

## 3.1 Cases Selection and Overview

Being interested in elaborating theory on coordination in creative group work, the author conducted an inductive qualitative study using grounded theory approaches (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Inductive qualitative research is appropriate when the research question focuses on developing theory, especially theory about process (Cresswell, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The author thus conducted two case studies, allowing for an in-depth qualitative investigation of the coordination process.

The two studies related to one telenovela and one series. The choice of studies was based on the author's concern to ensure they consider creativity important, enabled transparent observations of group interactions and communications and was guided by the author's interest in learning how creative groups coordinate in a temporary organization where work is interdependent, and has to be completed under immense time pressure. These teams have members who do not know each other really well, as they only work together during the temporary project, but need to ensure they coordinate in a creative manner and under unpredicted circumstances. They place a premium on creativity, hierarchy exists but in a way that differs from that of a more traditional organization as it relates to a more flat group structure, and collective work is important for the final product.

In accordance with Bamberger & Pratt (2010) those being studied welcomed this “unconventional research” and as a result gave me access over a long period of time, were motivated to participate as they found being the focus of this study “an honor”, and were very interested in the progress of my research and

my discoveries improving the possibility of a strong practical impact. Conducting research on such unconventional setting ensured fewer strings attached and therefore no need to filter the findings before reporting the results.

Finally, the temporary organization created during the shooting period has nothing to do with a typical organization, as there are no organizational structures, control systems, inner-groups, evaluations, organizational politics, thus creating an extreme setting where the phenomenon of interest would be “transparently observable” (Pettigrew, 1990).

For these reasons, the author expected that this peculiar setting would enable him to elaborate theory (Lee, Mitchell, & Sablinski, 1999) on the mechanisms where coordination across interdependent specialized knowledge domains unfolds in a multidisciplinary, creative, temporary team.

The key issue was that although the production manager and director had an idea of how to shoot a particular scene, several decisions on how it could be materialized were determined through group interactions during rehearsals, where all crew collectively developed the script.

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### **3.2 Data Collection—Access and Sample**

The author gained access to the two settings by contacting two film production companies that shoot films, telenovelas, commercials and video clips. More specifically I got in touch with the production manager of each setting to consider if they would be willing to participate in my study. This would allow me to capture nearly the entire creative process and the emergent moments thought to be critical in collective creative work (Hargadon & Bechky, 2006).

The two projects studied were of different duration and focus. The first was a daily telenovela, shot both indoors and outdoors in different locations, filmed in three years out of which the author was present almost on a daily basis during the whole of the first year’s shooting that is a period of ten months. Crew was twenty five people and the yearly budget approximately one million euro. The second was a TV series, also filmed both indoors and outdoors, total duration was two years and the author was present almost on a daily basis during three months of the first year. Crew was twenty people and the yearly budget eight hundred thousand euro.

3.3 Analytical Process

Figure 3.1 outlines the research process, illustrating how the author iteratively moved between data collection, analysis and theory throughout the study.

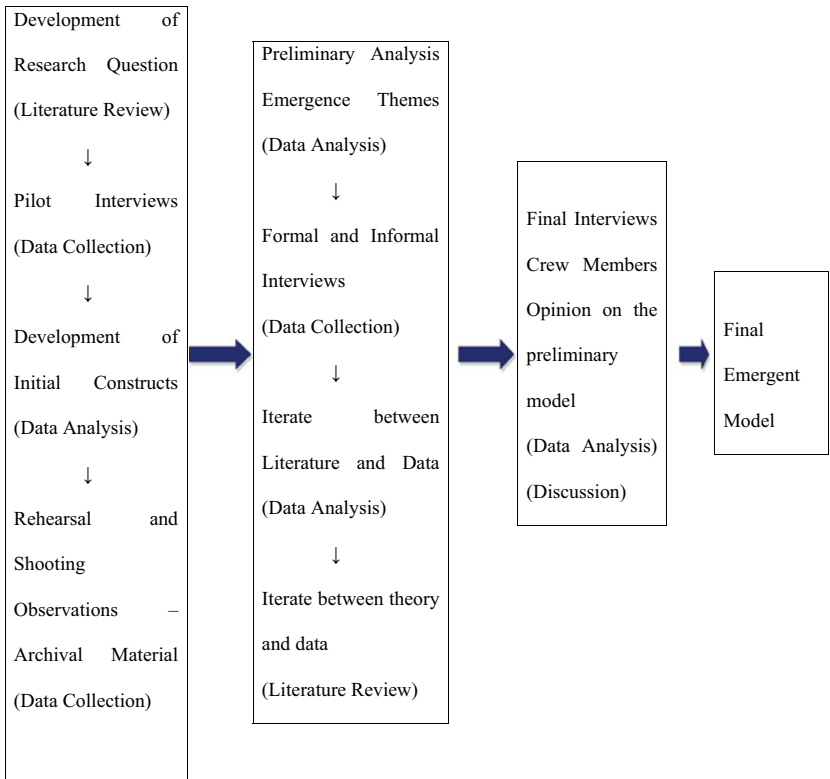


Figure 3.1 Research Process

**Development of research question:** Initially the author was interested in how groups coordinate creative work in temporary projects. The literature suggested that there is a need to consider how formal coordination structures can be combined with informal coordination practices in order to provide sufficient flexibility necessary to adapt to situations that require novelty (Ben-Menahem, von Krogh, Erden, & Shneider, 2016, Okhyesen & Bechky, 2009). Thus the need to examine

the dynamic nature of coordination (McEvily, et al., 2014) focusing on the way formal structures and informal practices interact and coevolve.

**Pilot Interviews:** To better understand the dynamics in film crew groups the author conducted exploratory pilot interviews with two production managers and two film directors in order to ask them about the shooting process of a film they experienced in their career. I did not want to focus on specific issues, but to let those issues arise during the interview.

During those interviews one of the production managers highlighted the idea that she did not want to be involved with all shooting details and that as a result she would just stay back and get involved only when she would realize that the director and the other crew members were not in agreement about how to shoot a specific scene, stating that “in fact each one have their specific roles, thus they should know how to handle it”. The two film directors expressed the importance of allowing flexibility during the group coordination process because “there are cases where people need to pass the boundaries of their roles and expected responsibilities in order to handle the issues arising during the shooting of a scene”. While reviewing the four interviews the author realized the need to understand the dynamics between formal team roles and the informal interactions actually taking place during the shooting.

**Rehearsal and Shooting Observations:** According to Bechky (2006) two important elements of coordination in temporary projects are role structure and role enactment. To consider these in depth I decided to participate in both the rehearsals and the actual shootings of two film settings. These observations formed the primary sources of data. The researcher was almost daily participant and observer in all departments (direction, production, camera and lighting, production sound, art). This gave him the opportunity to make notes which he would extend by adding additional details every night after the end of the shooting.

**Archival Material:** The author also gathered archival material such as weekly schedules, scripts of scenes, number of actors/actresses in each scene, locations and time tables during the weekly shootings for both film projects. Moreover, he collected archival data to contextualize the interviews. Data also included documents from the production manager’s management platform, and related publications from the local film industry including a local film on directions about the way a film is shot.

**Formal and Informal Interviews:** In order to enrich my understanding of the groups’ coordination and emergent constructs I conducted formal and informal interviews with film crew members in both settings. Those were outside the rehearsals, on a one to one basis, and aimed to help me understand the coordination process taking place during the shootings of scenes I observed and noted

myself. I also informally interviewed crew members during the rehearsals break or during lunch time break and those were shorter interviews that were mainly to help me with the notes I was taking during my daily observations.

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### **3.4 Research Setting**

A film production crew consists of several specialized members who need to work together, as their jobs are interdependent, in a creative manner. It is important to note that although they are aware of the script, there is still room for creativeness as there is always room for discussion about issues arising during the shooting of a scene. A major issue they face is time pressure as crew members need to follow strict timetables, otherwise they will surpass both the time and budget limits. There are two issues that are major when considering time pressure. Firstly, actors may be working on more than one project during the same period and thus may not be available to work overtime, secondly, all scenes scheduled to be shot in a specific location had to be completed before moving to a new location thus any delays would mess up the time schedule significantly.

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### **3.5 Data Analysis**

The author started the data analysis by going through his field notes and coming up with some initial thoughts on crew coordination. Data analysis was then conducted in three stages.

#### **3.5.1 First Order Concepts**

First, to reconstruct the crew's workflow of activities and break down the way coordination is achieved across different jobs, and thus duties and responsibilities, the author initially engaged in open coding of raw interview data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and more specifically in breaking down the data to understand the underlying dynamics. To contextualize the interview data, the author used field notes from observations and secondary data. During open coding, I stayed very close to the data to identify the different kinds of statements, questions, and actors that emerged in a given interaction and as a result develop first-order concepts. This was done until the analysis stopped yielding sufficiently distinct first-order categories. Each first-order concept was labeled consistently with informants'

terminology (e.g. first order concept “clear role assignment formally done by the Production Manager” corresponds to interview excerpt “before the start of the new project I was approached by the Production Manager in order to discuss what was expected of myself.” (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2012). If coding labels conflicted, I crosschecked emerging codes to ensure that the data were particular to a given code.

### 3.5.2 Second Order Themes

Second, the author used axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to identify similarities and differences in the first-order categories, and aggregated corresponding categories into second-order themes giving them higher order theoretical labels (e.g. handling job interdependencies). I solidified my understanding of each interaction pattern by comparing the interactions to one another. Particularly with observational data, comparing interaction to interaction can allow a deeper understanding of the phenomenon than the coding of small units of analysis such as words or lines (Charmaz, 2006). Counterexamples, where the interactions broke down, were used to round my understandings. Through these comparisons, a structure for my second-order themes emerged around triggers, emergent states and corresponding actions. For example, I noticed that while discussing the initial issues they needed to face during the shooting process, sub-team members flexibly changed their original ideas and as a result handled emergent job interdependencies.

**Aggregate Dimensions:** As the research design is aimed at elaborating theory, I repeatedly consulted the coordination literature to help me interpret the findings in the light of prior work. In doing so, I aggregated second-order themes into higher-order theoretical dimensions (Gioia et al 2012). This second stage produced a data structure with three aggregate theoretical dimensions. Figure 3.2 summarizes the data structure.

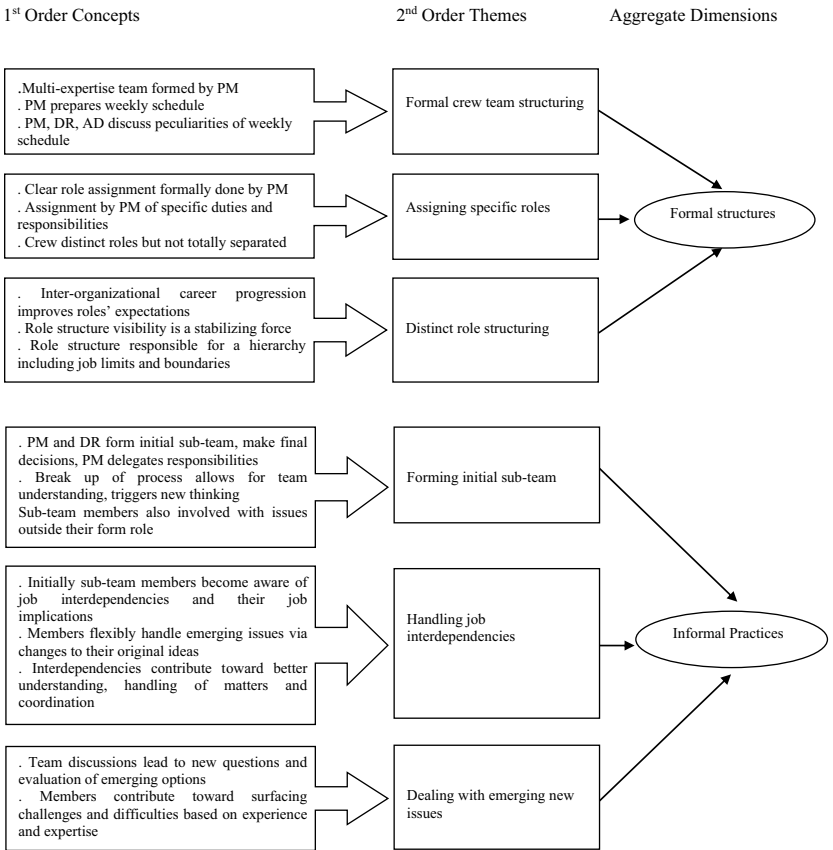
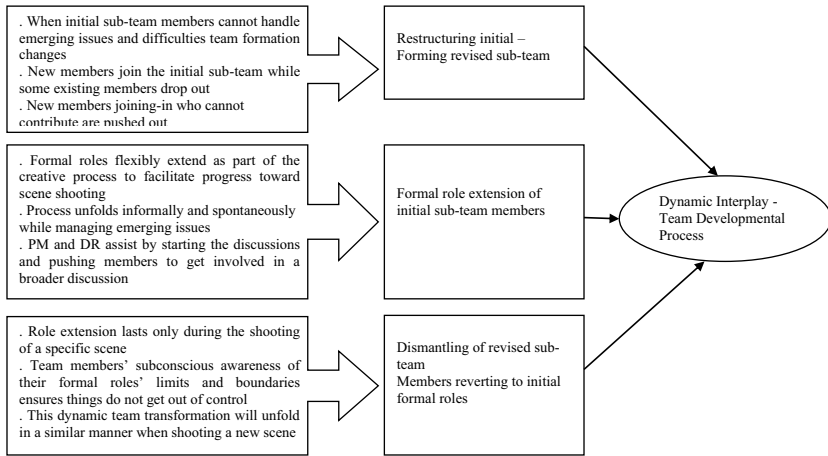


Figure 3.2 Data Structure



**Figure 3.2** (continued)

### 3.5.3 Preliminary Model

Third, the author revisited the full data set in search of emerging patterns and relationships between the themes and theoretical dimensions. As I progressed toward a deeper understanding of these patterns and relationships, I developed a preliminary model of how formal coordination structures and informal coordination practices interact dynamically to achieve creative group coordination in a temporary organization.

### 3.5.4 Final Emergent Model

Finally, to lend increased credibility to my interpretations, I discussed the emerging model with several key crew members (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Nag, Corley & Gioia, 2007) before its final development.



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