub-team?
1.7 What is your expectation on teamwork? How to achieve your expectation on teamwork?
1.8 Any perceived discrepancies between expected and perceived teamwork in your sub-team?
1.9 If teamwork fails to be effective (to achieve your expected aims of teamwork), what will be your reactions, especially on participating in sub-team?

2. Quality of team communication

2.1 Please describe a scenario you consider to be an unsuccessful team communication in your sub-team.
2.2 What makes you consider such a scenario as unsuccessful?
2.3 How do you expect your own role / the role of your counterparts in team communication?
2.4 What do you perceive the quality of team communication for the above mentioned scenario, according to the four validity claims-comprehensibility, truth, sincerity, righteous?
2.5 What is the role of your counterparts, subordinates, colleagues, supervisors, affecting the quality of team communication?
2.6 Any of your personal factors (Belief system, defense mechanism, employment history) affect the quality of team communication?
2.7 Do you think that it is important for team members to understand each other? How can mutual understanding be achieved through team communication?
2.8 Any difficulties to achieve mutual understanding with your colleagues, supervisors, subordinates?
2.9 Please suggest any barriers to communication in the team?

3. Power and structure on team communication

3.1 Are there any differences when you interact with your colleagues, subordinates, supervisors?
3.2 Do you have any difficulties in communicating with your colleagues, subordinates, supervisors? Please quote one such incident.
3.3 What is your own role / position in team communication?
3.4 Do you think the team structure be effective for team communication?
    Why and how?
3.5 Is there any domination in team communication? Any oppression? What is your reaction then?
3.6 Do you believe there will be open and free team communication, which is free from domination, in the team? Why?

4. Background information

4.1 Employment history in social work field and in the organization.
4.2 Perception on the organization.
4.3 Readiness in joining the integrated team.
Interview Guide for Indepth Interview  
(Chinese version)

1. 對團隊合作的理解

1.1 你對團隊合作有何認識？
1.2 如何才能達致團隊合作？
1.3 團隊合作對你的工作在哪些方面顯出其重要性？
1.4 在你的工作分隊內，那些活動能營造團隊合作？
1.5 你覺得自己是否在分隊中積極參與？為什麼？
1.6 請評論你分隊的團隊合作。
1.7 你對團隊合作有何期望？又如何能達致期望的團隊合作？
1.8 你覺得你所期望的團隊合作和你在分隊所觀察到的團隊合作有何差異？
1.9 假如未能達致你所期望能的效果，你會如何反應，特別在分隊內的參與情況？

2. 團隊溝通的質素

2.1 請試列舉分隊內一次失敗的團隊溝通的經驗，而你自己是參與其中的。
2.2 爲何你認為這次團隊溝通經驗是失敗的？
2.3 你覺得自己在團隊溝通內扮演什麼角色？其他成員又扮演什麼角色？
2.4 你認為是次經驗反映其團隊溝通的質素為何？是否「可理解」，是否「真理」，是否「正當」，是否「真實」？
2.5 你覺得其他成員 - 如下屬、同級、上司如何影響團隊溝通的質素？
2.6 又有什麼你自己的個人因素（信仰、信念、教育背境）影響有關團隊溝通的質素？
2.7 你覺得團隊成員間的互相瞭解如何重要？又如何能透過團隊溝通達致互相瞭解？
2.8 你覺得與同級、上司、下屬在達致互相瞭解上有何困難？
2.9 你覺得有那些因素障礙成員間的溝通？
3. 權力與組織架構對團隊溝通的影響

3.1 你與同級、上司、下屬的交往中有何不同？
3.2 你覺得與同級、上司、下屬的溝通有沒有困難？請試列舉一個例子？
3.3 你覺得自己在團隊溝通上扮演甚麼角色？
3.4 你覺得中心的組織架構能否有效地增進團隊溝通？爲何 / 如何？
3.5 你覺得在團隊溝通中是否存在著壟斷的情況？或是否有施壓的情況？
    你又如何面對呢？
3.6 你是否相信能有開放及自由的團隊溝通？爲甚麼？

4. 背景資料

4.1 於機構及社工界任職的資歷
4.2 對機構的看法
4.3 是否自願參與青年綜合服務中心
APPENDIX 2

Abstraction from a Verbatim Report
(English version)

Case: C Date: September 11, 1996 Time: 10:15am to 12:15pm

I: Thanks for your participation in this interview session. This is a qualitative study for Master dissertation on the topic of Teamwork. In this session of around two hours, I am going to raise some simple questions. And you can feel free to give your own indepth and detail feedback. It is aiming at getting your own opinions or understanding towards the discussion topic, and there is no absolute answers for the questions. All information collected in the interview will be restricted for research purpose only and will be kept confidence. Moreover, although I am the supervisor of this service unit, I must declare that I am using the role as a researcher in this study and should not be confused with my work position here. In order to ensure the rights of the interviewees, you can feedback to our senior staff, Mr. X should you consider any negatives influence of this survey on your work. Lastly, I will also like to confine our discussion on the context of our Integrated Team especially during its formative stage and your sub-team will be selected as the team of being studied. That is, all staff members of the sub-team will be invited to participate in this study.

Here I will raise my first question. What is your understanding on the concept of teamwork?

C: I consider teamwork is needed in anywhere including in work setting and daily life. It is practical and concerning the structure. It help to develop the spirit. There should be role differentiation in teamwork, including team leader and team members.

I: Anymore supplement on this.

C: Basically, I think that is all about teamwork.

I: Do you agree that you think teamwork with three parts, they are, structure, spirit and role differentiation.

C: Yes, that is what I mean.

I: According to your own viewpoint, How can teamwork be achieved?

C: Firstly, it should have clear objectives and the objectives be agreed among the members. Then the process should be followed. And there are many variables during the process. Much discussions and consensus in defining the objectives should be made among the dominating ideas so as to allow the cooperation among the members. It is important to mention that the objectives should be changeable depending on the pace and understanding of the members.
I: Can I conclude that there should be clear objectives and the process of discussion to achieve teamwork? Any more supplement?

C: Yes, that is what I suggested?

I: According to your working experience in your sub-team, in which aspect of your work shows the significance of teamwork?

C: In my sub-team, I consider it is easy to reach consensus and there are some dominating viewpoints and objectives in the sub-team. But I noted that the agreed objectives in the team were developed gradually during the process. I understand that the team leader himself has his own objectives in his mind and the objectives serve as the dominating views in the team. With the modifications and suggestions from the members during the team process, the objectives were further refined and accepted as the objectives of the team.

Moreover, I consider there are practical aspect and psychological or spiritual aspect of teamwork. Firstly, there should be division of work and cooperation in practical side. However, one must always work independently as the works are clearly divided among the members. For example, when I was assigned to liaise with the community leaders I must seek advice and suggestions from other members on how to start the work. That is what can be helped practically by teamwork.

I: That is what you consider as practical aspect, then what is the spiritual aspect?

C: That is the feeling of being supported by other team members. After the job is assigned, it is sometimes necessary to get support from the team rather than reporting the job in team meetings. There should be personal relationship among the members, in which the feelings of safety are fostered to allow open discussions and sharing of difficulties. It is difficult to achieve the objectives if the members feel insecure and mistrust by other members.

I: What kinds of activities do you observe in your team which are aimed at cultivating teamwork among members?

C: Some tasks. I think. Such as the planned tasks designed in the year planning exercise. Since we are working, we must accomplish some tasks in our works through cooperation, interaction and communication, both formally and informally, to cultivate team spirit.

I: What is formal and informal communication?

C: Formal is the accomplishment of tasks through cooperation. Informal is the chatting and mutual concern among the members or even playing together.

I: What is your own participation in your team and why do you have such participation?

C: I think just like my character, I will try hard to do even if I do not know how to
do and I do not like to do those job such as community liaison. I think I do highly satisfy personally with my performance in sub-team since I have actively participating in those works which is strange to me, especially works with the community leaders that I have no relevant experience in my previous job.

I : I think you have misunderstood my question. I am not asking whether if you are satisfied with your performance in sub-team. But whether if you actively involve in your team, especially in the team work formation?
訪問報告

個案： C
日期： 九六年九月十一日
時間： 上午十時十五分至下午十二時十五分
訪問內容：

訪問者： 感謝你參與此次訪問。訪問內容是為撰寫以團隊合作為題的碩士論文。我會於這兩小時的訪問中提問一些簡單的問題，而你可以隨意發表自己深層而詳盡的回應。此訪問的目的是得到你對此題目的個人意見和理解。這些題目是沒有絕對的答案的。所有有關此次訪問的資料都祇能用於這次研究，並將會保密。此外，我雖然還是這服務單位的主管，但我重申在這次研究中我祇使用研究員的身份而不會與我的工作崗位混淆。為了維護被訪者的權益，如果你發覺此研究對你工作有任何負面的影響，你可向我們的主管先生反映。最後，我會將此次訪問內容限制於我們的綜合服務團隊，特別是訪問合作過程，和你的分隊內。即是我所有分隊的成員都會被邀請參加這次訪問。首先我提出第一個問題，你對團隊合作概念的理解是甚樣？

被訪者： 我考慮到團隊合作無論在何地都是需要的，包括工作和日常生活。這是實務和結構有關的。它能幫助發展合作精神。於團隊合作中，有角色上的分工，包括有 team leader 和 team member。

訪問者： 有沒有其他補充？

被訪者： 基本上我想這是團隊合作。

訪問者： 你認為團隊合作有三個部份，它們是結構、合作精神和角色分工？

被訪者： 是，這是我的意思。

訪問者： 根據你個人的觀點，如何能達致團隊合作？

被訪者： 首先，應該有清晰的目標，而這些目標是其他團隊員都同意的。然後跟著去做。同時在過程中有不同的變數，透過將主流意見不斷作出討論、共同制訂目標，好讓成員間發揮合作性。重要的一提，目標應該隨著步伐和隊員的了解
深度而作出改變。

訪問者：我是否能夠總結地說這裡應該有清晰的目標和討論的過程，以達致團隊合作？有沒有補充？

被訪者：是，這都是我的想法。

訪問者：根據你在分隊內的工作經驗，那一方面能反映團隊合作的重要性？

被訪者：在我的分隊裡，我認爲是容易達致一致意見的。而分隊內是有主流意見和目標的。但我留意到這些目標的共識是於過程中漸漸形成的。我知道在 team leader 心目中已有其目標而這些目標便是團隊的主流目標。其他隊員通過提出意見作出修改，將目標再作定義並接受其為團隊的目標。

再者，我認爲團隊合作應有實務和心理或精神兩方面。首先，在實務方面應有分工和合作的存在。但是當工作已清晰地分配給各員工時，每人便應獨立地工作，例如，當我被委派與社區領導聯絡時，我一定會向其他隊員諮詢如何開始工作的意見，並聽取他們的忠告。這便是實際上團隊合作所能幫助的。

訪問者：這就是你對實際方面的考慮。那麼甚麼是精神方面呢？

被訪者：這便是團隊所給予支持的感覺。於工作分派後，有時是需要團隊的支持多於祇在會議中實際地報告工作內容，隊員間存在著一些不易察覺的關係，而這關係便能培養出安全的感覺，讓大家能公開討論和分享困難。如隊員間缺乏安全感和互信便難於達成目標。

訪問者：以你觀察所得，你的團隊是以何種活動培養團隊合作？

被訪者：我想有些工作。譬如，每年所訂的工作計劃。因爲在工作中，我們一定要通過合作、互動和溝通將工作完成，這包括正式和非正式地去培養團隊精神。

訪問者：什麼是正式和非正式溝通？

被訪者：正式是通過合作將工作完成。非正式是隊員間的閒談、互相關懷，甚至一同耍樂。

訪問者：在團隊中你個人的參與怎樣和為什麼你有這樣的參與？
被訪者：我想就好像我的性格，我會盡力嘗試，甚至我不知道怎樣做和我不喜歡去做的，例如社區聯絡，都會努力去做。我想在個人而言我極度滿意我在分隊的表現，因為我積極參與那些對我而言是陌生的工作，特別是那些與社區領袖一起的工作，我以前的工作沒有這些經驗的。

訪問者：我想你誤解了我的問題。我不是問你是否滿意你在分隊的工作表現。而是你是否積極參與團隊，特別是團隊合作的形成方面？
APPENDIX 3

Organization Structure of the Integrated Team

Organizational Chart of the Integrated Team