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Managers in teams: How valuing individualism or collectivism affects their participation

Robinson, George Chapman, Ph.D.

Case Western Reserve University, 1994
MANAGERS IN TEAMS:
HOW VALUING INDIVIDUALISM OR COLLECTIVISM
AFFECTS THEIR PARTICIPATION

by

GEORGE C. ROBINSON

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Eric H. Neilsen

Department of Organizational Behavior

CASE WESTERN RESERVE UNIVERSITY

January, 1994
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GRADUATE STUDIES

We hereby approve the thesis of

George C. Robinson

candidate for the Ph.D.
degree.*

(signed) Eric A. Nelson
(chair)

William A. Pomer

Paul Salipante

July 21, 1993

date 7/16/93

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George C. Robinson
MANAGERS IN TEAMS:  
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AFFECTS THEIR PARTICIPATION

Abstract

by

George C. Robinson

This research documents dissimilar outcomes found in two petrochemical plants responding to a common corporate mandate to institute more participative practices. Participative practices in teams, the focus of this report, are analyzed to learn ways in which they reflect a value upon either individualism or collectivism. The analysis chapters explain how human resource systems, plant manager's style, and national culture can influence participation in teams in ways that foster a collective agenda and dampen the self-interest of individual team members or vice versa. This work is distinctive in combining the anthropological methods of emic and etic description and analysis with a functional examination of bureaucratic dysfunctions.

Major research findings include the following: that favorable conditions for participation obtain when systems align with organizational structure; that members who exhibit good group skills and can serve as their own process consultants are central to developing self-managing teams; that participation is a "hard sell" to most US business executives because of its countercultural values and their successes without it; that national cultures provide uniquely different contexts which exert muted but unmistakable influence on participation; and, finally, that attending to members'
personal meanings of the concept "team", created from their first hand experiences, reveals variants of participation.

The findings imply that practitioners launching participative changes can expect increased congruence between efforts and success when they actively discern potential participants' personal meanings about teamwork. These data will give them an edge when orchestrating action via the web of structure, systems, actors and culture, all of which alternately pose restraints upon and create unique opportunities for participation. For scholars, studying participation is important because its use is much more likely in the immediate and protracted future. Competitive pressures ensure this despite cynicism about its effectiveness among executives and recipients of past doses. Furthermore, participation goads academicians and practitioners alike to grapple with a conundrum: how to bring the harmonious social relations and mutual dependence of collective thought to economic enterprise which typically treats human beings as instruments and generally rewards individual achievement and self-reliance rather than collaboration with others.
DEDICATION

To my mother

She would not have been inclined to read it, but she would have been so proud of my achievement. So let it rip up there, Mom. You can now say, "My son the doctor.....!"
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Producing a dissertation is a cooperative effort. Eric Neilsen was there from the beginning, well before my clarity about the focus of this project had sharpened. Without him, this would still be pieces of data in neat computer files. His special talent was in helping me see the story lines in the data and how they might evolve into this thing called a thesis. Also, his strength was to continually remind me of the overall picture when my personal inclination was to explore the detail of particularly appealing events or data. Don Wolfe helped me think through the detailed story lines in my writing to glean the more important psychological and sociological facts. I never left his office without new insight into the dynamics of the actors about whom I wrote. He also has a buoyant and sustaining way of offering assurance in moments of personal questioning. Paul Salipante read rough drafts at the beginning of my intensive writing phase and encouraged me by seeing beyond what I saw in these truly rough drafts. Later, he gave particular help which greatly improved the chapter on human resources. Throughout, he offered his support. Bill Pasmore's special contribution was to deepen my understanding of the concept of participation and to encourage me to look within this research for new hints which might further our understanding of participative efforts. Unbeknownst to him, he also has a manner which said to me, "Take yourself seriously, but not too seriously." Thank you each for your unique contributions.
Student colleagues helped me immensely with ideas, articles to read, transcribing, and support in the dim hours. Bruce Hanson, Chang-Kil Park, Ram Tenkasi, and Tojo Thachankary acted as my alter-committee, helping me shape fledgling ideas and showing confidence in me way back when. Chang-Kil, ever respectful of my need for alone time to write, offered articles, books or ideas that "might" be relevant. They always were. In the wee hours, he also manufactured different drafts of the paper, relieving me of that detail and worry. Ram and Tojo were my colleagues on a daily basis, offering encouragement, thought, and light moments as we toiled together. More recently, Bruce communicated from afar, giving helpful and perceptive ideas on both the content of my work and the process of getting it done. He always supported my ability as well. I can not thank you enough, Bruce.

My chapter on human resource systems is much the better for Ken Rhee's astute, frank, and amiable critique. Laura Binder helped with the thankless job of transcribing. Bob Niemi, Don Austin, Ken Rhee, and Tojo Thachankary allowed me to twist their arms into transcribing one particularly key part of my interviews.

My wife Kim supported me literally and figuratively. I owe her much for her understanding and forbearance. Many of us who write one of these tomes give up much and cause others close by to do the same.

Lastly, I acknowledge my own grit.
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Chapter 1: The Current Attraction of Participation

In this thesis, I compare participative practices in two petrochemical plants at a firm I will call Chemco. Many companies use an autocratic, "top-down" ideology and dabble with participative measures but do not adopt them in wholesale fashion. This is understandable. Hundreds of firms have performed well using the "top-down" management model, and large-scale participative interventions, when done well, require prolonged efforts, eat up substantial resources and initially disrupt routines. And, bluntly put, they threaten managerial authority. More recently, however, managers have taken a second look at participative measures. Global competitive pressures, a hackneyed yet accurate refrain, have caused increasing numbers of senior executives to question all aspects of the way they run their firms, even cherished managerial doctrine.

Today's competitive environment favors firms which demonstrate the key competencies of flexibility and speed (Cohen, 1993). The better firms marshall their human resources in fluid combinations (frequently teams), dissolve them and recombine them quickly to take on the next challenge. Hierarchical decision making does not fare well in this environment, especially given the rapid increase of knowledge workers tied to advances in information technology (Cohen, 1993). These specialists typically know much more about the subject matter relevant to key decisions than their bosses do. Wise managers are compelled to consider giving up some control and lowering the locus of decision making. Also influencing a move to
increased participation in decisions are widened spans of control. They often accrue from reorganizations in which whole layers or departments of white collar workers are removed. Managers can struggle to supervise added people or learn how to organize them into more participative configurations such as self-managing teams. Interest in new social system arrangements that can improve competitive advantage has never been higher. Participation is a timely topic if not a new one.

INTENT OF RESEARCH; THE RESEARCH QUESTION

My intent in writing this thesis is to increase understanding of participation, especially participation in groups. Lawler (1986) provides an excellent working definition of participation. Employees enhance participation when they gain more of any or all of the following: 1. power over decision-making processes; 2. access to business information; 3. control of rewards; and 4. knowledge and skills relevant to the job. He lists the following seven participative activities: quality circles; employee participation groups; employee survey feedback; job enrichment; self-managing work teams; union-management Quality of Work Life committees; and enterprise units (Lawler, 1986; Galbraith and Lawler, 1993). Five of these kinds of participation occur directly in groups. A sixth, survey feedback, suggests a group format for the data feedback meetings. Thus it makes sense to study joint action in groups or teams to learn more about participation.

The data for this study came from interviewing managers in two separate petrochemical plants at a firm I will call Chemco. The topic for this research is a
comparison of the participative practices that two plant management teams created within their teams or caused to occur elsewhere in their respective plants. The question for this research emerged out of these team building efforts.

In response to the same corporate mandate, both plant management teams began simultaneous changes in the way employees worked together yet produced substantially different outcomes by the time I studied them five years later. Based upon considerable variation in the kinds of participation evident in each plant, I structured this research question:

Given similar mandates for participation, what factors explain the variation in the forms which participation takes in two petrochemical plants?

After answering that question, I summarize key learnings and offer a descriptive model which characterizes the variety of participative responses found in the case material presented.

THEORETICAL LINKS

Focusing primarily on data about two plant management staff groups, I chose to highlight the group level of analysis for several reasons. Pragmatically, my data were filled with information about groups or teams at each plant. In addition, literature based examples of participative practices document a heavy emphasis on team based practices, for example quality teams, self-managing teams; semi-autonomous work teams. Also, management interest in teams as tools to enhance productivity is now widespread. However, the overriding reason for this choice was
that groups provide an excellent opportunity to study the particular set of theoretical constructs I used to interpret my data.

**The Paradox of Participation in Groups**

In a very real sense, the concepts of participation and teamwork epitomize a paradox in North American culture. Inherent in the notion of the group or team is the idea of collective action or a collective agenda, a purpose transcending that of individual members. However, our cultural heritage salutes the individual’s freedom and right to make his or her own decisions. Personal freedom within the rule of law supersedes the rights of the community. Even though we work and play in teams, our strongest ties are to our individual, personal goals and those of our immediate families. Just reflect upon the contract negotiating practices of superstars in any professional sport and ask if the team comes first. In effect our cultural dynamics can play out, particularly in group settings, in a way that works at cross purposes to the intent of participative acts. In corporate settings, as a new task force is forming, many potential members typically evaluate first and foremost how membership will or will not promote their own careers. Secondarily, they focus on the corporate purpose for the activity.

As a way to better understand the details of this paradox and, thus, to increase our knowledge of participation in groups, I used the theoretical constructs of individualism and collectivism to interpret my data. Again, to emphasize this point, groups provide an ideal site to use the concepts of individualism and collectivism as
an analytical tool because, in North America, groups hold within them this very
polarity. They are collective structures with a common agenda, yet their members are
better schooled in accomplishing individual goals than group goals. Below, I make
the important theoretical links between this dimension and participation as studied in
this research.

Consider the behavior of team members involved in participative activity at
Chemco. I assert that the dynamic of individualism versus collectivism exerted a
strong influence upon their behavior. I use data to show that this dynamic encouraged
members in some groups to function in self-interested ways while nudging those in
other groups to join wholeheartedly in the joint agenda. As an example, senior
managers can adjust a reward system to accent individual achievement only or to
value personal achievement and teamwork as well. The primary analytical question I
apply to study participation in groups can be stated in this way:

    What factors influence a team of managers to be more or
    less oriented toward individualism or collectivism (personal
    goals or the group’s goals)?

**Individualism and Collectivism Defined**

Individualism refers to behaviors associated with a belief in independence, self-
reliance, and personal initiative used to achieve one’s goals. Individualism assumes a
competitive environment in which personal interests take precedence over the interests
of others, especially those outside one’s immediate family. Collectivism refers to
behaviors identified with a belief in the primacy of the group’s goals over those of any
individual member. At the interpersonal level, harmonious social relationships and mutual dependence between associated members take precedence over advancing one’s personal agenda.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS QUESTION/ THE STUDY'S CONTRIBUTION

The importance of any study hinges on its relevance as a contribution to theory or practice. This research contributes generally by extending knowledge about participation in groups and also in three specific ways. A shop worn word too casually used by managers, practitioners and academicians alike, "team" has become a "catch all", diluted in explanatory usefulness. First, differentiating teams which are more collectively oriented from those more individualistically oriented adds back detail to the concept of team. Second, I question the premise that the mere presence of teams means that teamwork or participation are present, and I argue that participation comes in a variety of forms and under contrasting circumstances. Third, academicians and researchers will be interested in the combined use of emic or "native view" and etic concepts found in the case descriptions.

As noted above, this research spells out the characteristics of teams operating from more or less individualistic or collective orientations. This experiential knowledge can help managers analyze their organizations to spot conditions more and less favorable to participative interventions through teamwork. It can also help them think through in advance the appropriateness and consequences of using teams in certain circumstances. Even if individualistic by background, managers must gain
employee cooperation to advance firm goals. That is their job. We know that work
groups are secondary socialization agents (Dunphy, Fraser, Neilsen, & Zuniga, 1971)
and that extended time in them exposes members to the shaping effects of team norms
and values. Teams present a point of entry for managers to influence workers toward
more participatory behavior.

ORIGIN OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

My research question stems from three sources. First, in prior research efforts
I developed a keen interest in the social values of individualism and collectivism and
how they affect managers' behavior at work. Second, Chemco's unfolding history
provided the actual participative events for the study. Lastly, the concept of
participation has its roots in democratic values and also in one of the early historical
streams which led to the practice of Organizational Development (OD).

Prior Research

While studying newly promoted general managers several years ago, I noted
that these men were regularly fired within eighteen months to two years of entering
their jobs. Sheer lack of ability and a shoddy selection procedure contributed
separately or in combination to the exit of many. However, I argued that underlying
these problems, a norm of excessive individualism permeated the firm's culture and
hastened their demise.

Raised on self-reliance, competition, and individual achievement as the basis
for rewards, none asked for help when problems were small and easily solved. Skilled
only in one functional area and lacking collaborative networks because of their studied self-reliance, they did not solve unfamiliar problems associated with multi-functional responsibility. They fell victim to their own beliefs, encouraged by years in an autocratic and paternalistic firm, that "I can do it all by myself" and "They’ve always taken care of me". Worse still, some even voiced the position that they were entirely to blame for problems. This "blame the victim" mentality excused the firm from examining systemic issues encouraging the frequent exodus of general managers. The process also made room for a manager from outside the firm who would be more in sync with the new culture.

In stark contrast, one group of managers from the petrochemical plants in this study actively helped each other with business problems. They even discussed how to improve their home lives, based on what they learned as a team at work. Unlike the excessive individualism under which the GMs labored, this management group seemed to possess collectivistic traits. Individual initiative and self-reliance gave way to mutual dependence in pursuit of group goals; harmonious relationships took precedence over competition and self-interest. In essence, they worked as a self-managing team, a high order form of participation. The factors accounting for their highly participative ethos when compared with the other plants deserved further study. Personally, I felt much more attuned to the second management team’s ‘modus operandi but saw my own behavior, thinking and results reflected in the lives of the managers from the earlier research effort.
Literal Source

The literal problem for this research emerged because of Chemco's decision to undertake organizational change efforts with a more participative intent. Establishing new kinds of teams or groups was at the core of the participative efforts in the plants I studied. The divergence in the kinds of teams created at the two plants established the variability needed to justify the study on methodological grounds.

The third source of this research effort, rooted in the history of our field, relates so closely to the literature and theory underlying this study that I will combine it within the body of Chapter Two.

THE FLOW OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

In Chapter Two, I present literature and theory to prepare the reader for my description and analysis of managers in teams. I include a lengthy essay on individualism and collectivism, using the United States and Canada as examples.

Chapter Three contains my methodology for this research effort. I explain the particular method of ethnographic data analysis used. I also discuss validity in qualitative research and include personal biases which during the research process.

Chapter Four lays out the background and setting for the case material. Here, I describe the composition and operation of a typical chemical plant. I also discuss the factors external to life in these particular chemical plants which built momentum for later internal changes.
In Chapters Five and Six, I describe a particular set of those internal changes -- how participation in groups occurred in one Canadian and one American plant. I detail the kinds of teams present in the two plants and the uses to which those teams were put. I pay most attention to the management teams.

In Chapter Seven, I begin analyzing the data by noting the similarities and differences between group life in the two plants. I then set the stage for the more central part of the analysis by spelling out factors which account for the variation in participative efforts between plants. Following this tack, I then pick three factors for more in-depth analysis. In Chapter Eight, I address the effects of human resource systems on group participation at the two different plants. In the following chapter, I discuss the effects of leadership by plant managers on participation in groups. Finally, in Chapter Ten I discuss the links between national culture and participation in groups. In Chapter Eleven I conclude this research report with a descriptive theory of participation, delineating varieties of participation in teams. Within these varieties, I report the personal meanings which members attach to the concept of "team".
Chapter 2: Literature and Theory

The purpose of this chapter is to lay a theoretical foundation to analyze the data reported in the case materials. Two sets of concepts are covered. The first, participation and team building, tie the research data (plant management groups instituting participative practices in teams) to the field of OD. The second set, individualism and collectivism, comprise the central analytic tool for reviewing the data. The chapter is laid out in the following way.

It begins with a discussion of how participation and team building relate to the field of OD. Then, an example introduces a general discussion of individualism and collectivism. This general review precedes a commentary on the historical roots of individualism in the United States. This commentary names and explains four distinctive variants of individualism and then identifies one, utilitarian individualism, as most appropriate for the purposes of this report. Then, the text shifts to a detailed comparison of the United States and Canada. Focussing on the historical importance of revolutionary versus counterrevolutionary traditions, this segment highlights the collective aspects of Canadian culture. Next, I relate a brief account of events resulting in the professional manager of today's corporation. I also provide a behavioral sketch of how managers influenced by both individualism and collectivism could be expected to act.

The discussion then shifts to the notion of teams as a paradox in cultures of individualism. Dynamics found in collaborative and self-oriented teams are reviewed
with respect to the emotional demands made by teams, ingroup behavior, and the impact of human resource systems on behavior in teams. The chapter concludes with a discussion of hierarchical control in organizations. The dynamics of coercion and compromise are described and compared with an alternative form of control, namely collaboration and consensus.

**PARTICIPATION, TEAM BUILDING AND OD**

This research report tells of team building efforts by two plant management teams responding to a corporate mandate for more participative management programs. Five years after the mandate, employees at both plants said they had instituted participative management practices. The cases will substantiate the form of those efforts which I analyze in the chapters following the cases. The goal of this section is to show that concepts central to the research, namely participation and team building, are also central to the field of Organizational Development. I also note that these concepts run counter to the ethos of corporate America.

**Participation**

A fundamental belief in organizational development is that the organization does its work through work teams of a variety of kinds and natures... (French and Bell, 1990, p.92).

One of the most pervasive and far-reaching foundations of organizational development is its use of a participation/empowerment model... (French and Bell, 1990, p.93).

Douglas McGregor (1960) spoke about participation early in the development of our field, proclaiming that:
The effective use of participation is a consequence of a managerial point of view which includes confidence in the potentialities of subordinates, awareness of management's dependency downwards, and a desire to avoid some of the negative consequences of emphasis on personal authority...It consists basically in creating opportunities under suitable conditions for people to influence decisions affecting them. That influence can vary from a little to a lot (pp.125-126).

In a more recent statement, Plunkett and Fournier (1990) note that:

...participative management is a philosophy that demands that organizational decision making be made in such a way that input and responsibility are extended to the lowest level appropriate to the decision being made (pp.4-5).

One could find a similar assertion in the STS literature noting that good practice means in part letting those with the best knowledge and closest to the work make the decisions. I say this to point out the intertwined nature of participation and team building as we will see below.

In a general way, participation is always the question in a democracy. Concern for good citizenship brings up the issue of participation because representative democracy rests fundamentally upon the consent and participation of the governed. Cohen (1971) underscores this in his definition of democracy:

Democracy is that system of community government in which, by and large, the members of the community participate, or may participate, directly or indirectly, in the making of decisions which affect them all (p.7).

He goes on to say that "an understanding of what participation concretely involves will make possible a rational estimate of the degree(s) of democracy realized in any actual community" (1971, p.7). Our profession as students of organizations and practitioners
in them is concerned exactly with how concretely participation exists in organizations and with increasing democratic practices.

More collaborative organizations is a central goal of organizational development and implies broad participation by employees (Neilsen, 1984, p. 17). As practitioners, we constantly seek more participative management and better integration of the person into the organization. Neumann (1988) notes that our field views participation as "good for developing human systems" and that practitioners see increased participation as both a goal of their interventions and an indicator of success in changing organizations (pp. 2-3). Sashkin (1986) calls participative management an "ethical imperative" for our field.

In Chapter One, I stated that a third source of this research was historical. That was a reference to the following remarks about Kurt Lewin. Kurt Lewin’s action research model defines a major historical force in OD’s development. Action research is the basic methodology for the practice of OD and rests on participation by organizational members. Marvin Weisbord notes that:

...Lewin evolved a theory that when people participate in a study of their own behavior, they are more likely to accept and act on the results (emphasis added) (Warrick, 1985, p.7).

As a social scientist who had escaped Nazi Germany, Lewin was especially attuned to democratic sensibilities. His early work in which members participated in group learning events (laboratory training) evolved into the classic OD strategy of team
building. Addressing participation in groups places this study in the mainstream of our field.

**Team Building**

Groups became an object of serious study with the advent of laboratory training at the end of World War II (French and Bell, 1990). In fact laboratory training (or T-Groups) is another of the main historical roots of the field of Organizational Development. As innovative applied behavioral scientists tried transferring the learning from T-Groups to corporate settings, they found that stranger groups simply did not suffice. Individual corporate members returning to work found no reality base among peers who had not shared their experience. Their new learning was swallowed up by corporate norms. The idea for team training grew as these innovators tried to transfer learning from laboratory training.

The list of those involved in this early work reads like a "Who's Who" of Organizational Development (OD) as recounted in French and Bell's (1990) chapter on the history of OD (pp. 24-39). Kurt Lewin was one of the original practitioners and theoreticians at NTL and its earlier incarnations. Chris Argyris "was one of the first to conduct team building sessions" (French and Bell, 1990, p. 27). Douglas McGregor tackled the transfer of learning problem of T-Groups in corporate settings. Both he and Herb Shepard were early internal consultants, McGregor at Union Carbide, Shepard at Esso Standard Oil. Robert Blake and later Jane Mouton joined Shepard in
some of his work at Esso, adding instrumentation which they later evolved into the Managerial Grid.

The socio-technical systems approach, another key historical stem of OD, contributed directly to knowledge about teams. This stream's contribution began at the Tavistock Institute (French and Bell, 1990). Expertise in group dynamics and group theory evolved from early efforts in family therapy combined with Bion's group work with soldiers at a military hospital. STS itself grew out of Eric Trist's work in the British coal industry. He discovered the miner's enthusiasm for the traditional "hand-got" methods when the newer "long haul" practice incited near rebellion (Dalton, 1971). The older method presaged the host of later team labels such as (semi) autonomous, self-managing, self-regulating. The "hand-got" method:

...placed the responsibility for the complete coal-getting task squarely on the shoulders of a single small face-to-face group which experienced the entire cycle of operations (Dalton, 1971, p. 85).

More recently, Pasmore (1988) has noted that teams associated with STS help maximize cooperative efforts. He writes:

At the lowest level, this frequently means designing work and reward systems to encourage group versus individual effort. The autonomous group...has proven a robust and highly effective basic building block for organizational design. Although such groups do vary widely in their true autonomy...the fundamental notion of a group of multi-skilled individuals assuming responsibility for a whole piece of work has proven sound across a broad range of applications (p. 98).

Combined with Tavistock's early group work focus, STS furthered the evolution of what we now call team building or team development.
The Corporate Ethos

As advocates of participation and team development, academicians and practitioners of Organizational Development come squarely in conflict with the ethos of corporate America. Recently, from corporate chiefs one hears the value of participation, teamwork, even caring. Participation is a good thing once again as are teams. Teams will help us regain world prominence in the competitive global market place. Our teams will show the Japanese we aren’t lazy! From Fortune magazine comes this:

...managers are sharing more power with people they once regarded as subordinates, and employees of nominally lower rank are experiencing some of the joys and burdens of increased responsibility. With so many middle managers gone, there’s no alternative to empowering workers (p.52).

Senior managers have come to participation in teams grudgingly, digging in their heels the whole way, using teams for others lowest in the hierarchy as a participatory sop (quality circles) and only lately for themselves. Paradoxically, while wholesale downsizing shouts the message that people are disposable objects and employment contracts mean little, managers must somehow convince the survivors that they are the firm’s most valuable resource. To access more of employees’ talents, managers have picked up the banner of increased participation in teams.

No wonder managers feel endangered by these concepts. Self-managing teams, accurately understood, threaten management because they give those lower in the hierarchy a vehicle through which to organize, and they pose a direct threat to
managerial authority. If those lower in the firm and closest to the work have the best knowledge to make decisions, if the ideas and talents of all are truly valued and implemented, what special sphere does that leave for managers? This concern makes managers wary of too much participation.

As a bridge to our discussion of individualism and collectivism, I relate an example taken from events concerning authority and participation or rather the lack of it in the wider society.

A Riot of Opposing Ideas. In the near aftermath of the Los Angeles riot, Peter Jennings reported a story which highlights a dilemma central to this research. Community members divided sharply on whether to rebuild the area’s one hundred forty plus liquor stores. A citizen’s group urged against it, citing the area’s high incidence of alcoholism, the common use of liquor stores for drug deals and the sheer number of stores, figured either per capita or per square mile, when compared with neighboring Pasadena. The burned out entrepreneurs proclaimed their right to rebuild, their right to make a living and, as one said, the necessity for feeding his family of five. We all want a safe community in which to live and raise our children. Yet each of us has the constitutional right to set up a legal business. How to negotiate these differences has become increasingly unclear. Whose rights come first, the individual’s or the community’s?

We learn contrasting rules for living in society based on characteristic patterns of our culture. One of the central dimensions influencing social patterns is the relative
emphasis a culture places on individualism or collectivism (Triandis, 1989, p.420).

Generally speaking, in this country the individual’s rights come first. Our forefathers solidified that perspective when they penned the phrase "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of (individual) happiness". Individualism places consummate value on the rights of the person over and against those of the community. It maintains that the community or collective good is best served when individual people have the widest freedoms within the democratic rule of law. By contrast, collectivism holds the interests of the group above those of the individual. Ensuring the survival and flourishing of the state or community occurs when all cooperate in shared objectives. In cultures where individualism is strong, personal goals determine social behavior, and those normally overlap the collectives’ goals only slightly (Triandis, 1989). By contrast, shared purposes guide social behavior in collectivist societies, and individuals subordinate their particular desires in pursuit of the larger collective’s objectives.

INDIVIDUALISM AND COLLECTIVISM COMPARED

The United States and the People’s Republic of China represent cultures at the two ends of the spectrum of individualism and collectivism. Quintessentially individualistic, the United States “invented” self-reliance and individual initiative which capture the idea that anyone can rise from modest beginnings to achieve great personal success. So strong is this notion that, in the context of America’s great personal freedoms, it stirs many outside our borders to overcome great obstacles to come here. I stress the “self-made man” idea because of its antithetical nature to the
collectivist notion in China of accepting one's place in life (Triandis, 1989). In a word, self-reliance is the key distinction of American individualism whereas mutual dependence (what we commonly call interdependence) holds the passkey to understanding the Chinese (Hsu, 1981, p. 293). China has a century's old collectivist culture, group oriented or, more correctly, family oriented long before the communists gained power in 1949.

**Definitions**

*Power Distance.* One revealing measure of these two concepts is how cultures differ on Hofstede's (1984) measure of power distance. A measure of human inequality, power distance expresses the notion that great distances exist between persons at different hierarchical levels (Hofstede, 1984, p. 92). Collectivists score high, believing that those so elevated belong there and legitimately should have much more power over those lower down. This view functions to provide believers an unambiguous way to explain their circumstances in the social order.

Individualism, with its emphasis on equality rather than inequality spawns people who, although also members of complex hierarchies, are much more reluctant to see those at the top as greatly different from themselves. In fact, power distance correlates negatively (-.67) with individualism (Hofstede, 1984, p. 213). This explains the average person's willingness to criticize the minister, the boss, the CEO, the member of congress, or the president. When all are created equal, there's little
reverence for those at the top. From the collectivist viewpoint, such impudence shows disobedience and interrupts harmonious relations.

Cross Cultural Definitions. In an excellent review of cross-cultural studies on this topic, Triandis (1989) notes both cross-cultural and within culture definitions of individualism and collectivism. In his own cross-cultural research, he found the factor Family Integrity is the definitive marker of collective cultures. "It is the only factor that correlates (-.73) with Hofstede's (1980) index of individualism" (Triandis, 1989, p.50), contrasting East Asian with European and North American cultures. Items defining Family Integrity are:

- Aging parents should live at home with their children.
- Children should live at home with their parents until they get married (Triandis, 1989, pp.49-50).

The Family Integrity factor accounted for 57% of the variance. Within America so few people still agree with these statements that the items create no variance in responses. Hence Family Integrity is not a topic that appears with any frequency in the American literature on individualism. Triandis (1989) reports the following themes associated with individualism from a content analysis of Western texts:

"dignity of humans, individual self-development, privacy, the individual as the basis of society" (p.54) and the source of all knowledge. Social scientists from around the world agreed that collectivists are "concerned about the results of their actions on others, share material and nonmaterial resources with group members, are concerned
about their presentation to others, believe in the correspondence of outcomes of self and ingroup, and feel involved in the contributions and share in the lives of ingroup members" (Triandis, 1989, p. 54).

*The American Definition.* The American definition centers on the concepts of self-reliance, competition and distance from ingroups, the latter being the only one of importance in cross-cultural comparisons. To make these concrete, I have included the items below taken from a factor analytic study by Triandis of a sample in Illinois:

**High Self-Reliance**

- To be superior, a man must stand alone.
- What happens to me is my own doing.

**High Competition**

- Winning is everything.

**Distance from Ingroups**

- I am not to blame if one of my family members fails.
- My happiness is unrelated to the well-being of my co-workers.

The first two factors accounted for 35.2% of the variance. The first and last factors underscore a central theme of this polar dimension, namely the nature of the relationship between self and others. Individualists, however, are not quite so hard hearted as these items make them out to be. Triandis also references a "collectivist factor" in this same research which accounted for 14% of the variance. The items of this factor are:
I like to live close to my friends.

I would help within my means if a relative told me s/he was in financial difficulties.

**Within Culture Definitions.** Triandis reports more relevant information which allows within culture differentiation of those who value individualism or collectivism. Within a given culture, those high on individualism embrace self-reliance and competition while the collectivists value interdependence and sociability. Individualists in high individualism cultures tend toward narcissism and self-reliance. Collectivists in high individualism cultures "tend to be socially integrated, to receive much social support when they need it" (Triandis, 1989, p.55). Individualists in collective cultures "tend to be rebels, ready to migrate from the oppression of the culture" while the collectivists in collective cultures "tend to be well-adjusted, enthusiastic supporters of whatever ingroups are salient" (Triandis, 1989, p.55).

**The Self Concept**

We can think of individualism and collectivism as representing different mental programming (Hofstede, 1984) in human beings. In the West, understanding personality relies on the term self-concept, "a separate entity distinct from society and culture" (Hofstede, 1984, p.150). Each person is a unique individual, a viewpoint which brings special attention to each of us but, at the same time, accents our differences and reinforces our independence from one another. By contrast the Chinese believe in a more holistic sense of self. "The Chinese use the word 'jen' (jin
in Japanese) for 'man' in order to describe a 'human constant' which includes the person himself plus his intimate societal and cultural environment which makes his existence meaningful" (Hofstede, 1984, p. 150). While we accent personal uniqueness, the Chinese emphasize the fundamental essence all living things share. The independent American expresses a "self distinct from or separate from" others while the interdependent Chinese expresses a "self in relation" with other people and nature.

**Two Faces of the Independent Self**

The independent self reflects our early history and the intellectual tradition of pragmatism. Frontier life required hardness and ingenuity to overcome harsh conditions. Man conquered nature; he didn’t live in harmony with it. Hand in hand with our traditions of progress and technological innovation go domination over environmental obstacles.

Need theories in psychology are consistent with this elevation of the individual, stressing competition, scarcity and separateness (Shepard, 1965). Derivative of a physiological model, need theories operate on the premise of instrumentality. In a similar way that separate organisms compete for scarce resources outside their external boundaries, separate selves seek food, safety or a sense of belonging, for example. Desired needs are perceived to be in short supply, and one gets a share from others on whom he or she depends through a series of exchange relationships (Shepard, 1965). Note the self separate from nature and other selves, the assumption of resource
scarcity (which fuels competition), and the ease with which relationships can take on a utilitarian aspect. I need the other to gratify me, not for his or her inherent value.

*The Positive Self.* Stated positively, the separated self or self-concept allows the celebration of each person's unique qualities, with special abilities, and potential. Elevating the individual person in concert with an espoused value on equal opportunity encourages all to develop to the limits of their ability and initiative. This autonomy can unleash incredible energy and creativity, and individual's very personal journeys often benefit others greatly. A doctor develops a new procedure for heart surgery. Researchers discover a cure for a disease. Computer developments revolutionize the way we think about information. Athletes bring national pride by their stellar olympic performances. It is no accident that this country was the unchallenged leader in revolutionary innovations until very recently. The major technological inventions of the century -- jet and space flight, television, and computers -- were all developed here.

*The Negative Self.* This emphasis on uniqueness also spawns whopping egos who may damage others while pursuing their special path. Triandis notes that:

"...freedom and autonomy, however, leave people vulnerable to feelings of alienation and narcissistic self-absorption and tempt them to pursue narrow self-interests" (1989, p. 49).

The most alienated individuals turn to violence, the most narcissistic to exploitation. Serial murderers, berserk individuals machine gunning children on school yards, domestic violence -- all these human atrocities can be tied to our love of individualism
and the alienation it creates for many. At the same time that individualism has made us the richest nation on earth, it has also created a decade of corporate deal making. Some have held themselves above the law. However, quite legally, people with expert knowledge make millions buying firms and selling off their assets. Using companies strictly as financial instruments in this way has often put hundreds of factory workers with scant options out of work and jeopardized the economic stability of small communities.

**Independence vs. Mutual Dependence**

Acting from the cultural emphasis on uniqueness of self, American parents and institutions train children early on to stand out, to be different, to achieve through personal distinction. Many events in the lives of young American children reinforce this special attention. Pre-school "Show and Tell", elementary school testing of abilities and achievement, educational groupings based on achievement, musical recitals, school plays with lead roles, sports teams with awards for best student, best player--all of these and hundreds like them separate out some children from others for personal distinction. Parents take pride, gloat even at their child's successes. They expend great energy and money in taking Jimmie and Susie to ballet classes, soccer games, band practice, the math tutor. Few see virtue in the label "average" affixed to their child.

By the time we are adults, Americans revere independence but pay a steep price for it. Americans typically develop many relationships in diverse areas of our
lives. We join churches, clubs, health centers, self-help groups, movements, political organizations just to name a few. As we pursue our own interests in these multiple arenas, we make only partial investments in these people, conserving most of our psychic energy for the family. But feeling supported, fulfilled, a sense of belonging -- the sorts of feelings we will label later under the heading of expressive individualism -- become problematic when we can only give a limited part of ourselves to so many acquaintances.

By contrast, the Chinese revere mutual dependence. In China, an individual is born into a predetermined set of extended family relationships (Hofstede, 1984) which he or she will generally maintain for life. This larger family network reduces the need for devoting more energy to building elaborate relationships outside the family. Chinese children continue living at home even after they are married, something American youth do only out of financial necessity. Traditionally, the Chinese take care of parents through old age.

**Collectivists' Greatest Strength**

Collective societies have developed in ways that favor adeptness in human relationships (Triandis, 1989) while cultures high in individualism are best equipped to master the world of economic exchange. They have expanding economies that generate tremendous wealth. Americans innovate, create and achieve. Triandis (1989) notes that collective societies have exceptionally good mental health. The primary
reference group provides strong interpersonal ties, emotional caring, and quick punishment for deviant behavior. He continues:

...such societies have low rates of homicide, suicide, juvenile delinquency, child abuse, wife beating, and drug and alcohol abuse... (Triandis, 1989, p.58).

The trade off is one between extreme demands made by the family combined with a much lower standard of living or a higher standard of living and attenuated human relationships.

In summary, collectivists tend to join and remain in a few groups about which they care greatly for long time periods. Individualists may belong to many groups, but they ration the psychic energy needed for an independent existence and guard themselves from emotional depletion by forming much more casual bonds with the members of groups outside the family. Triandis (1990) notes the logical result:

Individualists have excellent skills in interacting superficially with many ingroup members but have fewer skills in interacting intimately with others than do collectivists (1989, p. 61).

This trait shows up in the work place as an oft cited complaint about managers. A highly talented young manager keeps getting feedback that, while his business acumen is terrific, his interpersonal skills are alienating people who work for and with him. Actually, Drath (1990) argues that the managerial task itself calls on managers to make tough decisions. Developing detached relationships helps them do this.
From this general canvass of individualism and collectivism, I narrow attention to individualism as it appears in the United States. I do this by relating the historical roots of individualism in this country and describing the multiple forms it has taken.

HISTORICAL NOTES ON INDIVIDUALISM IN AMERICA

The Reformation and Individualism

Individualism is inherent in the lives and theology of Luther and Calvin. Their very acts of protest and reform were the work of lone men standing against the still tremendous religious authority of the Church. Both could have been killed for what they dared to say and print. Only a peculiar set of political circumstances saved Luther. Calvin eventually fled his native France for Switzerland. These two were not individualistic in the banal sense that they sought to differentiate themselves from their peers. Rather, through doctrinal innovation, each made a profound break with the major institution of importance in his life. And one way they did this was to profess a closer relationship between God and man. God was not an abstraction in tenuous relationship with mankind. He was concerned with the lives and salvation of individual men and women. That they emphasized God’s concern with individual lives draws attention to one of the major shifts of Reformation thought—the changed position of the laity. In that new role are found the beginnings of the institutionalization of individualism in Reformation thought. The removal of the priest as God’s intermediary resulted in elevating the status of the individual, and the
reinterpretations of salvation—both Luther’s grace and Calvin’s predestination—thrust the individual alone to face God.

**John Locke and Individualism**

If individualism was strongly implied in the theological changes of the Reformation, it was made explicit during the Enlightenment. As the God of Reason steadily ascended and the God of faith and revelation diminished, the individual came to the forefront of man’s attention. Not surprisingly, with authority the major issue of that age, and the prominent trend of rising nationalism juxtaposed against the waning influence of the Roman Church, Locke’s individual is a political animal, not a religious one. To solidify our understanding of how Locke’s thought expresses individualism, I draw your attention to three topics: 1. his conception of society and depiction of natural rights; 2. the institution of divine right; and 3. his construction of Economic Man.

Locke’s conception of society is explicitly oriented toward the individual, not the collective. When he describes natural rights, he conspicuously specifies that man is free, "equal and independent". He makes no mention of this independent man’s ties to any group or collective. Lodge (1975) notes that Locke emphasizes "the individual in aggressive competition rather than the relationships between that individual and the surrounding community". He talks pointedly about the state’s responsibility to the individual (to protect his property rights) but not the converse.
Gabriel (1974) underscores Locke’s individual focus in the following passage:

The Enlightenment emphasized the individual man...It was the individual who had natural rights which the state was created to secure. It was the individual who had reason which entitled him to the dignity of participating in his own government (p. 43).

Actually Locke does specify a certain individual responsibility to the community, to pursue one’s own self-interests thereby assuring the common good. In fact, he advocates the theory of atomism (Lodge, 1985). Social acts and institutions are construed as composed of the acts of individuals. The holism of medieval thought, in which the community revolved around unity with the church is broken. Locke and Newton’s successors in France and England were to contribute to this trend of atomism which has resulted in our looking at the world through the eyes of narrow specialties. Newton picked apart nature to see how it worked. We have continued this propensity as an emphasis on parts (individuals), not wholes (communities). We assume the whole will take care of itself just as Locke assumed the common good would necessarily follow from individual economic initiative. Today we see it in the extreme specialization in just about any scientific or professional field.

Locke’s individualism stands out when considered against the institution of divine right of kings. Divine right, like the feudal system before it, specified a relationship between the monarch and a collective of low status others who were compelled to passive obedience. Locke offered the growing middle class an
appropriate ideology to further their position, the strengthened individual person in relation to a weakened state.

Perhaps the epitome of Locke's individualism, found in the blend of ideas between Locke and Adam Smith, is the Economic Man. His aggressive pursuit of purely economic ends makes him in effect the quintessential "good" citizen. For it is through his efficient efforts and the efforts of others like him that the good community has the foremost chance to be realized. He has license to pursue wealth to the fullest. He is no longer anchored to the community by the religious life of the Reformation man. He is an individual, alone and in competition against others, motivated purely by economic gain. Economic Man forms the core of one of four strands of individualism that developed in America. We turn our attention now to these four variants.

STRAINS OF AMERICAN INDIVIDUALISM

A current and dominant strand of American individualism is aptly named utilitarian individualism. The idea suggests that society benefits most when individuals pursue their own economic paths. Unlike other versions, the utilitarian separates economic behavior from a sense of social responsibility. In the next few pages, I show how our concept of individualism has changed over the history of our country.
The Biblical Tradition and Puritanism

Although lopsidedly caricatured as strict, unsmiling, guilt inducing and restrictive of life's pleasures, the Puritans contributed richly to the intellectual fabric of the growing colonies. From medieval theology, they retained the view that reason, not intuition or emotion, solved problems, and so they were quite content with the existence of science side by side religion. Their intellectual tradition showed itself in firm opposition to ignorance and placed a high value on learning and education, a stance which distinguished their settlements from all the other colonies. Though steeped in sin, man improved through reason.

Education, however, was an adjunct to the Puritans' fundamental concern -- improving one's relationship with God. Salvation, available only by God's grace, not by works, was the fundamental concern of human experience. However, the saved person's inner religious nature manifested itself in concrete behavior. Obeying God's law meant a life of good works.

The Puritans upheld the ideal that "character and nobility are values that man can achieve only by a personal struggle whereby he transcends his physical surroundings" (Grob & Beck, 1963). Note the individualism inherent in the "personal struggle" and the suitability of this emphasis to the physically difficult environment in which they found themselves. But their individualism was not directed toward material ends. Their ideas of liberty and equality were infused with an ethical content not present in all other strands of individualism (Bellah et al., 1985). Although
material success was commendable in moderation, "their fundamental criterion of
success was not material wealth but the creation of a community in which a genuinely
ethical and spiritual life could be lived" (Bellah et al., 1985, p. 29). Thus, they
embraced freedom and liberty in the New World for the purpose of constructing an
ethical community.

**The Republican Tradition and Thomas Jefferson**

The republican tradition of individualism is exemplified in the person and
thinking of Thomas Jefferson (Bellah et al, 1985), author of the Declaration of
Independence, man of letters, inventor, architect, gentleman farmer. In the tradition of
John Locke whom he had studied, Jefferson believed that man's freedom was
understood from natural law. "All men are created equal" he wrote in the Declaration,
referring to political equality. Having studied first hand the great institutions of
Europe—the monarchy, the state, the church, the military, the class system—he rejected
them all, believing them unsuited to his concept of freedom and the common man's

Like Locke, he disliked a strong central government, once remarking that he
was "not a friend of a very energetic government". As a political thinker, he sought
freedom from church control, from a landed aristocracy, and from great inequalities of
wealth. He believed a weak central government was most consistent with his position.
"Jefferson's greatest aim was to give individual men a wider liberty" (Nevins &
Commager, 1966).
Essential to the republican tradition was the concept of consent of the
governed. Jefferson said:

On this view of the import of the term republic, instead of saying, as
has been said, "that it may mean anything or nothing", we may say with
truth and meaning, that governments are more or less republican, as
they have more or less of the element of popular election and control in
their composition: and believing, as I do, that the mass of the citizens is
the safest depository of their own rights...I am a friend to that
composition of government which has in it the most of this ingredient

He thought the republic's future depended upon an educated population of relative
equals who participated at local levels. Rights persisted only in the context of
responsibilities. The defense of freedom demanded an engaged, educated populace.

To review, Jefferson emphasized individual liberty, the weak state, the concept
of the consent of the governed, and his wish for a rural America. The consent of the
governed, together with the notion of individual liberty, bring to focus the role of the
citizen as the building block of Jefferson's New World experiment. He did not hold
to a notion of unrestrained freedom which allowed the individual to do anything he
wanted. Nor did he believe in a freedom which allowed some few to pursue wealth
and power at the expense of many. The "good citizen" knew his social responsibility
and participated in governmental affairs, whether at the national, state or local level, as
a way of maintaining the health and freedom of the country. The republican tradition
has a distinct moral tone of responsibility and service.
The Modern Traditions of Utilitarian and Expressive Individualism

The source of a more recent interpretation of individualism has been credited to Ben Franklin, even though he himself was of the republican tradition (Bellah et al., 1985). Born into the home of a modest soap and candle maker, Franklin couldn’t afford college, so he apprenticed himself to his older brother, a printer. At forty-two, he was an established printer and publisher in Philadelphia, and had done well enough to retire. The quintessential “poor boy who makes good”, Franklin confirmed that in a non-aristocratic society, those born of modest families could do as well as anyone else.

A writer and publisher unsurpassed in his day, Franklin took Puritan values such as thrift and hard work, removed their theological trappings, added embellishments, and created a secular version of Puritan wisdom for eighteenth and nineteenth century Americans. “In short, Franklin gave classic expression to what many felt in the eighteenth century—and many have felt ever since—to be the most important thing about America: the chance for the individual to get ahead on his own initiative” (emphasis added, Bellah et al., 1985, p. 33). Individual initiative or self-improvement became the watchwords for so many who had come here to change their lot in life. A simple philosophy, it elevated the common man in American life.

Like Jefferson, Franklin knew that a democracy composed of “middling” individuals could only prevail under conditions which recognized the citizen’s responsibility to the larger social community. However, Bellah et al (1985) note that:
But for many of those influenced by Franklin, the focus was so exclusively on individual self-improvement that the larger social context hardly came into view. By the end of the eighteenth century, there would be those who would argue that in a society where each vigorously pursued his own interest, the social good would automatically emerge (p. 33) (emphasis added).

As early as the late 1700’s, the beginnings of the eventual split appear between economic endeavor and social responsibility for the community.

The result of individual initiative, taken to extreme and devoid of social responsibility, is the strain of individualism known as utilitarian individualism. In its pure form, it reads as follows:

Vigorous pursuit of individual interests automatically assures the social good!

It is utilitarian in the sense that it provides for the greatest good to the greatest number but assumes this will occur via the ethos of individual effort for individual ends.

More cynically stated, it might be, "Follow your own path and let the rest take care of themselves". In fact, it assumes this flavor in the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson who popularized the idea of self-reliance in his famous essay by the same name. Emerson meant two different things when he used the term (Bellah et al., 1985). One was an exhortation to self-discovery and creativity of thought in opposition to the conformity of small town life in late nineteenth century America. The other elaborated his view on property and the focus of hard work. He maintained that we only deserve the property we work for, and our primary economic obligation is to ourselves, not to other poor men (Bellah et al., 1985). Franklin, credited inaccurately
with beginning this tradition, would have blanched if exposed to Emerson’s second idea.

The import of this new strain of individualism is monumental. It split the bond between social and economic life. It justified the existence in this country of John Locke and Adam Smith’s purely Economic Man, whose activities were focussed on the making of unlimited profit and whose allegiances no longer necessarily included any thought to his social and political community. In effect, the individual could justifiably detach himself from community concerns to pursue purely self-serving ends. These two circumstances, the separation of economic activity from social and political concerns and the accumulation of wealth for its own sake, were essential for the growth of a capitalistic economy. The New World provided a opportune context with its vast expenses of land and plentiful resources. And the individual farmer, merchant and later entrepreneur were the prototype capitalists.

Our national values shifted from the Puritan view of work in moderation in pursuit of the moral community, from the Quaker call to universal brotherhood stressing the strong man’s responsibility for the weak (Gabriel, 1974), from Jefferson’s vision of an educated populace strengthening and maintaining the republic through participation. It was replaced by the Lockean tradition which had been articulated in a way that it "justified the divorce of economic activity from social and political relationships" (Lodge, 1975). Bellah et al (1985) write that:
The note of self-reliance had a clearly collective context in the biblical and republican traditions. It was as a people that we had acted independently and self-reliantly. With utilitarian individualism, however, the collective note became muted (p. 55).

The final strand of individualism, expressive individualism, came in reaction to the utilitarian version and used a totally different measure of success. It rejected the notion that individual success is related to material acquisition and defined it instead in terms of self-expression (Bellah et al., 1985). Writers, poets, and clergymen of the time carried and articulated this trend. Individual expression of intellect, of the senses and of the emotions was the fruitful way to utilize one's independence. Understanding of the self given the marvelous world rich in different people, different ideas, and different experiences was an admirable goal of life.

Although expressive individualism was a less central thread in nineteenth century life preoccupied with building a republic and developing an economy, it is a powerful voice in the twentieth century. It rings in what some have called our narcissistic search for meaning, given lives segmented between large bureaucracies, families, and community responsibilities. We see it in the development of the ego psychologists from Freud through Maslow and in the proliferation of psychological self-help books currently available.

AN AMERICAN IDEOLOGY

Lodge (1975), in his book The New American Ideology, makes a compact restatement of our current ideology, derived from the Lockean tradition. It succinctly
summarizes the tradition of individualism and its accompanying tenets. Borrowing from Lodge, ideology refers to that collection of ideas which defines the nature of the good community. It is the changing system of values that a community or nation adopts that in turn guides citizens’s lives in social, legal, moral, economic and aesthetic arenas. Ideology legitimizes the existing order as well as its patterns of behavior and action. Lodge points out that although many societies may have similar values, those values are defined quite differently. Traditional American ideology is anchored in the five major ideas reviewed below (Lodge, 1985).

1. **Individualism**: This is the notion that the community is the sum of its individual parts, the individuals in it. Fulfillment comes from the struggle in what amounts to a wilderness where the strong survive. The pre-eminent idea is that by natural right we are all free, equal and independent individuals.

2. **Property Rights**: Individual rights are guaranteed by the sanctity of property rights. The individual establishes himself by establishing that he controls property. This natural right to property guarantees the person’s economic subsistence and, taken as a group, guaranteed the colonists’ political independence from England.

3. **Competition**: An assumption of the American conception of property rights was Adam Smith’s idea that the best path to the good community is the pursuit by individual property owners of their own self-interest. The good of the community is the sum of the goods of all the individuals working independently in a relationship of competition. Of Adam Smith, Lodge (1985) notes that "he combined the ideas of individualism and property with economic profit and demonstrated their advantages for the community as a whole".

4. **The Limited State**: In reaction to the powerful hierarchies of late medieval times, Locke advocated the limited or weak central government, the role of which was to protect a man’s body (his labor) and his property. For government to take a larger role in men’s affairs
would be to interfere with the natural order of things and thus to diminish freedom and liberty. More recently, government can get big as long as it does not get authority or focus.

5. **Scientific Specialization:** Growing out of Newton's work and the elevation of "reason" as the source for knowing the world, the use of scientific disciplines naturally supported the development of the New World. The demand for new inventions and solutions to myriad problems as the settlers engaged the physical world assured the place of science and technology as the supplier of practical solutions. The doctrine of scientific specialization paralleled that of Smith's competition in that it also assumed that as specialties explored parts of the New World, the whole would be better off and be taken care of.

Lodge's pithy synopsis pinpoints the thinking that preserves the status quo in America and serves as a pattern for our behavior as a national group.

Next our attention moves to a bit of American history which explains why the values of Reformation and Enlightenment thought found the colonies such fertile ground. I also bring Canada into this discussion. The ultimate goal of this chapter is to provide concepts that help examine and understand participation in the American and Canadian petrochemical plants. As it turns out, Canada shows distinctively collective traits absent in US life. The genesis of these differences rests in contrasting patterns of historical development. By comparing early American and Canadian histories and values, I show how the two nations, so similar in many respects, developed in ways that imparted a distinctly collective flavor to Canadian life and institutions even though individualism is a dominant value in all of North America.
THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA COMPARED

That the United States and the Peoples’ Republic of China manifest a patently different relationship between the individual and the community is easily believable. However, comparing the United States and Canada seems insignificant at first since they "resemble each other more than either resembles any other nation" (Lipset, 1990, p. 212). Differences between the two in public opinion polls are often not more than five or ten percentage points (Lipset, 1990), yet the two nations deviate in significant ways just exactly along the dimension of individualism and collectivism. A recognized authority in the comparative sociology of the two nations, Seymour Lipset captures the contrasting value stances in the two statements below:

The United States remained through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the extreme example of a classically liberal or Lockean society which rejected the assumptions of the alliance of throne and altar, of ascriptive elitism, of statism, of noblesse oblige, and of communitarianism (Lipset, 1987, p. 67).

Canada, dominated by a Tory counterrevolutionary ethos, developed a more communitarian orientation...The leaders of both cultures (English and French)...consciously attempted to create a conservative, monarchical, ecclesiastical, and statist society...Canadian elites saw the need to use the state to protect minority cultures, English Canadians against Yankees, French Canadians against Anglophones, and also to provide services for a sparsely settled continent-spanning nation which private capital failed to supply (Lipset, 1987, p. 67).
Revolution and Counterrevolution

The overriding fact accounting for their dissimilarities resides in our revolutionary beginnings and Canada’s counter-revolutionary path. For Americans a sharp break with the English monarchy meant a rejection of

all things for which the crown symbolically stood: differences in social privileges, inequality in wealth, and class or status-based distinctions in manners (Hsu, 1953, p. 112).

Once the rift occurred, the fledgling nation rested safely across the sea from its progenitor, unfettered by monarchy or ecclesiasticism. Minus these familiar structures, westward expansion from safer coastal communities brought with it the need to experiment with new social arrangements.

Frontier Life

Frontier life was the potential leveller of Old World political and social institutions (Clarke, 1968). It held the opportunity for radical change and disintegration of traditional forms or for continuing variants of the past. Frontier development in all of North America came in bursts, regulated by available immigrants, the status of wars and uprisings, and technological developments affecting ease of transportation and ability to exploit resources. As thousands of diverse peoples followed a few trail blazing settlers to new areas, they were literally thrown together and had to come up with new social arrangements.

The US Frontier. This country’s expanse of land offered literally unlimited opportunities for the able bodied except for the indentured, native American, black or
female. "Equal opportunity" had an almost literal meaning at the time. Nor had
capitalism advanced beyond the point where the individual entrepreneur was still the
central economic actor. The fact of relatively few people dispersed over a wide
stretch of land magnified the importance of individuals willing to work hard. As
Lodge (1985) notes:

To tame and exploit the vast, lonely wilderness (of
America) in which only the fit survived was a task that
meshed perfectly with Locke's idea of individual
fulfillment through aggressive and self-reliant struggle (p.
114).

The country's resources, opportunities and purpose favored those who showed
initiative, ingenuity, and persistence. The strong work ethic passed down from the
Reformation fit with the grueling demands the land made on pioneers. Survival on the
frontier demanded an adaptive capacity embodied in the notion of self-sufficiency, a
literal criterion for survival initially. The settlers served as their own guides and
police in this new social experiment.

The Canadian Frontier. Clarke (1968) claims that the present differences in
Canadian and American social institutions stem from a powerful Canadian fear of
absorption by its southerly neighbor. This fear stimulated a conscious effort to control
northern frontier expansion by using (modified) Old World institutions. Faced with
this continual threat, the Canadians sought to solidify their citizenry against the
expansive Americans in two ways. First, to gain control over the settlers, they
embraced the Old World structures of state and church. Second, governmental bodies
encouraged settlers to locate in close physical proximity for sheer purposes of defending themselves in the event of attack from the south. They developed larger cities rather than the small, scattered outposts common in this country. Thus, New World versions of the European institutions moved westward with or ahead of the settlers. As Clark (1969) notes:

The Canadian frontier grew up within the protective custody, first of the French colonial Empire, then of the colonial empire of Britain, and, finally, after 1867, of the Dominion itself (p. 189).

And Canadians did in fact settle in larger concentrations in and near cities as well.

For example, Kilbourn (1988) comments that:

Toronto was begun...not by a group of self-reliant individuals cutting themselves off from Europe in order to create a better society, but by a military governor and his clients and civil servants attempting to follow patterns of behavior established in Europe (pp. 19-20).

In this distinctly different approach to frontier settlement, key value contrasts show themselves. The more traditional Canadians inclined to structures which solidified the collective will while the rag tag Americans exerted their autonomy and self-reliance from the beginning.

Organizing Logics

The two versions of frontier expansion held within them implicitly contrasting organizing logics. Think of this term as establishing the nature of authority inherent in the individual’s relationships to government and church as well as defining the sociological purpose of middle class life.
The State. Kilbourn (1988) points out that:

...Canada was founded on the principle of allegiance rather than social contract, on the organic growth of tradition rather than an explicit act of reason or assertion of revolutionary will (pp.20-21). (emphasis added)

Allegiance or obedience glued citizen and state. Early Canadians accepted the state as the legitimate source of authority. The collective will came first. Stronger government was worth the price of order which was essential to solidify collective sentiment against the ruffian nation to the south. To the Canadians, the Queen was always more than

an ornamental relic. Her office is the contemporary expression of the medieval political tradition that authority comes first and that the citizen's liberties are protected within the overall framework of that authority (emphasis added) (Kilbourn, 1988, pp. 20-21).

Preserving the relationship with the queen was a clear statement that the collective will came before the individual's will in Canada. In direct contrast, the American colonists saw the strong state as a direct impediment to expressing their individual pursuits.

The Church. The divergent pattern of religious authority in the two lands also implied varied intent for social structures. The Canadian settlers imported the hierarchy of the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, both of which had strong ties to the Canadian government until recent times (Lipset, 1987). In contrast, the small Protestant sects appeared on our shores for the very reason that they opposed traditional authority. These nonconformists sought religious liberty and wanted nothing to do with a strong state that might meddle in their practice of worship
(Lipset, 1986). Their small size and history of persecution underscored this sense of self-reliance and autonomy. Lipset (1986) quoting Sutherland (1977) notes that Canadians, on the other hand, had the security of reliance upon a church establishment, detailed codes of behavior, a controlling system; and in general, until very recently, Canadians have tended to depend upon and to trust systems which control their lives...(pp.2-3).

The Middle Class. Another manifestation of different control logics showed itself in the role the middle classes played in the two countries. Again, geography had a hand in these events. The many stretches of relatively flat, unbroken land in the United States expedited expansion. Policing institutions could not mobilize quickly here and monitor expansion. Canadian settlers had to contend with a land dotted by complicated fingers of water. The slower pace in Canada favored "large-scale bureaucracies and wide-spread state intervention" (Clark, 1968, p. 233) in frontier expansion. Clark (1968) sums it up in these words:

In the U.S., a large middle class developed as the driving force and beneficiary of the entrepreneurial spirit. In Canada, the middle class was composed of the office holders in the bureaucracy of the state, church, and business corporation. One advanced within this select group of bureaucrats or often went to the U.S., if advancement was a goal and unattainable in the bureaucracy. As a distinction, the middle class in the U.S. has been the drivers of social, economic and political change whereas, in Canada, the middle class is the status quo (p. 234).

In summary, the early organizing experiences in the two nations differed dramatically. Institutionalized authority performed a central function in developing the Canadian frontier. Monarchical and ecclesiastical bureaucracies provided familiar and valued ways to organize collective sentiment and to rally sheer physical numbers in
the face of a hostile geography and threatening southern neighbor. The middle class gratefully filled governmental bureaucracies as they developed, thus becoming the elites of the New World. In the United States, the middle class became largely an entrepreneurial class, more experimental and more dependent on themselves than on large organizations for their successes and failures.

**Values and Behavior**

Through his work in comparative macro sociology, Lipset (1968) has identified distinct differences in Canadian and American responses along the following polar variables:

- achievement-ascription
- universalism-particularism
- self-orientation-collectivity orientation
- egalitarianism-elitism.

**Achievement and Ascription.** This pair distinguishes whether end goals are earned through achievement or unearned and ascribed because of other circumstances such as class or family background. To cite an extreme example, do I become a state employee by working nights to get through college, then passing any required entrance tests and interviews? Or do I reach the same end by birth into a government employee’s family which assures a university education which in turn puts me in the pipeline for government jobs? America leans hard toward meritocracy; Canada
preserves a bit of aristocracy. Educational practices do provide an appropriate example.

Americans tout educational achievement as a major path for personal betterment, and this outlet has been made available to the large majority of people, regardless of one's station life. Although educational practices have changed dramatically in Canada during the last two decades, Canada formerly did show an elitist pattern in educational practices. The figures below show the percentages of twenty to twenty-four year olds in higher education for the years 1960 and 1979 (Lipset, 1986, p. 138).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>US</th>
<th>CANADA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>36%</td>
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Although the gap is closing, its existence substantiates the presence of ascriptive elitism in Canada. A former president of the University of Toronto noted that the "country is moving away from an elitist conception of higher education" (Lipset, 1986, p. 139).

*Universalism and Particularism.* Particularism refers to acting on the basis of a personal or group trait rather than applying a universal rule such as the egalitarian notion that "All men are equal". In the same way that we use "melting pot" as a metaphor for assimilation of immigrants, the Canadians describe their nation as a "mosaic". A mosaic embodies the notion of the "right to sustained collective
individuality" (Lipset, 1987, p. 494). Canadians see themselves as a confederation of many groups each of which can maintain its ethnic distinctiveness. Third parties in the political system also give evidence of particularism. In general, smaller groups or factions maintain their identity as parts of the whole.

"Melting pot" connotes an assimilative function which downplays group identity. At the price of some loss of ethnic identity, immigrants gain the benefits which egalitarian and universal values afford. Once part of the melting pot, all should have "equal protection under the law" or "equal access" to education, for example. No one should be disqualified from participation in society on the grounds of ethnic origin, class, creed (Lipset, 1968).

Together, universalism and our high value on achievement were meant to obviate the need for the welfare state in this country. The United States helps its people by creating conditions which foster personal success. Combining a high value on universalism -- rules that apply to all -- with a high value on achievement -- encouraging all to put forth their best efforts -- provides an environment where those who try hard can make it, so the argument goes. This view is consistent with the utilitarian individualism described earlier and necessary in a system of democratic capitalism. Market forces and weak governmental intervention will result in the greatest good. It differs from the Canadian approach in attention given to results. For example, the universal value on equal opportunity in no way assures equal results. In fact, competitive business situations guarantee that there will not be equal results.
Some firms go out of business. Some employees lose out to peers for a desired promotion. But in each case, they had equal opportunity to try.

In contrast to the American preference for restrained governmental "meddling", Lipset (1990) points out that:

...Canadians at both the elite and the mass levels -- particularly the former -- are more supportive of state intervention than Americans (p.140).

One impact of stronger governmental influence in Canada is the greater accent upon equal results rather than equal opportunity. Canada is more aptly described as a social democracy. Support for this statement comes from comments by Lipset:

A variety of opinion data gathered in the 1970s and 1980s reveal that Canadians are...more disposed to reject competitive and business values and to support income redistributive measures (Lipset, 1987, p.69).

...the 1988 election debates "on what Canada was all about" emphasized "social programs...national standards to offset regional disparities and ...[a] willingness to use government power to redress the inequalities of the market place" (Lipset, 1990, p.141).

These sorts of programs try to equalize results. Comprehensive health care coverage is the clearest example. Taxes pay for most of everyone's health care, "and the government sets all fees charged by doctors and hospitals" (Lipset, 1990, p.138). Canadians give more dollars for social programs which address the inequities in a capitalist system. They are a bit less concerned with working on the "front end", that is, trying to provide equal opportunity for all. In fact, employees of government bureaucracies themselves constitute an elite few.
Egalitarianism and Elitism. Canadian value on elitism is consistent with particularism but not with universalism common in this country. Preserving ethnic and regional distinctions, for example, is also consistent with preserving differences in class. Canadian people of all classes and backgrounds respect the authority of established government which is run by an elite, more highly educated few. Elitism shows up in Canadian business as well. Data for 1977 showed that sixty-one percent of Canadian top executive were of upper class origin as compared with thirty-six percent in the United States (Lipset, 1986, p.140). A person of working class origin can more easily break into the ranks of the economic elite in the United States than Canada. Here the lack of elitism and the high value on personal achievement work in her or his favor.

Self and Collectivism. Strong differences in sentiments about unions distinguish the two countries. At the same time union membership has shrunk in the United States, it has grown in Canada. In 1985 Canadian membership numbered about "40 percent of the nonagricultural labor force, while American ones encompass about 18 percent" (Lipset, 1987, p. 63). Actually, the American figure declined "to 11.9 percent in 1991, in part because of the loss of so many manufacturing jobs..."(Wall Street Journal, July 28, 1992, p.1). But the losses, at least through the mid 1980s were not entirely associated with lost jobs. Lipset (1987) has established a high correlation between what the public thinks of unions and "the ability of unions to maintain or gain members and to win certification elections"(p.66). Americans in
general have taken an increasingly dim view of unions over the last few decades.
During the Depression, Americans felt the need to band together and let government take strong measures. The war effort also captured the nation’s collective spirit. As the post war economic boom gathered momentum, individual initiative regained prominence, collective sentiment waned and union strength with it.

Summary. The historical data clearly confirm a greater sense of collective sentiment in Canada than in the United States. Although alive and well in Canada, utilitarian individualism is a bit muffled by a social democratic ethos embodied in a national health care policy and a social welfare network. Several tentative hypotheses suggest themselves from the difference in accent between the two cultures. First, one could surmise that Canadians’ collective expressions of sensitivity to others might also extend to small group settings as well. Certainly, having one’s salary heavily taxed for the sake of others attunes one to the issue of the other in contrast to the hyper self orientation that we as Americans often manifest. As a second hunch, Canadians have models for collective thinking and for working within collective structures, and these might transfer to other situations such as participation in groups. The belief in a strong federal and provincial government accentuates the citizen in relation to the community rather than as unfettered individual. Also, there is an added emphasis on responsibilities as well as rights, a viewpoint which seems lacking in current interest group politics in this country.
THE MODERN MANAGER AND INDIVIDUALISM

In this section, I enumerate two historical symbols of individualism, the entrepreneur and the modern corporate manager. I provide a definition of individualism, appropriate to a modern managerial context, amended from one of the strands cited previously. I then describe the manager's style of action derivative of the individualistic tradition so that we might know what to look for in a manager motivated by individualism. As a comparison, I depict the modern manager who acts from the collectivist tradition. At that point we will be ready to examine the case material.

Earlier we identified utilitarian individualism with its focus on economic goals alone as the American strand descriptive of a business environment. I will use this version as the basis for my analysis of managerial action. This variant underscores self-improvement by individual initiative and can be stated in pure form in this manner:

Vigorous pursuit of individual economic interests automatically assures the social good.

He justified his efforts because, following Locke and Smith, pursuit of individual interests assured the common good. It did not take long for the vision of utilitarian individualism to advance past the point of the successful businessman who plied his trade on a small scale to its embodiment in the entrepreneur of the late 1800's and early 1900's.
The Entrepreneur and the Professional Manager

Out of the American industrial revolution came a new social form, the business corporation, capable of extending the control of a few investors over vast numbers of resources and employees (Bellah et al., 1985). Big time entrepreneurs created, ran and consolidated the first corporations during this period of our history. These entrepreneurs were the logical extension of two earlier ideas: Franklin’s self-made man and Adam Smith’s individuals in unrestrained free market competition. Dubbed the "Robber Barons", these predatory capitalists ignored public opinion with impunity and rose to national power and prominence by economic means alone. A tough, savvy, self-sufficient, competitive breed, they freed themselves from external constraints via their wealth, thus permitting their undivided pursuit of faith in progress. Paradoxically, while creating an individualistic dream for themselves, they generated the drudgery of industrial life, complete with the most vile working and living conditions for thousands employed by them (Dewey, 1930).

The entrepreneurs forever altered the landscape of this country, and many worried about the effects of the factory on American small town life. The republican stream of individualism had solidified by the mid nineteenth century in the persona of the small town, distinguished by its ability to mediate between the individual and the nation as a whole (Bellah et al., 1985). People’s involvement in church and civic organizations gave them a sense of participation and held off isolation. Interaction with everyone--family members, neighbors, store clerks--took place face-to-face.
Although most men were either small entrepreneurs or working and saving to be one, the competitive individualism was "balanced and humanized by the restraining influences of a fundamentally egalitarian ethic of community responsibility" (Bellah, 1985, p. 38). The building of factory towns in the Northeast signaled the end to this small town way of life. If restricting and conformist, the small town was secure and affirming. In it people could "touch" their beliefs and values through ordinary acts of every day living with other community members.

The entrepreneur and his factory towns changed the old vision forever and solidified utilitarian individualism as a legitimate mode of American expression. Although its excesses were eventually muffled by anti-trust laws, organized labor and public opinion, corporate entrepreneurship with its ethic of utilitarian individualism was here to stay. As the corporation evolved into more and more complex forms, the task of running it became too involved for the single entrepreneur. He was supplanted by a cadre of professional managers. Although the entrepreneur still symbolizes individual initiative in the pursuit of profit, he has shrunk to more nearly human size from the days of the robber barons. But his early vehicle, the bureaucratic corporation, has grown to dominate economic life in this century (Bellah et al., 1985). And the critical figure in corporate life is the professional manager.

Although both entrepreneur and manager alike share a desire to achieve and a love of problem solving (Bellah et al., 1985), the manager is distinguishable from his predecessor by his outlook and responsibilities. While the entrepreneur was compelled
by an Enlightenment ideal of faith in progress of the still expanding country, the manager is driven by his charge to steward the company’s profitability in the face of stiff external competition and desire to keep his job. The former was motivated by the pursuit of an individual fortune, the later by pursuit of organizational or subunit goals on the road to a successful career. Exceptional wealth is the province of a few Chief Executive Officers but out of reach for most professional managers. And while the robber barons decided their own fates, managers confront the mundane reality of answering to a boss or a Board of Directors. The robber barons were big names, few, and wealthy beyond comparison with others. For a time they were above the law. The professional manager is nameless, many, and wealthy only in comparison with those below him in the hierarchy.

**A Definition of Individualism for a Managerial Context**

Although he is less distinctive than his predecessor, the manager is no less valuable to the corporation. Nor is he less in the utilitarian individualistic tradition. Managers oversee the corporation’s modus operandi, the rationalization of collective activities (Crozier, 1964). Whereas the robber barons engaged in conquests, the manager applies rational tools to solve technical and human problems. Bellah et al.(1985) pinpoint the substance of the manager’s job in the following passage:

The essence of the manager’s task is to organize the human and non-human resources available to the organization that employs him so as to improve its position in the marketplace. His role is to persuade, inspire, manipulate, cajole, and intimidate those he manages so that his organization measures up to criteria of effectiveness shaped ultimately
by the market but specifically by the expectations of those in control of his organization -- finally, its owners. The manager's view of things is akin to that of the technician of industrial society par excellence, the engineer, except that the manager must admit interpersonal responses and personalities, including his own, into the calculation of effectiveness (p. 45).

The manager lives by "criteria of effectiveness". He is judged and judges others by how productively resources are organized. He no longer directs his initiative to the single-minded pursuit of individual (his own) profit familiar in our definition of utilitarian individualism. But, true to the spirit of that individualism, he marshals his energy to direct the vast organizational system that creates profit. With the disappearance of the entrepreneur, the manager emerged as the steward of corporate wealth.

The corporation as the dominant employer in this century has reshaped utilitarian individualism. Whereas the definition fits for the entrepreneur of both yesterday and today, we must amend it slightly for the manager, the major force in today's corporation. Utilitarian individualism has three components:

1. the individual's guiding principle is self-improvement by individual initiative;

2. the context for self-improvement is economic;

3. one's goal is the pursuit of individual wealth.

Since ownership of companies is diffused to shareholders, the third condition of our definition above no longer applies in today's environment. Instead we can rewrite that item to reflect the manager's major tasks, the effective deployment of resources and
the stewardship of company profits. With items 1. and 2. left unchanged, item 3. can be altered as follows:

3. the manager's goal is the pursuit of company profitability and his/her own career development, a derivative of which is personal wealth.

These three conditions, then, define the individualism to which I will refer in analyzing the case material. In the next section, I relate these abstract concepts about individualism to concrete actions of managers.

**How Manager's Enact Individualism and Collectivism**

To give concrete form to an abstract concept, we must depict how managers behaves. A list of descriptive adjectives provides an intermediate level of understanding. We would expect a manager in the tradition of individualism to be independent, self-reliant, ambitious, competitive, aggressive and autonomous.

McClelland (1985) indicates that entrepreneurs exhibit the achievement oriented behaviors of continuously desiring to improve performance, taking moderate risks, seeking feedback on performance, taking responsibility for their performance, and developing innovative strategies. Managers who climb the corporate hierarchy because of their high achievement orientations could be expected to exhibit some of these behaviors, at least on their way to more senior management positions. Once in management, McClelland (1985) notes that high performing managers downplay the achievement motive more suitable to individual success and work more from the
power motive which emphasizes one's ability to execute power and influence through others (subordinates).

Based on the research findings of McClelland, my own field observations of managers, and a bit of speculation using our definition, I constructed the following list of managerial actions I think might be observable in a manager operating from the tradition of utilitarian individualism.

**ACHIEVEMENT AND COMPETITION:**

- always wants to do tasks better in the future or wants his/her subordinates to (McClelland, 1985);
- takes moderate risks and enjoys the challenge or directs others to do so (McClelland, 1985);
- has strong feelings of personal responsibility for project outcomes, business outcomes (McClelland, 1985);
- stresses individual initiative for self and others and favorably notices the "self-starters" among his subordinates, i.e. those who need little direction and who exercise the above three behaviors;
- "runs over" other people to get what he/she wants done and may be only dimly aware that this alienates others since he/she is well rewarded for successes;
- enjoys competing fiercely for goals, sometimes with the motivation of looking better than peers rather than reaching an organizational goal;
- competitive to a point that he/she sometimes loses sight of organizational goals because so diverted by personal goals, sub-unit goals;
- tends to think first in terms of individual goals rather than group goals.

**HELPING BEHAVIOR:**

- understands supporting others to be independent but not to be dependent, even for a short while, or to be interdependent;
does not assume he/she should give help to others who clearly need it;

- does not realize when he/she needs help because so driven by self-reliance;

- does not ask for help readily when he/she could use it because often interprets problems as his/hers, and self-reliant person solves own problems;

- sees offers of help as being a sign of weakness on his/her part if accepted;

- has difficulty understanding social and organizational determinants of peer behavior and tends to explain another’s success or failure exclusively by personality traits the individual exhibits (psychological reductionism);

- primarily focused on self or own organizational group and does not fully appreciate the interdependency of his unit with others.

As a contrast, I also derived a list of actions one might expect from North American managers with a more collective bent.

COOPERATION AND COMMUNICATION:

- has an orientation to cooperation as a major strategy to motivate people rather than competition;

- more likely to take the time to build consensus for decisions rather than to rush personal preferences through;

- tends to view teams as natural vehicles for accomplishment of certain tasks;

- shares responsibility for project outcomes without feeling like he/she hasn’t done his/her part;

- communicates in a manner characterized by sharing information readily; less likely to see information as potential leverage point against others and more likely to see it as piece of the puzzle the team needs to solve a problem;

- more readily identifies with organizational or large unit goals and less likely to over-identify with sub-unit or individual goals;
more understanding of interdependencies between organizational units and more likely to build this awareness into decision making process;

- self and other oriented rather than tending toward exclusive self-orientation.

HELPING BEHAVIOR:

- sees teams as a resource for help; sees offers of help to and from team members as a natural part of team membership;

- defines problem solutions in terms of team responsibility and participation rather than individual ownership; therefore, asks for help when he/she needs it because no need to be totally self-reliant;

- because of better understanding of organizational interdependencies, is more likely to explain behavior by reference to characteristics of the work system or at least the group rather than exclusively by reference to the behavior of individuals.

THE PARADOX OF TEAMS

Organizations have many arrangements of people that can be rightly labeled teams. Management teams, project teams, ad hoc groups, work groups, committees, and task forces are teams. The numerous structural collections of related people in the firm--staffs, units, subunits, departments, functions—are often referred to as teams. Teams are essential when complicated tasks require skills resident in more than one or two people. Teams help when firm goals depend on the coordinated action of highly interdependent units. Yet teams present a paradox in this culture.

We form these collective entities to carry out a common purpose, yet the employees who staff them strongly value individualism, a belief in self-reliance, personal initiative and the primacy of one's personal goals. Organizational norms and practices may mute or accentuate this basic competitive backdrop. But, ultimately,
employees make choices and seek goals which serve their own interests first so long as they honor the terms of the employment contract. I maintain that individualism inherently opposes collaborative acts, and that, in excess, it poisons teamwork. From the member's side, "deeply ingrained, self-limiting assumptions about individual effort and authority...work against cooperation" (Weisbord, 1987, p. 35). From the firm's side, reward systems typically prize personal accomplishment of company objectives, rhetoric not withstanding. Alvin Zander comments in more detail:

"...Americans are not all that interested in...improving group life...Individuals feel that the organization should help them; it is not the individual's prime job to help the organization. Thus, members often are more concerned with their own personal needs and rights than with those of their organization. This country's basic values in interpersonal relations foster individuality, autonomy, equality among persons, pride in aggressive and outspoken behavior, and formation of groups that put the good of the individual before the good of the group (1982, p.xi).

With so much emphasis on self and competition, no wonder interpersonal skills are not our forte. We often put being right, proving a point, prevailing in a rational argument -- all forms of winning -- ahead of listening, compromising, taking partial credit, skills necessary for effective teamwork.

If employees can adopt this "Me first" stance, managers can not. They are charged to act in the firm's best interests even when this may conflict with their own, and they must encourage others to do the same. As Zander notes, the "...point is that decision makers in most organizations must reasonably weigh the needs of their social units, not just the needs of individual members" (1982, p.xi).
Although most employees come to teams steeped in the individualistic ethic, managers (and the systems they create) need not continue to stimulate them in this way. Since we know that groups can socialize participants, teams present a context in which norms and accompanying work behaviors can be influenced. In teams, leaders and managers have an opening to reinforce either competitive or cooperative behavior by modeling, by policy, by systems of rewards.

**Work Team Dynamics: Individualistic and Collective Responses**

In the next sections, I spell out some of the social interplay that managers must face when working with teams. Both individualistic and collective responses are described.

*Emotional demands.* Working in prolonged face-to-face interactions exacts considerable emotional energy. Although facile in casual social contacts, most individualists tend to stumble in these more intimate situations. So ingrained is our self orientation that we balk when having to consider equally the needs of others, especially when some are our competitors. Hsu (1981) notes that Americans love to be listened to but find it hard to listen to others. Yet listening and understanding one another is basic to effective teams.

Team members must understand each others' perspectives, haggle about differences, work out who has influence and how decisions will be made. If there is a leader, he or she must earn or achieve the members' respect. It doesn't come with the title. In addition, members must often make compromises because of conflicts with
others or because of external constraints such as time or resources. All of these transactions take energy and go against the grain of those accustomed to doing things their own way. Moreover, highly achievement oriented members are accustomed to having total responsibility (as well as control) for tasks assigned to them. Some don’t acclimate well to the shared or partial accountability which accompanies team goals. They don’t trust other members to measure up to their level of excellence. They may try to do it all, check up on the work of others or redo work, any of which can cause friction.

By comparison, because of the collectivist emphasis on harmonious relationships, obedience, and respect for authority, persons reared in these cultures or North Americans with this orientation possess more natural aplomb for the interpersonal demands inherent in a team setting. They share attention more easily. They negotiate rather than compete. They are less likely to air private opinions about others in public meetings. They understand partial responsibility for the task. They see no dishonor in asking for help. They listen. They can think "We" instead of "I".

Ingroup dynamics. As mentioned earlier, the ingroup - outgroup dynamic is more prominent in collective cultures. Collective work groups have stronger boundaries than individualistic work groups (Triandis, 1989). The shared viewpoint and value on "we" or "us" encourages members to remain in the group longer; new people and viewpoints enter less frequently. Shared sentiment can become rigid ideology. The highly cohesive group may fight with other groups it sees as wrong,
uninformed, unenlightened. And it is especially vulnerable to the power of groups or individuals more senior in a hierarchy.

By contrast, Americans work groups have more permeable boundaries. Participants' allegiance is partial, mediated by the work contract and personal career goals. When career opportunities appear, most will move on regardless of the status of project teams or other ongoing efforts of which they are members. The individual's needs overlap the group's needs only partially, and it is perfectly accepted for the person to leave to advance his or her career (Triandis, 1989, p.42). In fact many firms encourage this practice. They shuffle aspiring managers rapidly through diverse assignments to ready them for more senior positions.

The attenuated nature of a member's relationship to the group can cause lack of continuity when too many people join and leave the group in a relatively short time span. A potential loss of organizational learning and memory can result in high turnover individualistic teams. As people leave to follow career aspirations, they take with them essential technical or managerial knowledge unless it has been well documented.

On the positive side, because of members' partial allegiance to teams, the highly cohesive, potentially combative team is a less likely occurrence. Also, because of the less personal nature of relationships in most individualistic work teams, new members have little difficulty joining and fitting in with the team. Old members receive the new with minimum resentment.
Human Resource Systems and Teamwork. Reward systems generally pay employees based on the value the individual role contributes and its status in the hierarchy (plus seniority). Performance reviews linked to career development systems have great potential to influence behavior. But few managers work with subordinates to determine team related behaviors against which to measure performance. Fewer still make promotions contingent in part on discrete progress toward teamwork. Yet with the exception of the most cantankerous person, employees typically are "checked off" as satisfactory "team players", whatever that may mean.

Frequently, management development systems spotlight superior individual achievement and then plan developmental opportunities for these "high potential" people. While necessary for succession planning and retention of good employees, these programs tell younger firm members that outstanding personal achievement--distinguishing yourself from others--is what matters most. Teamwork is fine, but make a big splash and make it early if you want to get ahead. Meanwhile, near do wells and late bloomers are left to ponder a limited future or options outside the firm.

ORGANIZING AND HIERARCHY

To organize thousands of employees "under one roof" and point them in the same direction requires control of some sort. Hierarchy serves as a major organizing principle across cultures. Yet the cultural interpretation of this vital organizational mechanism can be quite dissimilar. Below I describe one version of hierarchical control and an alternative. Both affect behavior in groups.
Alternative Systems of Control

Primary and Secondary Mentality. Because employees compete directly with peers for scarce resources--higher salaries, promotions, power, attention--leaders and managers seek ways to manage this "grand cooperation" (Shepard, 1965, p.1120) on behalf of the firm's goals in the midst of multiple, mini-competitions. In managing this inherent conflict, Shepard (1965) highlights the systematic use of a pattern of coercion and compromise in corporate hierarchies. Individuals agree to work for a specific salary and benefits package in return for which they consent to subordinate their goals to the firm's superordinate goals. They compromise some personal freedoms for money. With their remaining degrees of freedom, they try to maximize self-interest. But since many are doing this simultaneously, there must be a way to avoid confusion of disorganized competition and point firm members in one direction.

That mechanism is hierarchy and its attendant systems. The hierarchical structure gives managers considerable power to coerce their subordinates either boldly or subtly. But employees temper their superiors' power by their ability to leave physically or disengage psychologically. Nevertheless, the hierarchy allows creation of classes of individuals with attendant levels of responsibility and authority. By measuring performance, the hierarchy can dispense rewards and punishments. In summary, firms coerce some behavior to reduce individual competition and to face all employees in the same direction, and some behavior is agreed to via compromises, for example, negotiating an agreeable salary.
Shepard (1965) counters this bleak but all too often accurate view of organizational life with another option, a system of collaboration and consensus. He says:

Collaboration and consensus systems require a reward system that rewards commitment to one another and to superordinate goals, rather than a reward system which rewards superficially cooperative behavior while reinforcing mutually competitive attitudes (Shepard, 1965, p. 1130).

Collaboration and consensus systems have four dominant characteristics. First, they encourage participants to commit to each other's growth and to a larger goal. Second, members need "mutual confidence and trust rather than authority-obedience relationships" (Shepard, 1965, p. 1129). Third, the structure in which those using this approach work must be task based and not ruled by power dynamics. Lastly, the supervisor changes from one who enacts the will of higher authority to one who coordinates work and monitors consensus decision making processes for those involved in interdependent task work.

These two ways of capturing work relations derive from more encompassing concepts called primary and secondary mentality (Shepard, 1965). The former is rooted in the biological model of need satisfaction, the latter in humanistic psychology. Those of us acting out of the primary mentality live in a world of scarce resources, competition, and need satisfaction. Others become only instruments for our need satisfaction. Teams are another arena in which individuals can look at each other through the glasses of short term utility, hoping to extract what each needs without
giving up too much in return. A flavor for primary mentality is reflected in phrases like "He owes me one", "Throw him in the deep end and see how he does", "pursuit of rational self-interest", "survival of the fittest", and "What have you done for me lately?" Competition for scarce resources always lies close to the surface in the primary mentality. Employees work together for their mutual benefit and at expense of a third common "enemy". When they get what they seek, they revert to competitive relations and form new temporary coalitions to meet other needs. As a classic example, conflicting management functions will pull together temporarily to forge a new contract with the union, their common enemy.

Opposing the need satisfaction of primary mentality, the secondary mentality is a growth oriented, self-actualizing, non-instrumental path for human interaction that says, "We can be more for each other than means to personal ends". The secondary mentality "assumes that the individual can only develop and express his full potential in an interpersonal atmosphere of trust and openness" (Shepard, 1965, p. 1127). Shepard goes on to say:

The dominant theme in systems of collaboration and consensus is that the organization is a means which its members control toward ends which are in accord with humanistic values. The form of the organization is not predetermined: it's form is determined by consensus among members and is subject to change to meet the particular form of environmental challenge that confronts them (Shepard, 1965, p. 1130.)
The secondary mentality emphasizes managerial teamwork rather than individual action. This is apparent in Shepard's (1965) comment that developing good managers calls for:

...the need for change procedures which are directed toward the development of relationships in a team, rather than of individuals in isolation p.1131.

The secondary mentality is more in tune with collective sentiment. It accents developing teams as a unit. Establishing collaboration and consensus in a competitive business environment is problematic since the traditional command and control structure, the primary mentality, oppose it. Both concepts are important to remember when reading and reflecting on the case materials presented in Chapters Five and Six. Evidence of primary and secondary mentalities speaks volumes about the extent to which effective teamwork is present in an organization. Before turning to the background material preparatory to the cases, it is necessary to review the methodology which guided this research.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This field study of managers' participation in groups evolved from field work in four petrochemical plants. I gained in depth knowledge of the firm and one of its plants during a six month stint as a full-time, paid Organizational Development intern in 1988. In 1991, I returned to conduct research in that plant on the strength of contacts developed during the internship. Friendships formed then led me to eventual entry into another American plant and to a Canadian manager who agreed to extend the research into two Canadian plants. The central methodology employed is a comparative case analysis of two organizations, one Canadian petrochemical plant and one American plant. They were chosen on the basis of the variation between them in the kinds of teamwork present and the contrasting ways in which that teamwork manifested itself.

I wrote and analyzed the cases drawing on two traditions. As my ethnographic guide, I relied on Spradley's (1979) method as described in The Ethnographic Interview. I also drew from Crozier's (1964) perspective on bureaucratic dysfunctions. Both are explained in detail in the DATA ANALYSIS section.

PILOT STUDY

The intent of my pilot work was to determine if national character alone was a robust enough variable to study differences in Canadian and American managers. In the winter of 1991, I gave thirty three managers a shortened version of Hofstede's (1982) culture survey in addition to interviewing each of them. The sample consisted
of fourteen Canadian and nineteen American managers. Even with the small sample size, I obtained significant results which did not, however, follow Hofstede's (1984) theory. Americans responded both as predicted and as predicted for Canadians. Ditto the Canadian group. National culture alone was not a promising explanatory path. Thus began a series of fits and starts before I settled on the final research question.

THE PLAN OF THIS RESEARCH or "I Wonder as I Wander"

I chuckled to myself during a meeting with a committee member when, in response to my question, he told me a "solid Methods chapter should lay out your plan for the research". His comment suggested a linear sequence of activities culminating in, voila, the thesis. My chuckle reflected my peripatetic research activities ironically juxtaposed against the order implied in his statement. I collected my data before I knew (or understood) what method I would use to organize and analyze it. My pilot data became my data bank because access to all but one research site ceased. Early ideas all but discarded popped up prominently much later. I wrote in earnest for eleven months before the final research questions were settled. A sequenced trip it was not.

The driving intellectual force remained steady throughout this period - my interest in individualism and collectivism and how these social values affect behavior in the work place. However, after the pilot effort, I shifted topics several times. From studying cultural differences in managerial behavior I moved to explaining variations in organizational change efforts at the four plants. When I bogged down in the
number of contextual variables to explain, I deferred to a common orienting approach among qualitative researchers. Diesing (1971) captures this when he notes that "Frequently...it is simply a matter of being surprised by something (p. 145)." Two observations struck me. Between them, the four petrochemical plants had a profusion of teams related to their efforts in participative management. Also, the plant management groups differed sharply in emotional expressiveness.

First, the sheer numbers and different kinds of teams generated many questions. What did managers think and feel as they worked in teams? Did they have a sense of participation, or did they feel stunted from the familiar and lucrative recognition which accompanied individual achievement? Was membership gratifying, an ordeal, both? Would they seek out or avoid future experiences in teams? Did the plant run any better because they organized some work in teams? Second, the dissimilarity in emotional expressiveness came out in several ways. An American manager reflected on the contrast between chilly relationships with bosses and peers and the warm ones he felt in church and neighborhood groups. Several noted the infrequent positive comments for work well done. In contrast, the member of one Canadian management team spoke about how they "supported" each other and how they "think and feel" for the business. They recounted events commonly thought quite private during some of their staff meetings. Although I could not have articulated it at the time, it was this very split between affective expression and the appearance of so many contrasting teams that led to my central descriptive categories, kinds of teams and uses of teams.
THE SAMPLE

The sample consisted entirely of plant personnel from the same firm. Almost all were engineers in middle management positions. Several non engineers and managers above middle management were included as explained below. Subjects came from four different petrochemical plants, two each in the United States and Canada. Both U.S. plants were located on the same physical site as were the two Canadian plants. At each location, participants came from the same two divisions of the firm. Please see Figure 1 as I explain the subjects in more detail.

[Diagram of the sample distribution with breakdown of positions and numbers]
The Canadian sample consisted of six managers from each of the two plants plus the human resource manager and the site manager. The American sample contained ten subjects from each of the two plants plus the site manager and the human resource manager. In an exploratory field research project using anthropological field methods, verbal data or words are the currency of the analysis. Transcribed interviews from the four plants numbered four hundred sixty nine pages. Field notes numbered one hundred forty pages.

The site managers were the highest ranking persons at each location. In both countries, plant managers had a dotted line reporting relationship to the site manager as well as a direct reporting link to the operations function at headquarters. The site manager and plant manager were at the top of the middle management chain of command. I attempted without success to include an operations manager from the American headquarters in the sample. The two human resource managers' staffs provided services for all the plants on their respective sites.

Before explaining relevant hierarchical relationships in the sample, I must point out that confidentiality constrains how I present this information. Because an exact description of the configuration of plant personnel constitutes proprietary information, I can not, for example, reveal how many managers at a given level work in a particular plant. By level, in both U.S. plants the subjects included the plant manager, department heads who reported directly to the plant manager, and second line supervisors (SLS) who reported directly to department heads. In one plant, I also
interviewed one engineer and the quality coordinator. He reported directly to the plant manager but did not hold the same rank as department heads. In Canada, subjects consisted of the plant manager, called the manufacturing manager, and section heads who reported directly to the manufacturing manager. The terms "section head" and "department head" are synonyms. The second line supervisor position was eliminated in Canada during a reorganization in 1986. This fact resulted in a curiosity in my sample which I did not know in advance. In Canada, I interviewed the majority of both plant management groups since there were only two levels of engineering management. In the U.S., I sampled more managers below the management group than within it. An unexpected bonus derived from the fact that the American sample contained one Canadian on loan to the plant. The converse was true for the Canadian sample. These two subjects provided a unique perspective, having lived in both organizations and both cultures. The American in Canada was in fact not assigned to the Canadian plant referred to in the case but to the other Canadian plant in which I interviewed. However, he knew and interacted with some of the case participants.

I would like to report percentages which indicate sample size as a percent of the total population of managers in each plant. Again the proprietary nature of the data constrains me. I can say that the Canadian subjects constituted the vast majority of the total population of managers in the two divisions studied. The American samples included only part of each management team. However, when second line supervisors are considered, the sample covered each department in each plant, and the
total number of managers represents a substantial number of managers from each
division. By engineering discipline the total sample breaks down in this manner:

- nineteen chemical engineers
- six mechanical engineers
- three civil engineers
- one electrical engineer
- two chemists
- two human resources managers
- one quality specialist.

In the sample were thirteen participants with masters degrees in engineering, one
Masters in Business Administration, one Masters in Industrial Administration, and two
Ph.D’s.

DATA COLLECTION

A two hour, structured interview constituted the main data collection strategy
for this research. I augmented these interviews with data collected while I worked as
an intern in one of the plants for a six month period. During the internship, I
conducted structured interviews with thirteen second line supervisors and wrote a
report from that data base. I also collected archival data, specific pieces of which I
used in this research. Following the internship, I also consulted with managers from
this one plant over a two year period after returning to the university. This
relationship allowed me to continue collecting information about the plant and the firm as a whole.

I conducted interviews in February and March of 1991 during five to seven day stays at each site. I audio taped all interviews and took copious notes during the sessions. Offers to present interim reports, at which time I had hoped to conduct more interviews, were politely refused in three of the four plants. A US plant manager said he didn't have the time for an "academic" presentation unless the report had immediate applicability. The Canadian site manager cited the press of work and alluded to difficult issues facing the plant. (Later I learned he was referring to a prolonged period of downsizing and permanent layoffs with their attendant difficulties). My failure to negotiate a second round of interviewing at the outset meant that the pilot interviews became the central data base. I did augment these interviews in several ways. In September, 1991, I returned to the American plant in the case to present an interim report. (At the first of two meetings, one person attended!). At that time I conducted two follow-up interviews and three new interviews. In April, 1992, I began a concerted telephone interview follow-up stage with the Canadian plant in the case to fill gaps in my knowledge. I had great difficulty making this happen. Managers were hard to reach by phone, slow to return phone calls, and unresponsive to letters. I did conduct follow-up telephone interviews with two long suffering and extremely helpful participants. And with one of them, what began as phone conversations became a series of faxes back and forth to verify,
correct, or expand information. The general lack of response from managers was understandable. They worked in a fast paced setting. My timing intersected with another round of layoffs of salaried people, including some of their peers. Lastly, after more than a year since the initial interviews, I queried them about very old news as far as they were concerned.

The Internship

From June, 1988 through December, 1988, I worked as an OD specialist in one of the American plants. Unwittingly, I collected data during this time that gave me a background understanding of the firm and even very specific information used in the current research effort. At the suggestion of my supervisor, I entered the organization by interviewing fifty six percent of the second line supervisors about their work and current organizational issues. I also conducted shorter interviews with all but one department head, the plant manager and a human resource manager. From these one to two hour conversations, I wrote a report for the plant manager. This report contained themes about teamwork, quality, leadership -- all topics relating to the present research. Most importantly, I was a participant observer for half a year.

I toured two plants. I facilitated meetings, joined working task groups, sat in on regular quality meetings at which the management group was present, ran company workshops with participants from both divisions in which this research was conducted, developed and served five consulting clients, and attended workshops and "state" occasions. Although housed in the plush administrative office of a senior engineer on
special assignment, I spent limited time "out in the field" with wage earners on the operating units and in control rooms. Two of my consulting projects were directly involved with wage level employees.

After returning to the university, I maintained a working relationship with the plant management group via intermittent consulting trips -- about three or four per year -- through February of 1991 when I began to devote full time to research. During that time, I accumulated archival data in the form of position papers, speeches, memos, vision statements, mission statements, quality statements, workbook manuals and miscellaneous papers collected over a three year period of consulting activities with the firm. My ethnographic record (Spradley, 1979) consists of archival data, three notebooks of field notes stimulated by the interview data or by later contacts with the research sites, a series of letters and faxes, and a personal log of reactions and musings over the course of the project.

**Scheduling of Interviews**

I specified that I wanted to interview managers, including the plant managers, but made little attempt to influence the selection of those interviewed. An assistant to the human resource manager selected and scheduled all interviews at the Canadian site. Secretaries in the U.S. plants scheduled subjects based on sheer time availability. In the plant where I had worked, I did call the plant manager and two particular department heads, all of whom I knew, to be sure I got time with them.

**The Interview Protocol**
Please refer to the interview protocol shown in Appendix A. I designed this protocol for the pilot phase with committee assistance. At that time, the research focused on presumed differences in the way Canadians and Americans manage. Questions One, Two and Three concern career history, career development, and life outside work. Questions Four and Five address work group or team experiences and decision making in groups. Questions Four-A and Seven focus on the related concepts of autocratic versus consensus management and activities related to individualism or collectivism. Question Six elicits descriptions of exceptional performers. Lastly, question Eight asks directly about Canadian/American differences. I designed some questions to elicit data indirectly, others directly.

Since most people take time to acclimate to an interview situation, I began with well-known, factual work-related topics. I reasoned that career histories, career development material, a catalogue of time and interests outside of work might indirectly reveal Canadian/American differences. (Remember, this was the topic at the time of the pilot study). For example, Canadians and Americans might spend time outside of work differently or define a successful career differently. Question Four was an informal kind of critical incident technique, designed to indirectly elicit differences in decision making method. Lastly, in questions Four-A, Six, Seven and Eight I sought direct information about high performance, consensus, individualism, collectivism, and national culture. Clearly direct questions, I thought the precariousness of the contract warranted them. Although I hoped to gain future access
to these managers, my contract was only for the one pilot interview. While I had their attention, I was going to ask them directly about my major interests. In retrospect, I definitely made the correct choice! Question Seven turned out to be a jack pot, yielding data central to my topic of participation in teams.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

After an initial period of data analysis across all the plants, I selected two which evidenced symmetrical variation for the in-depth case study and analysis contained in this research report. Actually, two major kinds of analysis are reported in this document, one tied more closely to the cases, the other to the later analysis chapters. To analyze the interview data and build the content for the two cases, I used Spradley's (1979) method of domain analysis, supplemented with what Diesing (1971) calls pattern analysis, a kind of thematic analysis. Together, but drawing most heavily on Spradley, they yield the ethnographic description which is apparent in the case material. Description is a bit of a misnomer since the material contains analytic understandings which become part of later analysis chapters. To analyze the case material and write the analysis chapters, I used Crozier's (1964) approach of examining dysfunction in bureaucracies. Below I provide more detail about these analytic techniques.

**Ethnographic Learnings**

My growing interest in ethnography, begun while working on my qualifying paper, got a boost in May, 1991 from attending a conference on symbolic
interactionism and qualitative methodology. In typical fashion, I returned, excited and diverging with the help of a plethora of creative, unwieldy ideas. Several committee members had the good sense to persuade me that my plant led away rather than toward simplicity. I maintained my interest in domain analysis, recommended earlier by my committee chairperson and reinforced by the conference (which was attended by more symbolic interactionists than then existed at any other single point on the face of the earth).

Although my earnest intent at the time was to "write an ethnography", I gladly "settled" for a work with an ethnographic flavor. Wolcott (1990) lists the purist's three defining characteristics of ethnography. First, the researcher grounds the work "in solid description" (Wolcott, 1990, p.54) or, more popularly, "thick" description. Second, the author approaches the topic from a cross cultural and comparative angle. Thirdly, the analysis intentionally reveals cultural patterns. I grounded this study in solid, descriptive data, and it has a cross cultural dimension. However, participation in groups is not dealt with in a thoroughly cross cultural and comparative way. For starters, I do not compare participative activity around the world nor rely solely or even primarily on an American / Canadian comparison to account for variations in group participation. In fact, culture is the most muted explanatory construct. Finally, the analysis does not result in themes which express overall patterns in the cultural scene of these petrochemical plants. Although approximating this goal with the descriptive analyses of teams in each plant, limited access to participants and a
purposeful decision to follow Crozier's method of case analysis took me in another direction.

For the case material, I combined analytic techniques to write the descriptions of the two plants. Using Spradley's (1979) method of domain analysis (explained below), a procedure designed specifically for interview data, permits the researcher to go beyond description to a cultural analysis. However, reaching this level depends upon repeated access to participants, a condition not met in this research. These data lend themselves more to a breadth of understanding about teams than a depth understanding. To offset this circumstance, I augmented domain analysis with thematic analysis or pattern analysis.

**Pattern Analysis**

Diesing (1971) starts building inferential models of social behavior by concentrating multiple kinds of data and/or multiple data sources on the same data point. This practice is commonly called convergence or triangulating the data. Convergence improves the dependability of statements made about the data. Repeating this process over and over for other data points builds more and more plausible accounts of social events. The researcher moves from data to themes to connections between themes, all of which relate to a subsystem or part of the whole social phenomenon under scrutiny. An explanatory model solidifies when the researcher puts together the pattern of themes which relates the subsystems (Diesing, 1971). A theme and its relationship to others is explained by showing its place in the
pattern. By integrating more detail and more themes into the pattern, it becomes even more plausible. Diesing (1971) notes that:

A larger network [pattern] based on a greater variety of evidence is not so readily questionable; it is more difficult to imagine an alternative that manages to include all the same themes. The larger and more complex the pattern, the more difficult it is to imagine an alternative, and a time comes when no plausible alternative is imaginable (p.158).

This method is most apparent in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten on human resource systems, leadership, and national culture, respectively. For example, many people at both sites described the appraisal method used at Chemco, and I had direct knowledge of it because of my internship with the company. So the detailed description of that method found in Chapter Eight represents an example of triangulating data. Comparing the American and Canadian variants then yielded two themes -- that one is a high differentiation system, the other a lower differentiation system. In this subsystem called "appraisal", a pattern of participation emerges -- the lower differentiation system is more conducive to collective acts in teams than is the high differentiation system. The previous statement about the patterns of participation connects two themes (low and high differentiation) and explains a subsystem (appraisal) as it relates to the whole pattern. That pattern concerns the influence of individualism and collectivism on participation in groups. This line of reasoning exemplifies building a piece of a model in the tradition of pattern analysis (Diesing, 1971).

**Bureaucratic Dysfunction**
Chapters Eight through Ten reflect Crozier's (1964) treatment of dysfunction in bureaucracies. Although acknowledging structure's impact on human behavior, Crozier asserts that employees live by their wits as well. Within constraining organizational designs, employees identify even slight areas of discretion which they exercise to personal advantage. In essentially a functionalist analysis, I review social events and provide rational explanations which can be converted into practical, applied knowledge (Burrell & Morgan, 1980, p. 26). For example, in the final chapter, I suggest the advantages and disadvantages accompanying diverse participative acts observed in the two plants. In accord with the functionalist tradition, this section contains consequences, both pro and con, related to alternative choices managers make. For example, one plant manager devoted time and energy to develop his group into a self-managing team. The other did not. While we can applaud the former for action in line with OD values, it appears that time given to building his management team came at the expense of similar and perhaps more crucial efforts among wage earners in his operating units.

**Domain Analysis**

For the purposes of this study, a general definition of culture is "the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior" (Spradley, 1979, p.5). Following the symbolic interactionists, Spradley (1979) accents meaning in the study of culture. Although documenting behaviors, events, emotions, artifacts is necessary, "the essential core of ethnography is this concern with the
meaning of actions and events to the people we seek to understand" (Spradley, 1979, p.5). The key to unlock these meanings hides in language, specifically in the semantic relationships inherent in any culture's language, and the tool Spradley uses to unlock meaning from language is called domain analysis.

As an example, after developing an early curiosity about teams in the plants, I began by making verbatim transcripts of Question Seven which asks:

In what ways does this organization pay attention to the individual's needs and the individual's talents and, on the other hand, the needs of groups of people and the talent that can be amassed in a work group?

Although not intentional on my part, this question evoked lots of conversation about participants' membership in teams. I picked a relevant semantic relationship, strict inclusion ("X is a kind of Y" or, in this case, "X is a kind of team"). Then I read the text once for the story line and many more times to find all the "kinds of teams" mentioned in that story line. In this way I began building a list of teams in each plant. My incomplete list then directed me to read more interviews, transcribe more data, review field notes, listen to the full audio tapes of interviews, conduct more interviews, conduct phone interviews until satisfied that I had a reasonably full account of all the extant kinds of teams. I repeated this process for another, more revealing semantic relationship, uses of teams, and applied it primarily to the plant management staff teams themselves. For example, members of the Canadian management used their team for learning, for their own development, and as a support net. Members of
the American management team used their team to create and monitor quality teams, to manage the career development of subordinates, and to plan business goals. These very dissimilar uses of the team then allowed me to develop themes and make analytic statements comparing the two management teams. Spradley uses the word "domain" to name these categories such as "kinds of teams" and "uses of teams". The procedure outlined above is a domain analysis, and Spradley conducts them in a very specific way.

*Emic Ethnography.* He requires building the categories or domains by encouraging interviewees to speak about their cultural scene using their own vernacular rather than trying to transpose into terms more easily understood by the interviewer. Then the researcher reassembles these verbal data using the participants' words. This method places Spradley squarely in the "emic" (Pelto and Pelto, 1978) camp of ethnographers who seek the "native view", that is, the meaning cultural knowledge has to those who live in it rather than the significance social scientists make of it by applying their discipline specific concepts. In point of fact, I did both, mixing native terms and social science concepts in my description and analysis as explained in the example below. This was my way of using social science concepts necessary for more complete understanding while trying to respect the participants' ways of speaking about their experiences.

As the researcher fits together many different domains all related to teams, he or she can form a more integrated pattern which unlocks a cultural description of
teams as the managers see them. Figuring out the interrelationships between domains is the work of teasing out cultural themes, the more fundamental and pervasive guides to cultural behavior. A cultural theme is "any cognitive principle, tacit or explicit, recurrent in a number of domains..." (Spradley, 1979, p.186). Cognitive principles clarify connections between domains and, more importantly, articulate rules which strongly influence employees’ thinking and behavior. For example, a rule the Canadian management team lived by is "We will conduct performance appraisal sessions of individuals in the group setting." I learned this rule from fleshing out the domain "uses of the Canadian management team". From a similar exercise, I learn that the American managers do not follow this rule. Combining the data about group appraisals with other facts about them led me to a theme about leadership in the Canadian management team. They shared control, a concept addressed in detail in Chapter Nine. Put differently, they became self-managing (Hackman, 1990). Using the same method, I learned that the American management team is more accurately described by the term manager-led (Hackman, 1990) than by shared control of leadership. This example constitutes the analytic use of domain analysis and exemplifies a form of complete ethnographic analysis in itself when enough domains are tied together. It also exemplifies the use of both emic and etic (Pelto and Pelto, 1978) practices. Taking the emic data from the domain "uses of the management team" and combining that with Hackman’s etic concepts, allowed me to compare the two management teams.
To summarize, a single domain stores pieces of a cultural scene. The web of related domains reveals relationships between the parts from which come the themes that tie the parts to the whole. The themes express fundamental truths which, when taken together, build the ethnographer's theory about a particular cultural scene. Grasping the story in the themes forms the researcher's holistic understanding of the culture or cultural scene studied.

VALIDITY

Traditional positivist research relies on a battery of testing instruments with established degrees of reliability and validity. By contrast the qualitative researcher is the measuring instrument, perceiving the object of study through filters of sophisticated training and his or her unique personality. This distinguishing subjectivity unlocks flashes of meaning and insight unavailable via conventional measuring tools. It also lays one open to the question of whether the research is science or journalism. This research is not "reliable" in the strict "testing" sense of that word because the "person as instrument" path does not yield a result which is independent of the researcher and therefore easily replicated.

While eschewing reliability, credible work requires attention to the validity of evidence. Roughly speaking, validity is the extent to which a measuring instrument gives the correct answer (Kirk & Miller, 1986) or, in the case of qualitative research, yields accurate interpretations. The plausibility of this work rests on the integrity of
both the data used and my interpretations of those data. This statement highlights two issues: (1) the dependability of the data; and (2) my biases as a researcher.

**Dependability**

Diesing (1971) addresses dependability by reference to what he calls contextual validity -- the researcher's on-going effort to establish the accuracy of evidence by balancing pieces of evidence in the context of other pieces. He suggests two ways to bolster validity: convergence on the data and convergence on the source of the data. The first, a special case of the general strategy of using multiple methods, is to compare alternative data sources with reference to the same data point. When the same information can be documented from converging sources, the researcher strengthens the integrity of the data and interpretations made from it. For example, I have evidence from interviews, informants, observation and organizational literature that tells me safety commands a place of extremely high value in successful chemical plants.

A second kind of contextual validation occurs when a researcher accumulates several kinds of evidence about a *source* of data, the objective being to reveal a characteristic pattern of distortion and correct for it. For example, after establishing that one of my interviewers/informants had a dual reporting relationship, I compared his structured interview responses and our telephone conversations on certain points and checked these against what others told me. His comments about the group which
claimed his functional loyalty were colored by his participation in the management group.

As a third validity check, I had some interviewees read written material, in particular some of my domain analyses. This practice helped verify factual matters and invited challenges which can sharpen interpretations.

Diesing's (1971) idea of renaming the construct of validity and calling it dependability provides a useful guide. Rather than claim the portrayal of the "true and certain account" of teams in the chemical plants, I strive for an increasingly plausible account. To that end, the test of dependability is to constantly review sources of evidence, keeping in mind the extent to which I can treat what I learn from that source at face value relative to other sources. This helps establish accuracy of data. Converging several data gathering strategies on one point of information strengthens interpretations.
**Researcher Bias**

Although researcher bias is frequently mentioned in texts, concrete examples of it are rarely listed. Below, I point out ones I am aware of coupled with corrective measures. Paradoxically, as the research instrument, I must disbelieve everyone initially, yet I cannot suspend my own beliefs. Here are potential villains of which I'm aware.

- Jealousy of interviewees. As an unpaid researcher and impecunious doctoral student, I found it difficult at times during interviews to listen empathically to young men in their thirties, who made considerable salaries and had done so since their early twenties grouse about their economic plights.

- My past experiences as a (responsible) victim of individualism incline me to downplay its virtues and, I believe, look for ways to knock it. This bias combines with the professional value on collaboration, essentially a "team" orientation, from the field of Organizational Development. I guard against this by including a section in the individualism/collectivism section which praises the former. Also, in my analysis, I'm careful to show the pros and cons of team solutions.

- Rooting for the underdog, over identifying with him/her in my analysis. A perennial position, not likely to go away, my cure takes the form of disciplining myself to write critically about the benefits and stresses on those in each role. This helps create distance.
Holier-than-thou attitude of social scientist who knows more than these nerdy engineers who invariably screw up human systems. I realize the superiority component as some compensating mechanism for self-esteem issues. As a correction, I simply recall data about their lives, especially more poignant things I have been told, and this quickly enables me to see them again as people, not things.

The strong value on the "control paradigm" in plants seemed overdone to me, and, in fact, a main hindrance to social system innovations. While reading Perrow's (1984) *Normal Accidents*, I began to understand the catastrophic consequences of plant screw ups which result from lack of control. I understand how and why control is appropriately drilled into these engineers through education and then the plant experience. This was a major step in my understanding of what it is like to suspend my beliefs, "cross over" and "get it" about what the "native view" really means.

Bias in favor of emotionally expressive people. I found it easy to identify with one plant in which affect was encouraged and easy to label its absence in other plants a lack rather than a stylistic difference. I'm not sure I've licked this one yet although I think my analysis is going to show how the "favored" plant got itself in trouble on this very issue.
CHAPTER 4: A DESCRIPTION OF CHEMICAL PLANTS AND FACTORS EXTERNAL TO CHEMCO'S PLANTS WHICH BUILT MOMENTUM FOR CHANGES INSIDE THE PLANTS

In this chapter I present background material needed to understand the next two chapters in which I depict group behavior at two of Chemco's petrochemical plants. First, I describe a petrochemical plant -- its physical characteristics, how chemicals are made, industry values, a plant's organizational structure. Then I address a more important issue, the external factors coming together prior to 1986 which built momentum for changes inside the chemical plants during and after 1986.

In this second section, I catalogue assorted external events, beyond the control of plant personnel, which assured major changes within Chemco's plants but did not determine the form these changes would take. For example, excess production capacity throughout the entire petrochemical industry foretold fierce competition which in turn pressed plant managers to make plants more productive. Explaining the alternative paths plant managers chose to boost productivity is the task in my analysis chapters. For the present, I parcel out the factors which guarantee coming changes, first acquainting the reader with petrochemical plants and how they operate. Unless otherwise noted, information about plants and plant operation came from interview data and data accumulated during my internship experience.
A GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO PETROCHEMICAL PLANTS

Visually, a large chemical plant conjures up the image of a playground on which grown up kids played endlessly with giant erector sets and giant metal tinker toys. Spheres, squat boilers, short stacks, thin stacks, fat stacks, tall silvery towers and scads of pipes connecting these pieces spread as far as the eye can see. Ladders and catwalks wind up and around the stacks and towers so that workers can take measurements and make repairs. The hiss of steam is literally deafening, and employees working in the area wear orange or yellow ear plugs.

At the perimeter of this "playground", huge round vats half a football field across and four stories high hold thousands of gallons of crude oil. From these vats piping of various diameters runs to plant equipment which appears sprawled out in an undifferentiated mass to the layman’s eye. But to the chemical engineers who run and manage a plant, this metal jungle divides neatly into the operating units of the plant.

Men and women called console operators monitor related operating units from round buildings set low to the ground. These blast-proof, concrete structures contain control rooms, the nerve centers of the plant, and from them "computerized systems and instrumentation actually run the plant by controlling flows, temperatures, pressures, and other operating variables." Despite automation, plants still require workers called process technicians who check assorted gauges and pumps out in the field.
In distinction to the noise and grit of plants, administration buildings at Chemco are quiet, modern office structures, one in contemporary industrial style, painted inside in primary colors which mark off sections of the building. The other, with plant-filled atriums and a stream running underneath, almost seems like a garden and museum combined. As an intern at the latter, I occupied the spacious, functional office of a senior engineer away on special assignment. Looking out the window, I saw ducks swimming in tinted green water!

Both administration buildings are informal places. Men don’t wear ties nor women suits. All employees, exempt and non-exempt, talk on a first name basis. As an odd counterpoint, written references to each other rely heavily on abbreviations. Outside my office, the name plate read G.C. Robinson (never a first name) and all memos referred to me likewise or simply as GCR. As a newcomer, getting to know people’s first names became a daunting task.

An intense work ethic pervades the plant. Engineers and managers alike behave as if there is always too much to do. Their Franklin planners are jammed with meetings, and they demonstrate a tremendous focus on work related tasks. They would be incredulous at the lax schedules, abundant free time, and lack of accountability of graduate students and professors. Most managers put in at least fifty to fifty-five hours per week. Almost all recounted times in their careers when they had worked seventy or eighty hours per week for two to four months at a time, usually on special start-up projects.
THE CONVERSION PROCESS

In the petrochemical industry, the conversion of raw materials to chemicals is referred to as continuous process manufacturing. Two factors distinguish this method. First, production equipment runs ceaselessly (except when technicians shut down a unit for major repairs). Second, converting energy into chemicals happens instantaneously, not in the step by step fashion of product manufacturing so familiar on automobile assembly lines, for example. No stockpiled inventory waits to be processed. Additionally, the chemical changes occur in the tall towers mentioned earlier, out of view of employees. An abstract quality distinguishes the work since plant workers may never see the actual product, interacting with it only by computer.

The petrochemical part of the chemical industry derives its name from the carbon compounds -- primarily petroleum (crude oil) and natural gas in liquid form -- used to make products. These raw materials travel through piping from the large vats mentioned earlier to the refinery. There they are processed into fuels, and the byproducts continue through pipes to the petrochemical plant for further processing. When they enter the plant, these refinery byproducts, now called feedstocks, flow into steam crackers, gas crackers or cat crackers for conversion to chemicals. Steam or gas fuel the first two processes, and a catalyst triggers the chemical reaction in the third. In all three, the chemical reaction immediately "cracks" apart the hydrocarbon molecules into simpler substances. Technicians then route the newly made chemicals
through more tubing to storage equipment, onto rail cars, directly to customers, or to other plants in the same firm for further processing.

A chemical plant which processes feedstocks directly from a refinery is called a commodity chemicals plant. It makes basic building block chemicals which require additional processing before customers in the market place actually use them. The American plant described later is just such a plant. A commodity chemicals plant sells its products to other chemical plants, often to other plants in the same organization. These downstream plants turn basic chemicals into intermediates which in turn can be converted into plastics, the end of the production stream (Bower, 1986). Both intermediates and plastics become products for commercial and industrial markets. When highly processed, designed for a narrow market, and sold at high profit margins, plastics are called specialty chemicals. The Canadian plant described in the case is a specialty chemicals plant.

Petrochemicals sport polysyllabic names like ethylene, butadiene, paraxylene, polyethylene, and polypropylene. Yet from these esoteric chemicals come everyday products such as trash bags, coffee cups, piping, (polyester) clothing, carpet fibers and backing, clear plastic kitchen wrap, plastic for use in automobiles, home laundry detergents, bubble gum, soccer ball bladders, and plastic gallon milk containers to name a few.
INDUSTRY CHARACTERISTICS

The paraphernalia mentioned in the conversion process is extremely expensive, making petrochemicals a capital intensive industry. For example, the industry as a whole spent $92,300 on capital equipment per worker in 1985 compared to $42,900 per worker for all other types of manufacturing (Dertouzos, Lester, and Solow, 1989, p. 189). However, because of the computer automated systems, a relatively small number of process technicians and control operators can run a plant, holding labor costs low relative to other manufacturing concerns. Petrochemicals is also a research intensive industry. Figures for 1989 show that 4.7 percent of net sales was devoted to research and development compared to 2.8 percent in manufacturing as a whole (Dertouzos et al, 1989, p. 189). This focus reflects the key role of technical managers in the petrochemical field.

Chemical engineers turned managers, men and women who know the business, run it at all levels. Technologically experienced executives provide a key source of knowledge to these firms. Because they value science and technology as tools of innovation and have a history of pairing future success with continuous innovation, they often hammer out more realistic strategic plans for the industry's future when compared with their counterparts in other industries (Dertouzos et al, 1989).
BASIC VALUES

Primary values in the petrochemical industry are control, high reliability, safety and secrecy. Control of plant operations and operating changes, reliable equipment and technical processes, and safe operating practices are "musts" for the chemical engineers running complex plants.

Since products as well as feedstocks are volatile, processed under enormous pressures, and reach extremely high temperatures, careful control of plant operations and careful control of any changes are paramount to avoid catastrophic accidents. Irreversible chemical reactions occur instantaneously so that small errors can send literally hundreds of thousands of dollars up in smoke or result in catastrophic fires or explosions. For that reason, engineers build multiple redundancies into systems to counteract this tendency. Still, steam under great pressure and dangerous, explosive chemicals create conditions under which Perrow (1984) claims "normal accidents" will inevitably occur.

The huge capital investment in large plants puts enormous pressure on managers to operate plants continuously so that the firm can recoup its investment. Highly reliable equipment and manufacturing processes, as well as effective managerial systems, hold the key in this equation. In plant vernacular, high reliability means avoiding or minimizing planned or unplanned downtime. Plant equipment visually reminds the world how well an operating unit is running by the discharges from small diameter stacks called flare stacks. Poking up above the giant towers on
each operating unit, flare stacks shoot flames and smoke into the air, sometimes a lot, often just a little, indicating whether a unit is running poorly or simply burning off by-products.

The industry's safety record is much better than most manufacturing concerns and, in particular, better than the nuclear industry (Perrow, 1984) despite the catastrophes and bad press of recent years. Outsiders might even consider safety precautions excessive. They are certainly pervasive. As an example, I once pulled a chair next to a wall so I could stand and tape flip charts to the wall. A manager stopped me, called someone in maintenance who sent a man over with a very sturdy ladder. Nevertheless, the potential exists for catastrophes in which people are burned or killed, expensive equipment blows up, or toxic discharges are released. The relatively small numbers of plant employees and the fact that many work in blast proof buildings reduces the numbers exposed to accidents. Administrative buildings sit at a distance from the actual plant for this reason.

The chemical industry has a reputation as secretive (Perrow, 1984), not simply to protect proprietary information but to manage knowledge of "near misses". Currently, the industry has avoided federal regulation such as the Nuclear Regulatory Commission imposes on the nuclear power industry. The chemical industry wants to keep it that way. Incidents like the Bhopal plant explosion and tragedy have brought the industry under much closer public scrutiny in recent years. More recent fires and
explosions in the U.S. have caused Chemco to scrutinize its safety management practices.

**PLANT STRUCTURE**

Any chemical plant of the size dealt with in this report has certain basic capacities: ability to produce chemicals; ability to troubleshoot production problems; ability to modify, add to or build new equipment; and ability to maintain and repair equipment. At Chemco, functional departments rather than centralized ones perform these tasks.

An operations or manufacturing department oversees the running of the actual units that produce the chemicals and the control rooms that monitor the process. Most plants also have a technical department with several kinds of engineers who support plant operations. Process engineers work directly with the process technicians and computer console operators on the units to troubleshoot complex problems related to upsets in plant performance. Away from the units, they do creative work like dreaming up step out or breakthrough ideas to improve a process or to add a new feature onto an existing unit. Process control engineers monitor and tinker with the computer programs that operate particular units and make changes that improve productivity. Other plant support services may be configured in many forms.

The maintenance (or mechanical) function may be a separate department or could be part of an operating department. These employees plan for routine maintenance and make unplanned repairs. Routine care of a steam cracker is a huge
job, requiring highly coordinated efforts over a brief time span to minimize expensive
down time. Fortunately, such major maintenance is needed only every five to seven
years.

Some plants have a separate department dedicated to large expensive projects
which add capacity to the existing plant by adding on to units or building new ones.
Alternatively, a project manager can draw employees temporarily from other
departments to conduct these same projects.

One or a few professionals often carry out other highly specialized functions at
the plant. Someone may analyze feedstock prices and calculate the alternative
disposition of energy. This jargon can refer to whether the plant takes a barrel of
feedstock and makes steam or electricity out of it. It also signifies which feedstock to
bring into the plant, a decision based upon the profit to be made given current prices
for competing feedstocks. Plants may have a special analyst who links the plant to
headquarters by taking headquarters’ requests and meeting with product
representatives. The analyst then determines under what conditions the plant can meet
headquarters’ request for a certain kind and volume of product. In large plants, a
person or small group may have a tie to a research and development center to keep the
plant informed of new technology and new product ideas. In addition, commodity
plants often have operations support personnel while product, marketing or customer
service support groups are common in specialty chemicals plants. Every plant has at
least a small cadre committed to plant safety.
Highlighting the levels of hierarchy is another way to understand life in the plants. I draw attention to this point especially since the Canadians removed a layer of plant management during their reorganization, a fact of some importance later in this report. Below are listed the analogous levels of management at the Canadian and American research sites.

**PLANT MANAGEMENT LEVELS BY COUNTRY**

Canada
- Site Manager
- Plant Manager
- Section Head
- First Line Supervisor
- Wage Employees

U.S.
- Site Manager
- Plant Manager
- Department Head
- Second Line Manager
- First Line Supervisor
- Wage Employees

Most Chemco geographic sites contain multiple plants representing different divisions. The site manager oversees all the plants on a particular site, regardless of division membership. Plant managers report up through divisional lines to the head of operations at headquarters and also have a dotted line reporting relationship to the site.
manager. The Canadians call the top manager in a plant a manufacturing manager while the Americans label this same position plant manager.

In 1986 the Canadians cut one more layer of plant management than their American counterparts, leaving only two levels of engineering managers in the plants—the manufacturing manager and section heads. Section heads manage specific departments such as operations, technical, maintenance or major projects. They have greatly increased spans of control compared with their pre-1986 counterparts and with the post-1986 American department heads who are their equivalents. Promoted from the wage ranks, first line supervisors in Canada manage groups of wage earners and report directly to section heads. First line supervisor is a terminal management position in both countries.

In U.S. plants, the first line supervisor reports to an additional management layer called the second line supervisor. The second lines in turn report to department heads who report to the plant manager. Engineers enter management at the second line position, the most numerous kind of manager in the plant. The loss of this entry level position in Canada creates a developmental issue for those aspiring to careers as managers.

At both sites, I'm struck by the immense amount of money involved in building and running a plant, by how much money they can make, and by how fast large sums of money can literally go up in smoke when units run off spec. This really is "big business"! For example, in 1992 the value of products and services sold by the
U.S. petrochemical industry was $129 billion (U.S. Industrial Outlook, 1993, p. 11-3). Last year 264,000 people were employed in petrochemicals or about thirty percent of the 850,000 employees in the chemical industry as a whole. In 1992, the entire industry exported $44 billion worth of products, petrochemicals accounting for $25.4 billion (U.S. Industrial Outlook, 1993, p. 11-3) or about fifty eight percent of that total.

EXTERNAL MOMENTUM FOR INTERNAL CHANGE

A set of factors external to the petrochemical plants generated momentum for later changes inside them. Three classes of events contributed to this momentum. First, upsets within the world-wide petrochemical industry occurred in the late 1970s and on through the mid 1980s. Second, North American management practices came under close scrutiny during this time period. Third, Chemco's senior executives orchestrated a reorganization for both business and cultural reasons. Although senior managers interviewed a few plant employees from around the world, managers in the plants had no influence on the outcome of the restructuring effort.

Industry Trends

Although a world leader after World War II, the U.S. chemical industry slowed down and declined in the 1970s, reemerging in a position of strength in the late 1980s after considerable restructuring throughout the industry (Dertouzos et al, 1989). Through the 1960's, the petrochemical industry enjoyed a relatively stable environment and great success. Feedstocks were plentiful and cheap, and chemical companies
enjoyed moderate to high profit margins combined with high volume sales all through the 1950s and into the 1960s (Spitz, 1988). But "the period of high growth that had characterized the petrochemical industry over the first 25 years of its life" (Spitz, 1988, p.465) came to an abrupt end in the early 1970s.

During the 1970s and early 1980s, a maturing technology, the energy crisis, and overcapacity (Bower, 1988) within the industry came together to create a turbulent industrial environment from one which had heretofore been relatively stable. An energy crisis twice buffeted the industry which found itself gripped by the worst recession in fifty years in 1981 (Dertouzos et al, 1989). Together, these conditions prodded Chemco among many other firms to consider restructuring as a strategic response.

MATURE TECHNOLOGY

A mature technology defines conditions in which firms no longer can exert competitive advantage over each other by sheer technological superiority. When technology matures, companies across the industry can obtain similar equipment. This condition began to characterize the petrochemical industry by the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The industry yielded one innovation after another up through the 1960s after which time technical innovation took a decided nosedive. Chemical engineers developed forty of sixty three major advances by 1950, another twenty during the 1950s and 1960s, and only three in the 1970s and early 1980s (Dertouzos et al, 1989,
p. 192). By the 1970s, the chemical business focused largely on commodity chemicals (Dertouzos et al, 1989). Big, state of the art plants with impressive economies of scale pumped out huge volumes of product in a fiercely competitive field of old players and new entrants. Pricing margins dwindled, and Wall Street exerted predictable pressure for short term profits. The combined effect created disincentives for long term research and development expenditures, the historical mainstay of the industry.

THE ENERGY CRISIS

Beginning in 1973, the energy crisis hurt the chemical industry in multiple ways. Feedstock prices shot up quickly as did prices for fuels to process those feedstocks. At the same time, product demand dropped. As an example, the automobile industry, a major customer highly dependent on petroleum related products, struggled to incorporate increased energy costs into its pricing structure. Simultaneously, it was knocked reeling by heightened foreign competition.

Twin oil shocks, first in 1973 and again in 1979, exposed the Achilles Heel of the US petrochemical industry -- its dependence on foreign oil. In 1973, the Arab oil producing countries, primarily Iran, cut back crude oil production, starting a price increase trend which resulted in the near doubling of feedstock prices between 1973 and 1975 (Stobaugh, 1988). The second jolt came when the Shah of Iran took flight in 1979 to be replaced by the intransigent, anti-modern Ayatollah Khomeini. The Ayatollah cut oil output again, causing another steep increase in feedstock prices.
Although 1979 itself was actually a banner year for petrochemical companies (Stobaugh, 1988), increasing costs combined with a deep recession beginning in 1981 led consumers to buy fewer petrochemical products. The industry could no longer ignore eroding profits in the face of huge capital and overhead costs. These internal pressures to act were echoed outside the firms. Within a year, Wall Street began exerting pressure on firms to exit petrochemicals, described as "an unprofitable business with poor prospects" (Spitz, 1988, p.512).

OVERCAPACITY

Overcapacity resulted as firms continued to build plants while misreading the slow but steady decline in demand for their products. Two types of new entrants into the petrochemical business fueled overcapacity. The early wave consisted of American firms whose major business was non-chemical -- tires, distilled spirits, paper, paint, glass, metal (Spitz, 1988). These firms often cut prices to enter the market, and some were acclimated to operating with much thinner profit margins. Their entry meant an increasingly competitive business climate with lower margins. The more serious blow came when oil rich countries, primarily in the Middle East but including Canada, sought to rapidly increase national wealth by establishing themselves as local markets rather than simply continuing to supply crude oil (Stobaugh, 1988). They began building refineries and chemical plants or making plans to do so. However, the world market for chemicals grew too slowly to absorb the capacity associated with these new local markets.
RESTRICTURING IN THE INDUSTRY

In response to this tangle of problems, companies slowly began adopting different strategies. In general, they shifted away from commodity chemicals since everyone had access to the commodity technology. Instead, they sought out market niches where they could profitably sell higher margin products produced in smaller volume. These were value added downstream products such as specialty chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and advanced materials (Dertouzos et al, 1989). As an example, Dow Chemical’s production of commodity chemicals went from sixty three percent to thirty five percent in five years (Dertouzos et al, 1989, p. 197). Some oil companies joined this trend as well. Most of the major oil companies became the heavy weights in commodity chemicals because they were the only ones left with continuous access to feedstocks and large plants which gave them the economies of scale necessary to profit despite slim margins. During this period of reassessing strategies and shifting product priorities, company reorganizations began in earnest. 310,000 people worked in the petrochemical part of the chemical industry in 1980 (Bower, 1986, p.15). That number dwindled to 254,000 by 1987, creeping back up to an estimated 264,000 by 1992 (U.S. Industrial Outlook, 1993, p. 11-3). One other trend in American business over the last several decades also pressed in the direction of change.

**Questioning North American Management Practices**

Throughout this same time period, thoughtful senior managers throughout North American industry began examining management’s role in organizational
ineffectiveness. The top down model came under ever more scrutiny as managers learned about "Japanese management", quality principles, participative management, quality of working life experiments, the success of "greenfield" plants and the like. More and more executives came to believe that to create a new vision of a company, "it is almost always necessary to reorganize first" (Bower, 1988, p.40). Executives in large firms that had been successful for decades found this message hard to hear since it implied mistakes and lack of foresight on their part. In a climate of global competition, lower profit margins, fluctuating prices linked to volatile exchange rates, and management questioning, Chemco and many other firms considered new ways of organizing to maximize performance.

Chemco’s Reorganization

As part of the restructuring across the entire industry, Chemco’s own reorganization signaled specific changes for life at its plants. Some of those changes followed from shuffling the blocks on organizational charts. Others resulted from a call for new practices in the way people worked together. I want to emphasize this second aspect, the social system changes, after first explaining the new design of the firm.

As an initial gambit, the company used an early retirement program in the early 1980s to cut its ranks. One person privy to this process claimed that by 1983, senior managers realized they had a somewhat smaller firm that was no more competitive than it had been. In late 1985, a study team of senior executives including
Chemco's post 1986 president began meeting to think seriously about how they might reorganize. During a six month period, they interviewed several hundred employees up and down the ranks and around the world, talked with consultants and discussed alternatives among themselves. In the late spring of 1986, senior management reconfigured Chemco, abandoning its matrix structure in place since the early 1970's and substituting a divisionalized design based on product groups. In the old form, numerous product lines matrixed with many specialized functions were replicated in regional sectors of the world to create this international business. Now, the many product lines were compressed into just a few product groups (divisions). The plants attached to these new divisions pulled out their own pieces of formerly huge, centralized functions such as engineering and maintenance and incorporated them into departments as explained earlier. This permitted each plant to operate independently of the others and without most centralized functions. A few like human resources and information systems remained centralized at sites containing multiple plants. The firm duplicated this new configuration in geographic locations around the world.

**BUSINESS AND "PEOPLE" REASONS TO REORGANIZE**

Besides reducing overhead, the central business reasons for restructuring were "to shorten response time, improve cost-effectiveness and develop new business opportunities." These factors accurately reflected trends among those companies which weathered the industry's shifts more successfully. Survivors were more market sensitive and returned to research and development as the keystone to cultivate more
opportunities in areas like specialty chemicals or pharmaceuticals (Dertouzos et al., 1989). Chemco's president got the message. About combining new research with sharpened marketing skills, he said, "We think it's the key to our future." But beyond rearranging the organizational charts in concert with the new business focus, Chemco's senior management sought to stir up changes in the social system as well. Tightening international competition prodded senior management to see Chemco's people as a strategic force for competitive success. Best practices among chemical firms making successful transitions through the 1980s echoed this emphasis on people:

They emphasize productivity, quality, and management of human resources, particularly in organizing the workplace for effective integration of technology and people [emphasis added] (Dertouzos et al., 1989, p. 198).

Chemco sought novel ways for people to work together in the revamped structure. Plants provide ideal sites to learn how they went about forging a new congruence between social and technical systems.

THE MANDATE

Chemco's president actually named all the major elements of social change in this summary comment from a speech:

I see our early '90s organization as one that is continuously improving...We will be demonstrating that we recognize the strategic value of our people. We will be demonstrating the real value of international diversity in our management. These values will be evident from strong employee development initiatives at all levels. Through our quality process and appropriate delegation, our people will feel empowered to act. Teamwork and leadership will be the principal keys to success and advancement in our company (emphasis added).
The underlined words highlight the major elements of change, which I refer to as Chemco’s mandate for cultural change. They included the following:

- empowerment (participation)
- quality
- leadership
- teamwork
- diversity.

**Empowerment**

Empowerment was at the center of the mandate. (Chemco employees talked interchangeably about "empowerment" and "high involvement"). The concept references how much control and discretion employees at particular levels in an organization possess. Reflecting on his learning during the study period prior to reorganizing, the president said:

"There was a general feeling that for many matters we had kept decision making far too high in the organization. If we were going to free up and empower a larger part of the organization in making more of the decisions, how would we achieve that best?"*

Empowerment meant finding ways to place decision making power in the hands of those lower down the ladder. And there was a special concern to increase the participation of wage earners and thus awaken their creative energies on behalf of the firm. In the organizational literature, the more precise terms which include
empowerment are employee participation, participative management, or high involvement management.

Participative management names the degree to which employees throughout the hierarchy share in increased knowledge or skills, more information about the business, more control in distributing rewards and increased decision making power (Lawler, 1986, p.3). As we will see, Chemco's managers, in theory at least, latched on to the first and last part of Lawler's definition in particular. Empowerment became the byword for faster decision-making, delegated lower in the organization -- a competitive weapon, in effect, congruent with the shift to a strong market orientation. And the new knowledge was about quality. In fact, the task team studying reorganization found that many employees "felt that they were over managed and under utilized." They wanted more discretion in approaching their work.

Empowerment a la Chemco made sense given the new business direction because firms able to scan their external environment, analyze data rapidly and make timely decisions could respond more quickly to market whims. Empowerment also made sense given the exit of excess managers associated with the matrix. At all levels, fewer people remained to do at least the same amount of work. One coping strategy was giving people lower in the hierarchy more authority and more decision-making ability.
Quality

From headquarters, Chemco pushed broad-based quality training programs in both American divisions in which I interviewed. These were active at least by 1988. Although quality efforts were clearly in evidence in the Canadian divisions in 1991, I lack data about when and how they began. In addition to the training programs, the firm's restructuring in itself represented a move to position itself to improve quality.

The shift from the overgrown, complex matrix to the simpler divisional design addressed a basic tenet among quality approaches -- attention to customer needs and requirements. From the core values statement for quality came this excerpt (see chapter's end for summary of core values):

...we define quality as understanding the customer's expectations, agreeing on performance and value and providing products and services that meet expectations 100% of the time.

Quality also had strategic value as the president notes:

...a continuous and relentless drive for quality can be a powerful competitive weapon. The quality drive can be a great strength with customers, and a means of empowering people at all levels to play more active roles in improving products and services.10

Here, he tied quality with empowerment. Another component of the mandate, teamwork also dovetailed nicely with the new emphasis on quality.

Teamwork

Regardless of brand or guru, quality programs call for the use of problem solving teams, often with membership across disciplines and hierarchical levels
(Mason, Salipante and Robinson, 1991). Any firm sincerely pursuing an effective quality program also encourages teams.

Teamwork as a distinct value, co-equal with the other core values, represented a substantial shift in intent at Chemco. Past practices heavily favored individual achievement. Teamwork's appearance among the twelve core values showed that the most senior managers were thinking specifically about this concept. Teamwork also "made sense" as one potential way to address problems posed by a flatter, leaner firm with larger spans of control. In a climate espousing more empowerment rather than more top down authority, creating self-managing teams to tackle interdependent tasks provided an alternative to straining for close supervision over even more subordinates.

As the president said:

"...the behavioral scientists are showing us new ways that organizations can be run as high performance teams with much less bureaucracy and rigidity..."

And part of the core value statement about teamwork said:

"We believe that high performing teams containing appropriate diversity can achieve what individuals alone cannot."

This statement touched on the tension between what the best individuals working alone can achieve and what groups with multiskilled members can accomplish. In fact the presence of leadership and teamwork in the statement of core values symbolized the interplay between individual action and collective endeavor in this firm.
Leadership

In addition to highlighting individual achievement in different clothes, emphasizing leadership represented a desired shift away from the concept of management at Chemco. Put another way, the senior executives wanted to accent to their charges the concept of grasping the big picture of the company’s future and leading others to it rather than dwelling in too much detail on daily concerns. Over managing others conflicted directly with empowering them. This shift coincided temporally with the "hey day" of strong leadership as extolled by American consultants such as Tom Peters and academicians as well. Chemco’s twist on leadership reflected the historical moment’s spotlight upon it’s "visionary" or "transformational" aspects (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Bass, 1990). The strong Chemco leader created the future vision which he or she then interpreted for those below and moved them toward. Chemco provided leadership training in 1988 and 1989 for managers from the most senior on down through the plant manager level, including a select few department heads. Managers navigated an outdoor obstacle course as well as attended classes during this elaborate two week training. Visionary leadership was also the theme of the 1989 yearly meeting of the most senior managers in one research division. And from the core values statement came this compatible passage:

We value leaders of high integrity, energy and enthusiasm who have the necessary managerial, professional and people skills to inspire a group or an organization to set high goals and achieve them willingly (emphasis added).
Diversity

Attention to diversity stemmed from several sources. The multinational firm operated around the world in diverse cultures. Closer to home, senior management shared a concern about the difficulty in retaining female and minority engineers. Pilot workshops were in progress in one division when I interviewed in 1991. As important as this issue was in the work force, it was not a central part of my research, and I do not address it in the remainder of this report.

SUMMARY

In summary, Chemco’s plants were fated for change as ineluctable forces gathered momentum across a slowly reacting petrochemical industry. Chemco too felt the effects of a mature technology, the energy crisis and recession, and industry overcapacity. By paring down from the complex matrix with its sluggish checks and balances to a divisional design, the firm hoped to reach customers faster, be more cost effective, and develop new business opportunities. Yet, that was only part of the equation. Senior managers faced up to management ineffectiveness among their own ranks and also sensed their success was tied to new kinds of social relationships at work.

The mandate for social change called for empowering employees by giving them more responsibility for decisions, instituting a quality improvement process, developing leadership foresight, counterbalancing individual achievement with increasing teamwork, and acknowledging and using the diversity inherent in the
peoples of a multi-national firm. However, the bid to increase participation was not without inherent problems.

Chemco's attempt to introduce employee participation into a bureaucracy posed a direct threat to a central plant value mentioned earlier -- control and careful control of changes. Engineers' education and work experiences stamp them as masters of the technical system and of problems admitting to rational solutions. But technocrats' arsenal leaves them ill equipped and disquieted when face to face with complex social issues. Their trepidation is understandable. Tinkering with the social system holds the grim prospect of undermining tight control of the technical process. When mistakes may squander extreme sums of money and even endanger people's lives, we can understand many engineers' hesitancy about cultural changes. No matter how right sounding the notions of participation and teamwork may be, they collide with engineers' control model and point to a major theme in the data:

CONTROL VERSUS EMPOWERMENT

Control and careful control of changes in the technical system go against the grain of empowerment in the social system\textsuperscript{12}. Giving away control is exactly what words like empowerment, participation, and self-managing teams imply. I address the dynamic of control versus empowerment in detail later when I discuss leadership and its effects on the kinds of groups which developed in the plants.
PRIOR TO THE CASES

Having documented the forces prodding Chemco to change, I turn now to present the data about group life at two of the four plants in which I interviewed. I chose these two because both showed strong evidence of teamwork, yet in distinctly different patterns. The Canadian plant had a more collective bent. The American plant mirrored individualism more closely. I did not intend to make this report a Canadian / American comparison, given the results of my pilot work. However, the data indicated I could not ignore national character as an explanatory construct.

In the case material, I highlight participative acts in teams. The reader can think of this group behavior as the "dependent variable" in this research. As stated in the methodology, I used Spradley's domain analysis as a central mechanism to collect and organize data about teams. In particular, both cases feature the same two domains -- the kinds of teams in a plant and the uses of those teams. The plant management team and its participative behavior is the focus of each case although I do not limit the description to these teams. "Plant management team" denotes the plant manager and department heads in the American plant, the manufacturing manager and section heads in the Canadian plant. For the sake of clarity, I chose the term "plant manager" to refer to both Canadian and American managers of this level. I preferred to accent the multi-functional responsibilities of these individuals rather than underscore manufacturing as the major task of plants. I do differentiate the terms "section head" and "department head". Both management teams had ten or fewer members.
Following the cases I compare and contrast participative acts in groups at the two plants. Then, as the core of my analysis, I argue that human resource systems, leadership by the plant managers, and national culture help explain the differences in kinds and uses of teams evident in the two cases. Said another way, differences in participative behavior between the two plants are associated with differences in human resource systems, the plant manager's style, and national culture, the "independent variables".

**SUMMARY OF CHEMCO'S CORE VALUES**

In late 1986, the firm's executive committee developed a set of principles called core values, listed below in abbreviated form:

- Maintaining High Profit Levels
- Communication
- Attention to Community
- Employee Development
- Innovation
- Enjoyment of Work
- Plant Safety, Employee Health, Concern about the Environment
- Teamwork
- Leadership
- Integrity
- Diversity
Quality

These values appear in different order in similar documents. I make no inference about relative importance based on the order in which they are listed above.

ENDNOTES

1. From published company document explaining chemical plant operation.

2. From company document explaining chemical plant operation.

3. The headings mature technology, energy crisis, and overcapacity were taken from (Dertouzos et al, 1989). They represent the most direct scheme for explaining the circumstances that I have seen.

4. Taken from transcript of public presentation at conference.

5. Taken from published material. Revealing any more than this would inevitably compromise the confidentiality of the firm.

6. See end note 5.

7. Internal company document. I derived the definition of the mandate from this internal document, the president’s comments in print, a set of core values written by Chemco’s Executive Committee in late 1986, and the statements of managers I interviewed.

8. See note 5.

9. See note 5.

10. See note 5.

11. See note 5.

12. This theme was explained to me by the internal OD specialist with whom I worked in 1988.
Chapter 5: THE CANADIAN SPECIALTY CHEMICALS PLANT--

PARTICIPATION IN A SMALL, MAVERICK PLANT

Typically, manufacturing management teams mirror an action oriented, get-the-product-out, time pressured plant environment. They often convey a somewhat macho "damn the torpedoes" get-it-done-somehow attitude. The managers in this division broke that stereotype. They got the work done, but note what they said about how they worked:

We've crossed the line from the cold business to "Hey, I'm a person; you're a person...we should share a lot more things at an emotional level." And I'm talking about at a deep emotional level...

...rather than enjoy the misery of others,...we're seeing a shift towards more support for one another...

Work has an overwhelming impact on me, especially the last few years, ever since I've been involved in this movement (emphasis added).

...I'm very satisfied with the position I'm in in the organization...but that's less important to me than...how it's affected me as a person...I would really strongly point at the last probably four or five years where I think my work experience has really changed my whole life...

...we actually did our so called appraisal review as a team...instead of me doing it one on one with the people who work for me.

One section head was so excited to talk about team development that I literally had difficulty redirecting him to other questions.

Although these are by no means random quotations, even a cursory reading of the transcribed interviews set apart this management team. As one said, "A (US Chemco) management group is about as far from (our) group as you can get." In
addition to the conspicuous emphasis on teamwork, members of this management group said they express feelings with relative ease. They showed shades of a T-Group, an ingroup, a social club, a cult, a mini-mental health center. Several referred inadvertently to their efforts as "the movement".

The plant manager, prime mover in this effort, lived and breathed teamwork and loved to talk about it. I had to catch myself, ready to accept uncritically everything he said in the interview. He convinced easily. I imagined his impassioned pleas, his persuasiveness with employees. We talked three and a half years into his efforts. Note the accord in these comments from every section head about how team oriented they are:

With HQ interface, recognition is for individual skills. Here the emphasis is on the team; we go out of our way to be team oriented to the extent that the VP level at HQ demanded we report how individuals were doing. (paraphrase from field notes)

Oh, we are very far on the collaborative, collective scale. Very far.

(The plant manager) is definitely pushing towards running as a team.

...what I see is rather than enjoy the misery of others, ...we're seeing a shift towards more support for one another, better understanding of one another and essentially developing a team.

The following account explains just how these managers came to share a collaborative point of view.

ANTECEDENTS
Three conditions set the stage which launched this management staff group into their participative venture. They concern the plant manager, a section head and his special assignment, and the persona and location of one of the two product lines in this division. First, the plant manager brought an inquisitive disposition to the job he took over in 1987. Immediately prior, he spent a seven month sabbatical touring other company plants worldwide. Pausing several weeks in sites throughout North America, Europe and the Middle East, he sought out best practices to apply at home. Soon after his return, he had his chance.

About a year earlier, local management divided an operating unit into two sections, polymerization and finishing, as recommended in a company reliability study (conducted by US personnel). Designed to improve lagging performance, the change irritated the wage employees who much preferred the variety of working both sides of the unit to working one side for three months and then switching to the other.

Sandwiched between the senior management study and irate technicians entered the plant manager, the highest ranking person on a cross sectional task force chartered to resolve this issue. Through the work of an outside facilitator, members saw that they had "ten different goals". Once they let go vested interests, hidden agendas, and defensive posturing, the members moved quickly to a solution. Operators understood the company’s pressure on the manager; he saw their view. Ultimately, they decided to reunite the unit which then ran much better than it had. This initiation into teams roused in the plant manager an excitement about the power of group action:
"That was...my first experience about what teamwork was all about. Opened my eyes on teams."...So once we shed all out hidden agendas and put them on the table, people understood each other. Emphasis shifted to making it work. It became their decision. Got tremendous commitment (verbatim and paraphrase).

Not surprisingly, he put his stamp on the management team as we will see in the next section.

Second, a section head who spent a special assignment studying organizational change and quality served as another resource to the group. He alternated between the roles of peer and consultant/gadfly, asking hard questions at opportune times.

Third, this division had some distinctive characteristics. The managers from each product line worked in different locations. One group had offices in a recently built central administration building. The other group worked in the bunker, a concrete structure out in the plant which housed the control room and almost all plant employees -- operators, technicians and engineers as well as section heads. Having the engineers and managers out in the plant is highly atypical of chemical plants. As one manager said, "I'd say we are real family based..." Consistent with its unusual location, this product group had always been considered a maverick plant. At its inception, it was chartered to seed changes into the older and more staid plants. The other product line was folded in during or shortly after the 1986 restructuring to make one division. It had the only technology of its kind in the entire firm.

USES OF THE MANAGEMENT TEAM
Please note Table 1 below which lists the three major uses of the Leadership Team as Learning, Development and Support Network. These three terms, derived directly from a domain analysis (Spradley, 1979), represent the managers' language to describe their actions. I checked the terms with two section heads who agreed that these were the commonly used terms to describe their meeting activity. The subheadings (Topics, Experiential Topics, etc.) under each category are mine. The items themselves came directly from the managers.
# USES OF THE CANADIAN LEADERSHIP TEAM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USES</th>
<th>ITEMS UNDER EACHHEADING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEARNING</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Topics</strong></td>
<td>• about Demming and quality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• about high involvement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• specifics from management books</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Experiential Topics</strong></td>
<td>• how to be a team member</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• how to be a team</td>
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<td>• how to make decisions by consensus</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• how to be a leader so we can lead our own sections</td>
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<td>• which teams to have</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• about each other</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DEVELOPMENT</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Team Development</strong></td>
<td>• to discuss where we want to go, be in future</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• to discuss how to get there</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• to practice being a leadership team</td>
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<td>• to run an effective business</td>
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<td><strong>Career Development</strong></td>
<td>• to give compliments to each other</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• to establish openness, trust with each other</td>
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<td>• to give person disconfirming feedback constructively</td>
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<td>• to conduct group job appraisals</td>
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<td>• to conduct group career planning sessions</td>
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<td><strong>Human Development</strong></td>
<td>• to have work experiences which generalize to life at home and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• prepare me to be better father, better spouse</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• to help me create work place that nourishes people, is good place to be</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• to create work which is not just a means to an end</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• to be part of important things beyond just looking out for yourself</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• to see things change and have sense of mission</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SUPPORT NET</strong></td>
<td>• to ask for help</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• to share experiences people have had at work, at home, in life</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• to talk over home issues at work</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• to become friends with each other</td>
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<td>• to make adjustments to help member with temporary work overload</td>
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<td>• to say a kind word on a tough day</td>
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<td>• to help member with personal problem</td>
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<td>• to learn to open up with team and share out feelings - let the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>&quot;feeling&quot; side balance the &quot;thinking&quot;</td>
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Learning

Using that first team experience as a springboard, the plant manager wanted the management team, called the Leadership Team, to operate similarly and said his "whole approach is to establish these teams throughout our departments." Quite naturally, learning became a focal activity as observed in these comments from various section heads:

...I'm very proud of what I've learned...I don't think I ever experienced this sense of learning in school that I sensed in our organization over the last four or five years...you know how just being exposed to new ideas...makes you feel young. It makes you feel alive.

...the large group, the CIC, (the Leadership Team) that's to deal with overall (division) issues in part, but in large part it's also used as a learning base...we've had speakers in before; we've talked about experiences people have had...

(The plant manager) gets us fired up about something; great on concepts--team, commitment, enthusiasm--not details...

Now that we've moved toward a culture of much higher involvement, much higher level of decision-making by all parties involved, tremendous energy in terms of education and training and teaching...

But this topical learning about leadership, about Deming and quality bore the plant manager's mark. The learning was going to be highly personal:

Researcher: Talk to me about this kind of team you want it to be. What happens? It knows what its goal is...

...people can be very honest, non-threatening. There's a relationship that develops between the players, almost a personal relationship.
And his team paid attention to group process. He was impressed with the honesty and high commitment developed on that first team experience after the hidden agendas were exposed and the motivations behind them discussed.

Thousands of managers across North America utter similar comments about changing their culture, adopting quality, becoming more people oriented, adopting open and candid communication. Generally, most of them mean they want to learn material in quick bites if it does not take much time, requires little reflection, has immediate application to their work, and does not upset anyone too much. By contrast, the time these managers devoted to educational events underscored their serious intent.

Educational Activities. The Leadership Team, as they called themselves, committed hundreds of hours to educational activities over a period of several years. They met weekly at the plant for half-day seminars, and they attended retreats away from the work site approximately every other month. They also visited other plants which had high performing teams and attended conferences such as the Ecology of Work Life.

At their off sites, consultants guided them through structured experiences to teach effective group functioning, to stimulate their thinking about how to use teams and to provide practice of new skills. At one of these sessions, a consultant led them in giving each other compliments only. They spent one workshop learning about the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator which gave them a new language to talk descriptively
about each others' differences as managers. They devoted another workshop to the safety support net concept which extended their thinking about teams beyond the bounds of work. Occasionally, they engaged speakers on specific topics. The team also met off site without professional assistance as they developed more internal expertise. Back on site, in their discussions they talked about books they read. Deming’s version of quality was a key topic.

What They Learned. The managers wanted to learn how to lead in a way that ensured becoming a high involvement work place true to Deming and his fourteen points. What they learned came directly out of the 1986 mandate for change which accompanied the firm’s reorganization. In their own words, they studied quality (particularly Deming), consensus decision-making, participative management, the high involvement work place, highly performing teams, work redesign, STS, specific topics like innovation and strategic planning from management books. They also studied human effectiveness by reading books like The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, a favorite when I interviewed them.

As you can see in the LEARNING section of the chart under the heading Experiential Topics, they learned about each other and how to be a team member. They grappled with consensus decision-making. They learned how to lead and tried out their new knowledge back in their sections. They thought through which teams to have and later split the group by product lines into two smaller Leadership Teams. To
all of this they applied quality principles as signified by their early name, the Continuous Improvement Council.

**Development**

I took the items these managers listed under the topic of development and arranged them into three classes of events: team development; career development; and human development.

**Team Development.** Referring to the table on page five, the first four items show the team’s key goals. As they met, they practiced becoming a better Leadership Team so that they could more effectively run their two businesses. And, in the process of doing these two things, they discussed where they wanted to be in the future and how to get there. The group gave each manager a platform for practicing leadership skills so that he or she could then run each section more effectively.
Sequential Steps in the Leadership Team's Development

Following Lofland's (1971) practice called phase analysis of relationships, I produced a domain labeled "Sequential Steps In the Leadership Team's Development".

Step 1: TRADITIONAL STAFF MEETINGS

At the beginning, all the managers from both product lines met together. They called themselves the Continuous Improvement Committee (CIC), acknowledging their commitment to quality. Early meetings mirrored a traditional staff meeting devoted entirely to business issues. I use the word "traditional" to denote subject matter, for the plant manager never intended the process of the meetings to follow customary organizational norms. As one manager put it, the plant manager "made it very clear that he would not settle for the old way of doing things". He described the old way:

...people would lobby (the plant manager) before the meetings saying...
"This is what we should do," maybe bad mouth another section head...we would look to (the plant manager) to make the final decision...if there was a conflict of views...But he made it very clear early on that we're going to succeed as a team or we're not going to succeed. And we're going to make these decisions to where every one can live with them. And we confront and resolve conflict...we work through it together...there was no way he was going to let us off the hook by solving our problems for us.

The plant manager's intent implied that the managers needed new ways to interact and make decisions. That learning began in the second step.

Step 2: TRANSITIONAL MEETINGS
During this transitional period, the group reserved about an hour at the end of each meeting to talk and learn about topics like quality and teamwork. They gradually increased the time given to learning.

**Step 3: LEARNING IN THE GROUP, DECISION-MAKING IN INDIVIDUAL SECTIONS**

At the height of this phase, the group turned almost exclusively to learning new ideas. They developed a new image of what leaders think and do in the post 1986 era by building a definition of team which supported a recast mold of leadership. A manager remembered that time period:

> What we formed (to) do was basically provide a culture wherein the Leadership Team itself could learn and understand how to lead. We were exposed at that time or shortly before...to a Deming culture and...to a people side of the organization. How do you promote high involvement, high commitment, high participation? That formed the basis of our learnings. How do we promote a Deming type culture...

As a consequence of their immersion in leadership and the "people" side of business, they devoted little time to business issues. They learned in the group and made decisions independently of each other back in their separate sections. Paradoxically, while aiming for teamwork, they reinforced individualism. With one exception, the separate section heads ran their departments without benefit of the team’s input.

> "Half of a Team". A pair of section heads, friends from university, naturally coordinated efforts between their two departments. One of the pair recalled that time period:
...in the early years, it was a sharing type culture at the CIC level and then a leadership, decision-making type effort between the two of us...we didn't even recognize (it) at the time as being the role we were looking for the entire team.

When one of the pair left and another man entered the job, the relationship reverted to a pattern of uncoordinated action apparent in all other sections. The remaining member of the pair commented on those events:

...the culture of the time was almost one of refusal to have to deal with decisions or issues (in the management team). It was one of "We're here to share and to learn from each other and develop a culture. But you still have your own issues to manage. Go back and manage them"...So half of a team. (Chuckles)

In fact, the excellent work the new member of the pair did with his twenty plus engineers underscores their uncoordinated action.

Stuck with a huge span of control in the wake of reorganization, this section head worked hard to form his twenty plus engineers into four self-managing teams called engineering support teams. Eventually, these interdependent teams worked out a system to assign and complete all technical work without management supervision. Yet this imaginative effort on behalf of professionals accentuated the effects of uncoordinated subsystem changes. The perennial rift between the wage ranks on the one hand and management and professional engineers on the other grew even wider. In this paraphrase, the operations section head gave his perspective on the advantages and disadvantages of change to different populations in the plant:

Technical and (business) systems areas are smaller, staffed with professionals, tend to accept change more readily...given their technical
skills, they are marketable throughout North America. Change is worth trying because you don't lose a lot...Wage people have a different mentality, needing to protect what they have; leaving (the firm) doesn't guarantee them anything. We need to recognize those fears.

The management team's absorption in learning for themselves and with those others most like them accentuated a rift with the group most unlike them, those in the wage ranks.

"Too Much Leadership and Not Enough Management"

The Leadership Team discovered that their heavy emphasis on leadership confounded one of the very groups they wanted to reach -- the wage employees. A decision making process that worked for the managers perplexed and confused many wage earners. It was "too much leadership and not enough management," as one section head said.

The plant manager based his approach to decision making in the management team on the assumption that his section heads had a highly developed sense of autonomous action. A section head explained it this way:

(His) approach in past has been more we'll present an idea, we'll talk about it, discuss merits, and he'll basically let us decide if we want to do anything with it.

And remember that section heads were not encouraged at this stage of the group's development to check out their plans with the whole group. Highly selected, university trained engineers with years and years of leadership experience, they adapted quite easily to this increased autonomy. On the other hand, workers who have
endured years and years of close supervision did not experience an unstructured "loosening of the reins" as an increase in participation. It was too much freedom.

Looking back, one of the section heads interpreted the reaction in the field:

...people perceive the lack of very clear direction as "Well, ...(the managers) really don’t care what we do"...Our history is lots and lots and lots of direction. So in the absence of lots and lots and lots of direction, that's the equivalent of zero direction.

Raised on task clarity and obvious signs of closure, many of the wage earners found this brand of participation too vague for their tastes. Some few relished it. They found important work and did it without being told. Others hung back and waited to be told what to do. And a third group reverted to a "letter of the law" approach. If not strictly in the job description, they did not do it. So in response, the section head in one product line swung back toward the past. As he said:

We're saying "We're going to get your input, but we're going to tell you what we're going to do". And people seem to be wanting some of that, feeling like we backed away too far from the business in the last couple of years...five years ago we made every bloody decision there was and just told the operators to do their job.

Feedback from the wage ranks underscored their preference for more direction than the section heads had given or needed themselves.

**Step 4: COLLECTIVE LEARNING AND DECISION-MAKING**

Over time, the members developed a group agenda for discussion and action. Even when agenda items applied strictly to one or several sections, the group focused its talent as a whole on how to address issues in a way that created the most benefit
for the division. From the widening rift between engineers and wage earners, they learned that changes in one part of the system must be planned, keeping in mind their effects on other parts of the system as well as the overall division. As one of the managers said:

...it's how do you create change that's right for the business, not necessarily right for an individual group...it's those points that are driving us...back together to manage as a team and manage the decisions as a team.

Step 5: SPLIT INTO TWO LEADERSHIP TEAMS

About six months before my interviews, the group split into two leadership teams along product lines. Expeditious resolution of their respective business issues took precedence. Managers from both product lines remarked on the shift away from learning toward "managing the business" during this phase. A manager intimated that, for one product line, dissatisfaction with business results hastened the decision to split up. While the one product line clarified what it must do for business success, the other continued work on synchronizing changes within its sections to insure the best overall performance for the division. Despite this split, the entire group still met occasionally. Just a few weeks before my interviews, they went off site together.

Step 6: LESS LEARNING, MORE RUNNING THE BUSINESSES

Economic conditions worsened as the Canadian recession continued. Losing money for the first time in about one hundred years, the parent firm applied more pressure for productivity and efficiency. A new president at the parent firm was not
so benevolent as his predecessor. The serious business of running the plants and considering how to cut costs took precedence. Time to reflect and learn dried up.

In summary, to underscore how unusual this management staff group was, remember that even routine plant operation in "good" times can be pressure filled and fast paced. So time was a scarce resource. Yet these managers spent immense amounts of time educating their team over the course of three plus years. And this developmental time required that they switch from their natural action mode into a reflective one to consider new ideas and to observe their own individual behavior and interpersonal styles.

I mentioned that these employees learned to share experiences with each other in the course of their team development. Below, I describe how they expanded these conversations to examine how well they performed their jobs as well as the direction of future career plans.

**Career Development**

The Leadership Team members conducted performance appraisals and career development sessions right in the group, a remarkably collaborative feat! Under the heading of Team Development, a major topic was "What is leadership?" They discussed this general interest topic in public but initially acted on it back in the private confines of each manager’s section. In contrast, grappling with team oriented ways to enact Career Development caused the members to confront each other’s leadership abilities publicly. Employees confide in coworkers when they feel safe
with them and trust them. That the Leadership Team cultivated the ability to evaluate each other and discuss future career options testifies to members' trust for one another.

Early on, they talked about conceptual or "thinking" topics like leadership. Mixed in were affective or "emotional" topics like moments of personal sharing. Together, these laid a foundation that increased trust, eventually allowing members to talk about subjects as threatening as each other's performance. The plant manager modeled trust by talking about himself. A section head said "...he shares his issues that are going on at home; he shares his issues that are going on at work." A key group event, facilitated by a consultant, helped members build a more personal basis with each other, moving them closer to the time when they could engage in collective evaluation methods.

THE COMPLIMENT SESSION: CROSSING THE LINE

During one of their off site meetings, the group held an after dinner "compliment session" described below:

... we weren't comfortable in doing this but we did it anyway... we basically went around the table, and each individual would be the small "v" victim, if you will. That would be all we could say was something complimentary about the individual. And the only thing the individual could only say was "Thank you", could not argue...that was our first kind of crossing the line effort. And it was the first time that we started to talk as people.

He clarified that "crossing the line" means deciding to become more personally involved with each other. This manager experienced personal openness as a galvanizing event. No doubt, different events triggered "crossing the line" for other
team members. This kind of personal sharing built a base of trust necessary for the group development sessions that were to come later.

First, the Leadership Team met off site by product lines to conduct a career planning meeting. A manager stated both short and long term career aspirations. Peers then gave constructive feedback either confirming or challenging the individual’s aspirations and offering suggestions. One participant gave this account:

This is where I shared what my career development plan is and everybody else shared their career development plan..."I’m ambitious; I’m looking for this in this role in this time period. I want your job or I want your job"...we shared that openly. There’s a number of surprises...

Researcher: And then other people said, "Well, you may think you can get there, but... Or, yes I think you...."

Exactly. Confirmation, reality check was done.

Researcher: Or I think you got these barriers...

Or, how can I help you get there? That happened...that was extremely powerful because all of a sudden within the peer group, with the (plant) manager there...we all understood what we’re trying to achieve as individuals. So there’s not question about...does that guy really want my job... Well I know he is (does). But it’s not a matter of him trying to get it from you. He’s aspiring to that role as I’m aspiring to something different. It’s not a competition. It’s a help in that way...

Later, at group job appraisal sessions, an individual literally assessed himself or herself "in the round" and then invited comments. The plant manager attended as participant, not boss. The same manager quoted above described the group appraisal session:

The other thing that helped build that...is we did a peer appraisal session before Christmas. A self-assessment in the public forum as a
management group...we talked about what we're proud of, not proud of, what we're trying to achieve, where we need some help from the group, that sort of stuff...(the plant manager) didn't appraise us. We appraised ourselves in the open forum. We did a reality check.

Fierce competition and politicking for scarce slots often characterize middle managers' jockeying for higher rungs on the ladder. In stark contrast, participants in the Leadership Team's group meetings discussed their performance and aspirations openly and solicited constructive feedback in a recently flattened organization with reduced mobility. They recognized the difference between "I want your role in the firm" versus "I want your job." The former statement acknowledges the fact that each sought advancement through the plant hierarchy, but it avoids the personalized, competitive, attacking spirit of the second statement.

For members of a staff group to engage in direct discussions about these sensitive issues attests to extraordinarily high levels of safety, openness and trust between participants. These bright, ambitious people all wanted continuing challenges. They chose a remarkably cooperative strategy, not an individualistic one, to pursue career development. They believed they had more to gain from helping each other than by continuing to compete.

**Human Development**

In the next section, titled Support Net, I talk about the safety support net concept as one ingredient which accounted for the team's generalized learning beyond work. In fact, the final subcategory Human Development and the category Support
Net begin to blend together, both descriptive of the human tendency to give and receive nurturing. The Support Net refers primarily to members' ability to give and receive help from each other. Human Development names how these managers developed as individuals beyond work related competencies and even extended their learning about teams to settings outside work.

From the perspective of some Leadership Team members, the team experience was so powerful that it jolted their development as human beings. One manager said:

...the last probably four or five years where I think my work experience has really changed my whole life; it's...become a very rewarding, fulfilling experience.

The plant manager talked proudly of his ability to influence people to think and act in a more participative way. He commented:

I have actually seen some of the people who work for me change in the last three years. There are some individuals that have dramatically changed their management style...from a more control oriented to the more participative...they have changed as people. They do not manage and work with people the way they did four years ago.

For some these changes extended beyond their work related competencies to life outside work as well.

A review of the items under Human Development shows that members no longer made a firm distinction between the public and private aspects of their lives, between work and home. One manager talked about this boundary issue:

...I have a really difficult time separating my work and my private life, and I mean that in a positive sense...I don't really see the boundaries very clearly ...I see things that make me more effective at work make
me more effective with my family...it's a little difficult to have the proper balance. What's healthy about it is...growth at work is not at the expense of growth in your private life.

He took knowledge and behavior developed at work and used it at home. No one thinks twice when an employee mentions that accounting software learned for work tasks also helps her monitor her personal budget. But employees in manufacturing settings do not commonly mention that work helps them be better parents or spouses or makes them think differently about how their families function. Below two managers commented on just this kind of impact:

I'm proud of how I've actually changed my behavior...mainly as a parent. Undid some of road maps burned into my brain. I can see the two maps there, the one I'm behaving and the one I would have. I can see what difference I'm having with my children that way...How you are really preparing them to have a meaningful relationship with the world.

...I'm a new father...I've a year and a half year old....the process of the last four or five years has really prepared me to be a better father than I would...seven or eight years ago...I found a place where I really feel comfortable...that really...nourishes me and is a good place for me. And once you've had that experience, I think it's going to help me in helping my children to find the same thing for themselves...I'm just very much more patient...

This manager argued that finding nourishing work helped him nourish his child. He associated that nourishment with his involvement in the management team. He went on to say that new lessons also helped him as a spouse, noting that the history associated with relationships of longer standing made change more difficult than with
his child. Another manager talked about how he now viewed his family through the team model:

If our goal is...for each one of us to grow...if we're collectively working at it, then I think we're going to be a much more powerful and satisfied family than if we just do our own thing independent of each other. It doesn't mean that we don't remain individuals.

Some may say these employees managed their personal boundaries poorly, finding teams under every rock and in every crevice of life. I did not interview their spouses, so I have no way to check their perceptions of the positive or negative impact work teams have had on life at home. At the very least, that they take it this far gives testament to their dedicated experimentation with running the management staff as a caring group rather than a collection of individuals.

Support Net

As its third major use, the Leadership Team functioned as a support net for its members. A former Chemco employee turned consultant explained to the team that a safety support net extends the bedrock plant value of on-the-job safety into the home. He told them that preventing accidents and serious injuries in either location required knowing about and taking action on personal problems such as alcohol and drug abuse or even family conflicts. A "fortunate sufferer" has friends who not only sense his problems but urge, badger or drag him to the employee assistance program if the firm has one. This consultant suggested that the management team take that responsibility into the group. One of the managers summarized the idea:
...safety support net...what we’re trying to do here is get a group of people on this team for example to really care about one another...to try and prevent injuries on the job or off the job...Some of that involves getting involved with peoples’ in part home life...And if they’ve got problems with substance abuse or those kinds of things...trying to work that...It’s still going to be one-on-one, but it’s going to be sanctioned by a large group of people (the management team)...

Trying to "work that" is Chemco jargon for taking action on the issue. Help was to happen among those most knowledgeable with each other, not in the whole group setting, although the group sanctioned this reaching out. Helping members with personal problems lay on the edge of what the group did, more a direction they knew they could take rather than current fact. The bulk of their still distinctive activities centered on work.

These managers shared experiences with each other in their educational meetings and off sites. They developed more personal relationships with each other, some becoming good friends. They said a kind word to another stressed by the pace of events. A few rearranged their schedules to give temporary help to one overloaded with work. Helping an overloaded buddy took on a more personal feel than checking a coworker’s design specs, for example. A manager recounted how the group responded to his call for help:

...it was pretty emotional for me, but the guys did not really realize what I was going through...as soon as I expressed it...three or four of the guys came in, and we talked about how they could help. And for this point in time, they took a load share off...
Getting a pal in process design to check a calculation or part of a drawing or a calculation is an every day event in engineering departments. But managers in competitive firms like Chemco often do not ask for help even when they know they need it and can identify appropriate resources. At work few managers can risk appearing vulnerable or weak before peers, especially in getting just the basics of work done. For the staunch individualist, asking for help contradicts self-reliance and may make the manager appear ineffectual, even wimpy.

EMOTIONAL SHARING

As an aid in asking for help, this management group moved out of the comfortable area of thoughts into the less familiar one of feelings. These highly analytical engineers swapped thoughts constantly in their every day work but rarely shared their feelings at work. As one said, they now "share out" their feelings, letting the feeling side balance the thinking side. The compliment session, informally sharing experiences, the group appraisal and career discussions—all these drew the managers closer together and provided a safe base for talking with less censoring. Referring to the learning transfer from the career discussions, a manager said:

...we personally know each other better...we can recognize when their emotional bank account is getting overdrawn...And we feel comfortable enough to go up and say, "Hey, you seem pretty stressed out today...Is there something I can help you with?"
They were more emotionally expressive and less restrained, guarded or indirect with each other. As an example of how safe they now felt, one recounted the time recently when he told the group about his religious beliefs:

I don't tend to talk about personal life too much...But when I shared it, there was jaws going down, even guys that knew just didn't think I would say anything...I'll be very open about non-threatening things and then whole level beyond that which I don't normally talk about...I think (the plant manager) had a lot to do with it. As a leader...he's done a lot to try and create more of a Leadership Team of people that want to help each other, that want to support each other. So it's become less threatening...

The plant manager led by modeling emotional sharing for his section heads. As the manager quoted above says, "...he shares his issues that are going on at home; he shares his issues that are going on at work." More recently, in May of 1992, the plant manager made sure the team got together off site before the onset of an especially grueling period. The continued recession and pressure from the parent firm came together to force hard talk about ways to cut operating costs further. They faced cutting more employees, even members of the management team! He planned this session specifically for group members to relate their feelings about the upcoming situation and their emotional readiness or lack of it. They did no planning or "thought" work at this meeting. As one said earlier:

We've crossed the line from the cold business to "Hey, I'm a person; you're a person"...we share a lot more things at an emotional level. And I'm talking about at the deep emotional level.
In summary, this staff group, the Leadership Team, addressed the socio-emotional side of work as well as task accomplishment. Doing this actually assisted some in their task work because they learned to ask for and receive help from each other. This helping component signaled a major shift in the team from self-reliance to mutual dependence upon one another. Into a technical enclave normally dominated by analytical thinking, they slipped the care of expressive emotions. And despite draconian task lists, they sneaked moments to support each other. Rooted in the plant value on safety, the support net concept extended the notion of team in time and space. The team existed during and after work, at home as well as in the plant.

TRANSFER OF LEARNING

The members of this management team extended the team idea beyond the management group. Each of the six section head I interviewed used skills learned in the Leadership Team to establish team oriented changes in different sections of the plant. One used the new concepts to turn his twenty plus crew of engineers into four to six person teams labeled engineering support groups. These self-regulating teams determined work assignments and coordinated all project efforts among themselves. They also conducted peer appraisal reviews and career planning sessions in their small groups just as the management team did. Another section head created what he called cohesive shifts among wage personnel on the operating units. As he and his peers visited plants with effective self-regulating or high performing teams, they learned that the essential ingredient was a nucleus of workers. Back home, membership of his
own teams fluctuated daily. Team members and/or the supervisor changed each day, making continuity on the units problematic. As he said, "You, from day to day, never had the same group working in all the various posts." He commented on the change he made:

Going to a cohesive shift structure was significant. That was unheard of on this site even five years ago...had been this way since the late 1950s...

This same manager worked with his first line supervisors to teach them more about team concepts. As a sign of progress, he mentioned how they adopted a new title in the paraphrase below:

No longer viewed as supervisor or first line supervisor. They felt that their role had changed to one of leader or mentor. They dubbed it the term shift leader.

He later conducted a variance analysis to redesign one of the operating sections. I do not have data about how extensive this process was.

Another operations section head mentioned how he got information from wage personnel before the management team made decisions affecting them:

We're going to give the direction but not in isolation, are getting their help in terms of giving us their input before we make the decisions...five years ago we made every bloody decision there was and just told the operators to do their job.

In his interview he specified that he got their input on major issues like the direction the product line should take as well as on plant operating concerns. In addition, he and the mechanical section head were working on a plan to give much more authority
to first line supervisors as soon as they could function as a self-managing team. A
section head in a staff function was so impressed with the Myers-Briggs training that
he studied it and then conducted a similar workshop for managers in his functional
specialty. In the larger community, one of the managers used his learning to help the
YMCA. He encouraged "Y" employees to plan the use of volunteers by including
them in planning meetings rather than dictating to them. He also convinced the
executive director to adopt a team approach when he put a proposal together for a new
recreation building. I paraphrase his comments below:

I share articles about teams with the manager of the YMCA. I'm on
the board there...The package has to be presented to the city. A
business VP, myself, a local politician who is an insurance agent,
another woman who owns several businesses in town -- these people
composed the team. I helped the Y manager think about the kinds of
different skills which would be needed by a group putting together such
a proposal and thus the kinds of people needed on the team. Then
helped him to see that one or two (people) wouldn't have all these
skills; you would need a team for best results. We tried some
consensus processes in coming up with overall plan and strategy.
Everybody could buy into it when they walked out of the room.

STRESSORS ASSOCIATED WITH CHANGE

The Leadership Team believed in teams. In a pressured plant setting, this staff
spent hundreds of hours spread over several years learning about teams and how to
function as one. A few said membership in the team profoundly altered their lives.
All had positive statements to make about this time and their learning. Yet, they paid
for their new awareness in time and emotional costs. The 1986 restructuring left a
plant in which the same if not more and better work had to be done by about twenty
percent fewer people. Although the flatter structure afforded a more flexible decision-making format than its more hierarchical predecessor, it decreased their career options markedly since there were fewer levels to traverse. One manager in particular spoke about the struggle between the added depth from staying in his job longer and the wish to move on.

Great stress accompanied the sheer amount of change going on. In the same way that building a chemical plant is capital intensive, building a team is "emotionally intensive". A section head indicated how stressful the change could be:

...just the amount of energy and the stress level. It makes it difficult at times. We have a lot of meetings which...are very difficult, very emotionally draining because of the focus and the learning that's going on.

While they showed unwavering support for teams, others did not, and this took its toll on the proselytes. One put it this way:

...you really feel you're making achievements in some aspects of it, and all of a sudden, "Gee, if we've made such progress, why the hell did they do that or did that actually happen?"

After all this time and effort, people fought the changes. Many wage earners did not understand the plant manager's vision and remained highly skeptical. This disappointed him:

...today I would summarize there's a huge confusion in the organization on what we want to be and on understanding what the management team's trying to do. Sometimes I get discouraged because of that. On the other hand, when I take a look at how long it's taken us to become the kind of team I had in my mind, how can I possibly expect anything else except confusion? But it's still distressing.
Despite training about teams, some blamed teams for their problems and were plenty angry about it. The plant manager recalled an incident which underscored this point and his frustration:

Well a lot of people in our organization don't believe that's (team direction) the right thing to do. And so they are very innovative in finding ways to disrupt, destroy even what we're trying to do.

Researcher: And can you give me examples of that?

Oh, (sigh) ah, I came in one morning at (plant operating unit) where we had a very bad weekend. Things had not been running well at all. One of the senior operators over there was -- whom I respect, good guy, I respect well and is well respected by the organization -- jumped all over me about why all the plant problems were associated with this stupid team stuff I put in. That kind of comment has a huge impact on this particular team because there's a guy who's well respected that people look up to actually stomps all over it, on what we're trying to do...I think it's a very destructive behavior. I understand it but it is still damned destructive...So when he makes that kind of comment, I mean the people all look up to him and say, "Jesus, if he reacts that way, this must be junk!"...they don't understand why you want to review decisions as teams even though you can put them through team training, try to make them understand as a team, if everybody participates now and if everybody remains an individual, we'll always make better decisions than individuals. They have difficulty buying into that because they are used to the model of "I'm the senior guy. I know what the answer is. I don't need anybody else's help". And you talk to the junior guys and (he) says, "If you'd only listen to me, I got ten good ideas."

The plant manager remained convinced of the goodness and appropriateness of the team concept in the highly interdependent task environment of the chemical plant.

However, at the time of my interviews, substantial resistance from some wage earners hindered the effort. This disruption underscored an earlier manager's comment that
their kind of balance was "like we got one foot in a bucket of ice water and the other foot on a hot stove."

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Chapter 6: The American Commodity Chemicals Plant—Enacting Participation In a Hierarchical Structure

The initial impression of this plant was that it bore the mark of a more traditional manufacturing plant. Managers devoted fierce attention to the work of producing chemicals. Cost containment was a very high priority. Franklin planners jammed with meetings and work list items mirrored the tremendous emphasis on the task. The day to day pressure to perform never let up. The intense, likeable plant manager missed nothing and wanted everything attended to so that the plant functioned the best it could. The quotations below hint at the plant's traditional persona.

About plant managers in this division:

...(Very strong work ethic)...They're all driven by an intense pressure to cut cost, reduce cost. They all have strong manufacturing backgrounds. In that way their values are the same.

Researcher: I don't know about your intense pressure to cut costs.

It's pretty intense (smiles). People have told me I can sit on a dime and tell whether it's heads or tails (laughter).

About this plant manager's view of work priorities:

Engineers and managers alike kid that with this plant manager, "Everything's a 10!" (paraphrase)

About interpersonal relationships:

...it's very hard to get your emotional needs met...you mentioned we're a polite organization. It's coldly polite though. It's proper. Experiences outside (of here)...There's warmth and concern and humor.
About relations with headquarters:

Probably if there is any empowerment issue, it's probably between the plant and our headquarters location, leaving us alone sometimes...it's typically around the number of people we can have, the amount of money we can spend, the amount of time we can be down for a turnaround, amount of production we need to make. A lot of those are not up for negotiation.

The plant exuded the no nonsense aura associated with typical lore about such output oriented facilities. Employees were cordial, polite, perhaps testy and pointed in meetings but lacked the emotional warmth conspicuous in the Canadian plant. As a reminder of its embeddedness in a large bureaucracy, the plant sat an easy car ride away from the watchful eyes of headquarters.

This larger plant had fifty eight percent more employees than the Canadian plant. It had an additional level of management called second line supervision. These were entry level management jobs for the professional engineers. During my internship in 1988, second line supervisors in particular showed great excitement about changes. But by the time of my research interviews in the winter of 1991, mandate related efforts were simply one more set of issues managers had to incorporate into their already busy agendas.

In the American plant, employees agreed that efforts to create more teamwork were under way, but the eventual status of teams remained unsettled. The plant manager saw clear evidence of changes.

I think we're in a change process. I think we're changing from being more individualistic to being more collaborative. And there are just an
awful lot of signs for seeing that whether it’s the group of Second Line Supervisors working together, whether it’s a lack of competition between department heads (reference to their sharing resources).

In contrast, while they acknowledged that management stimulated team activity and wanted to do more, managers said right out that the firm’s culture still emphasized primarily individual achievement if judged by how people were rewarded. They commented:

**Individual Achievement:**

So in our heart and mind, we believe individual initiative and achievement and ownership--contact engineers--we drill it into them. "Take the ball and run with it. If you run with it...it's the greatest success in the world." And yet, we are getting our training and exposure to team concepts, quality team leader course I took...I even believe in it. I think a lot of that belief though right now is intellectual.

...there is a trend in upper management that we need to recognize teamwork more and more and individual contribution to a lesser extent...The trend is a desire, I think, more than it is an actuality. ...fundamentally, no matter how much management asks for teamwork or suggests teamwork will be valued, the bottom line is that what is valued in this organization right now is individual contribution. I truly think management wants to go in that direction (teams). I don’t think they have a clue as to how to get there because the systems...performance analysis system... salary system is still based upon the individual.

Several second line managers noted that more visible team endeavors occurred outside the management team than within it.

**Visible Teamwork**

We hear the support coming out of management that they want that to happen (more teamwork). Obviously that’s the case because
they're authorizing all that work (creating quality teams). But if you look at the (quality) teams and what they are working on, typically they are working on things that affect the lower level echelon of employees, how the plant operates, how we meet spec, that kind of thing. The focus is more on the actual operations of the plant...

In general I think that teamwork effort could be bumped up a bit more, not only preaching teamwork to the people working in the field but utilizing teamwork as well...There is a lot of good teamwork, but they may be able to amp up their part a bit I think. I don't know. Maybe it's part of empowering employees to let them do the teamwork. I don't know what their perspective is.

I can't point to anything I've ever seen them do that would make me think that or lead me to see that they're working as a team. I know they have those meetings. They meet every Tuesday from 11:30 to 1:00...I do not know that they are a team.

Compared with the Canadian plant, the American plant seemed to be methodically and incrementally introducing teamwork while attending to its first priority -- running the plant. The pronounced fervor about teams apparent in the Canadian plant was conspicuously absent here. When asked, "What are the things that you are most proud of so far in your career?", the Canadian managers effervesced about high involvement activities. Among the American managers, only two mentioned participative changes in response to this question. The plant manager said:

I think we've made substantial changes in the way we do business here...in terms of ground level involvement...(of) technician(s)...participation...I'm real pleased about our quality effort...that there is a large percentage of our population that can contribute and needs to contribute if we are going to be successful.

Another manager, a key figure in the participative activity at this plant, said:

When operating supervisor...Set up team rotation where people stayed together and rotated. Hair-pulling at times, but now the norm in whole
plant...Most recently, prior to this job, involved in work-
redesign...Though awfully slow, I think that that's about to stick and
take off. Lastly, in this job, engineering partnering. Feel good about
that.

The others talked about "start-ups", successful "turnarounds", improvements in plant
operating parameters like reliability. Some told of technical accomplishments. Others
cited supervisory successes, one man referring to the employee "who told me I
expanded his horizons". Several mentioned teamwork of one sort or another, for
example on a start up. But these incidences of teamwork were not tied to the mandate
but to project work common in any large chemical plant. Yet when compared with its
sister U.S. plants in the same division, this plant was in the forefront in terms of the
amount of involvement in decision making accorded managers up and down the
hierarchy. This seemed to be primarily a function of the styles of plant managers, an
issue addressed in depth in Chapter Nine on Leadership.

Managers at two levels said that their plant manager, although strong willed,
was more participative than either of the other plant managers in the same division. I
asked six managers to compare three plants in terms of how consensus oriented or
autocratically the management operated. Five said the research site was much more
consensus oriented than one plant, and four of five placed it a bit ahead of the third
plant. The fifth manager did not know the third plant and the sixth did not have
enough data to compare the three. Their opinions were not based just on hearsay but
on the experiences of engineers and managers transferred between plants. Here are a few of their comments.

Not yet at point where decisions we’re capable of making are all given to us. We’re not fully empowered yet. But I believe we’re much more empowered than other Chemco sites.

Strong perception that (the other plant manager) is running things with an iron fist and, by comparison, (our plant manager) is a very personable guy, probably strong willed, but nowhere near as controlling as ...

...it was kind of a public acknowledgement here, but I mean (a more senior executive) in the middle of this teleconference said, "And (another plant manager), I want you to get that...organization more democratic" (chuckles).

Oddly, no one interviewed talked in detail about the major "work redesign" effort going on in this plant. In fairness, I did not interview the organizational development specialist who headed the effort from inside the firm. He worked with an external consultant, and, at the time of my last interviews in September, 1991, both a design team and steering committee were in place.

ANTECEDENT AND CONCURRENT EVENTS

A few pre-1986 managers already spoke the language of participation and teamwork. A department head, recalling one of his early managers, said, "Even in 1978, the mainstream of (Chemco) was not saying things like that (statements about empowerment), but she was." A more direct impetus to change, a full time organizational development specialist arrived in 1988, the first of his breed ever in that plant. He regularly attended management meetings and quality meetings, injecting
new knowledge and offering process observations to the management team. He pushed work redesign concepts and Bernard Bass’s (1990) notion of transformational leadership with all levels of managers. He left for headquarters in 1989, and a second OD specialist came on board, taking charge of the work redesign effort. The notion of "special assignment" took on a new twist when a second line used his six months to read up on quality, best practices in the industry, and organization development. He developed a sophisticated two day training, synthesizing cutting edge concepts about socio-technical systems, quality, and world class manufacturing methods. He invariably appeared at the center of many later innovative actions, so much so that I refer to him from here on as the special assignment manager.

BROAD BASED EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

As noted earlier, the 1986 reorganization had carried within it a mandate for cultural change. Headquarters generated the most all encompassing educational event of the period, ordering all employees to be trained in the Crosby version of total quality. In full force by mid 1988, the program featured a quality coordinator and managers trained to teach weekly classes. The classes mixed together people from all hierarchical levels. Second line supervisors grumbled about the content, wanting to design their own around the concepts of Juran, Deming and other quality gurus. Concurrently, the special assignment manager used the training he developed to educate and to market cultural change ideas to all levels of plant personnel as well as to a few more senior managers at headquarters.
The first OD specialist led all the second lines in a galvanizing off site event in late 1987 or early 1988 that solidified that larger and less powerful group of managers. The second lines returned exuberant, having written a position paper elaborating a new vision for how they wanted to work and run the plant in the future. An excerpt from that document reads as follows:

We...zealously commit to continuously improve the quality of our products and activities in order to make (Chemco) the best company in the eyes of our customers, our competitors, and our community.

"The Best" means:

Our integrity and open, supportive environment will build trust and allow decisions to be made at the appropriate level.

Back in their offices, they began adding books to already begun libraries about quality, work redesign, JIT (just-in-time) and the like. They talked intently among themselves. A small cadre engaged one of our faculty to present workshops in routine and non-routine socio-technical system (STS) principles. The special assignment manager began an STS analysis on his operating unit, a pilot project mentioned later under the topic of transfer of learning. Three and four years later, second lines still mentioned the energizing off-site event, and they still met as a group, referring to themselves as the Second Line Quest group.

In addition to these on site activities, many employees attended training and educational events away from the plant. Mixed groups of managers, professionals and wage employees made fact finding trips to companies which had completed an STS
redesign and/or used self-managing teams. Singly and in small groups, interested
employees also attended the Ecology of Work Life Conference and specialized quality
and STS seminars. The plant manager and at least one department head attended a
training for senior managers. This two week event included outdoor team building
activities on an obstacle course as well as in class instruction. It came on the wave of
the firms’ emphasis on “visionary leadership” (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Bass, 1990), a
vogue concept in the 1980s. All of these activities occurred in the 1988 time frame.

At the time of my interviews in 1991, the current crop of second lines and
department heads were well versed in quality, and many more quality teams were in
evidence. Although the pilot STS project failed, the major STS effort had advanced to
the point that the second OD specialist and an external consultant had in place a
design team and steering committee.

The most noticeable new activity was a pilot training in diversity, the
outgrowth of a task force effort of several years’ duration. One of the firm’s
shibboleths, called into question by the training, was the stereotypical high performing
individual who made his way to the top -- HIPO man, as he was called at Chemco.
The training questioned the preponderance of aggressive white males who reached top
management. As a manager said:

The diversity people, the diversity consultants. They’re telling us that
we can’t use that as a role model anymore. Unfortunately, I don’t have
another one that I can relate to that is maybe a little more diverse that
also achieves the outstanding results.
The training must have been a powerful one. Four interviewees mentioned it. I saw its effect on the behavior of the plant manager and a department head. The plant manager said:

...going through this diversity training with a number of other people from different cultures...you learn that potentially there is more than one truth. OK. My whole life, I've believed there's one truth...

Members of the management team later confirmed that the plant manager was working on trying to be more consensus oriented. A department head made a comment, thought better of it and then restated it:

One way it might show up is too many chiefs and not enough Indians, for instance. Not supposed to say "Indians" any more. Too many cooks spoil the broth...Is that a diverse way of saying it?...I'm working on it, but I'm no master of it.

In addition to quality, diversity, and work redesign efforts among the general population of employees, the management team engaged in its own set of educational activities.

**EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES: MANAGEMENT TEAM ONLY**

Although it played out quite differently, the learning and experimentation apparent in the Canadian management team stood out in this management group as well. The team got a strong push to change when the plant's first OD specialist joined the staff. He helped them assess their behavior individually and as a group by teaching them the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. He also stressed Bass's concept of transformational leadership with them and provided timely process consultation to the
group. He clarified concepts such as consensus decision-making and work redesign for them. To my knowledge, he did not work intensively with them on team building activities, nor did any other consultants take them off site for the kind of developmental work apparent in the Canadian management team. The first OD specialist stayed in the job about two years before moving to a position at headquarters. His successor worked with the management team for a while but then took responsibility for the STS work redesign effort in late 1989 or 1990. Prior to taking on the STS project, this OD specialist innovated by taping the management team in action and playing the tape back so members could watch and discuss their interaction patterns. How long this activity continued is not clear.

Another infusion of new ideas came with the promotion of the special assignment manager from second line to department head. Rather quickly, he interested the team in an extended strategic planning exercise. Stretching over several years, this process resulted in clearer goals and priorities. A final, pithy version of strategic plans was not ready for three years -- until after a new plant manager arrived and just prior to my second round of interviews. Nevertheless, these regularly scheduled half day meetings, held outside the plant in a nearby building, created a semi-structured learning forum for the managers to talk more openly about a range of issues related to change. Of course, the managers all participated in the division-wide quality training.

USES OF THE LEADERSHIP TEAM
Please see the chart below. The content of this chart comes from interviews with only three management team members, a smaller percentage than in the Canadian case. I did interview one a second time, and I interacted with all three over a three year period starting with my internship at Chemco and continuing periodically after that via consulting projects. Nevertheless, excepting the chart itself, this section relies in substantial measure on data about the management team from five second line supervisors. On the positive side, this serves as a check on the top management’s perspective. It also requires my careful effort to watch for bias based in status differences. I point this out when I’m aware that it affects the data. The items listed in the chart come from the managers. I grouped them under the headings. Four of the five headings came from the managers, although I was only able to confirm this with one of them. Learning about Consensus is a title I coined.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USES OF THE AMERICAN LEADERSHIP TEAM</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USES</td>
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<tr>
<td>QUALITY</td>
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<td>COORDINATION</td>
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No firebrand stood out among the members of the post 1986 management team as configured in 1988. They acted conservatively, concentrating first and foremost on plant operations and then learning and incorporating new concepts at a deliberate, painstaking pace. The first general use of the team was for Quality. In 1991, this staff called itself the Leadership Team. When I was on site in 1988, they were known as the QIC, short for Quality Improvement Committee. The team fostered change initially by carrying out a headquarters directive to implement a large scale quality training program authored by Crosby. Please note that headquarters chose the curriculum, and the management team simply implemented the decision.

The quality program illustrated a primary and quick way this management team implemented the 1986 mandate while continuing to study work redesign principles in more deliberate fashion. The Crosby program, a meticulous, multi-step affair, called on management to set up quality teams and provided a formula for doing so. These teams soon sprouted throughout the operating units of the plant. The management team as the QIC allocated sufficient resources for these teams and required members to report progress on a timely basis. Over time, the Leadership Team required of these teams more carefully considered objectives and more stringent measurement methods.
As part of their Planning function, the team translated headquarters goals and plant capabilities into plant objectives. Their ability to conduct this work well improved as a result of their strategic planning effort. In fact the specific objectives below, in effect at the time of my last interviews, resulted directly from this effort:

1. effective plant operations with attention to safety, employee health and the environment
2. changing the way work is done: the work redesign effort
3. commitment to quality and continuous improvement
4. improving earnings by increasing business.

Related to this last goal were the financial tasks of "stewarding" fixed costs and overseeing the investment plan for the plant.

Most interestingly, this list was pared to four items under the new plant manager from a list approaching twenty under the former plant manager. The former plant manager moved to another plant in July, 1991, after my first round of interviews and just prior to the second. The former boss had a penchant, which I witnessed, of considering all things equally important. Managers and professionals alike kidded about how "Everything's a 10!" in the eyes of this man. A department head commented:

...we had seven goals before with I think 21 or 22 subgoals. We've now narrowed that down to four with maybe 10 or 12 (total). We cut it in half.
Under the heading of Career Development, the Leadership Team evaluated the entire group of second line supervisors and selected those for lateral moves and promotions, synchronizing its own selections with similar activity in other plants. This was quite an elaborate effort since it could involve coordinating with plants in Europe as well as other parts of the United States. The team also decided on salary increases. In conjunction with the second lines who were doing the major work on it, the management team tried to make promotional criteria more explicit. Tinkering with promotional criteria seemed to be an enduring activity. Second lines worked on criteria for themselves when I worked there and were conducting a similar exercise for engineers in 1991. In addition a task force led by a department head developed an experimental performance appraisal system authorized by management. It enriched the typical conversation between boss and subordinate by including feedback from customers, peers, and subordinates too. Voluntary during the first year, it was used in individual performance appraisal but not in selection decisions. The intent was to incorporate it into the selection system over the course of several years. This was a significant innovation from their traditional, closed, one-on-one mode of feedback.

One man who sent out nine forms commented on the process:

It was very valuable...I think from a supervisory standpoint, it’s a little better because it’s not a judgmental thing based on one person’s opinion...if the supervisor, subordinate relationship is not a very positive relationship...
The management team also served a Coordination function, coordinating work between departments and negotiating any differences. For example, a department head helped out his counterpart by lending him part of his unused budget to ease unforeseen, legitimate overruns. Another agreed that his people would take on customer relations contacts for a certain product to ease the load on swamped operating supervisors. In return he secured an "instrument technician" devoted to the "materials balance" function. The plant manager cited the first example as evidence of the move from individualism to collaboration which indeed it seems to be. A second line recounted the second example but saw it differently:

Not much opportunity to see how they work between themselves. Perception is that they don't work as much by consensus as much as by bartering, e.g., "I'll do things for you and you do things for me."... Sometimes I think they even keep score (emphasis added).

The data are not clear on this point. Most likely, both kinds of activity went on. I do know that the "trading favors" viewpoint did exist. For example, after I once mentioned doing some work for a particular manager, another manager was quick to say "He owes you one".

Learning About Consensus stood squarely at the heart of this management team's principle struggle to enact participation. Team members agreed that they did use consensus some of the time and approximated it at others, but evidence abounds that confusion about consensus accounted for the strained decision making process apparent in this group. The plant manager (and many of the early post-1986
department heads) "grew up" in a system of authority vested in hierarchical position and had done well in that traditional mold. Consensus contradicted what he had learned and presented a serious conflict for him -- what it meant, when or if to use it and why, what decisions he personally should retain. The pilot diversity training going on in the plant shook him out of his past position. He talked candidly about his personal struggle with the concept of consensus management:

First of all, it's kind of something I wrestle with personally, you know. One of the things going through this diversity training with a number of other people from different cultures is that you learn that potentially there is more than one truth. OK. My whole life, I've believed there's one truth, there's one best answer, and if you know what the best answer is, you ought to implement it. What you find is that's not always best received. So, I think we vacillate depending on issues, but I think the frequency of issues that get worked by consensus is greater as time goes on.

Familiar with his tendency to enforce his own will, he also knew how poorly others sometimes responded to this form of control:

...most of my working life operating under the premise there is one truth and one best way...is not necessarily consistent with a consensus type approach. And so I wrestle with myself. I mean my gut instinct is to say "No, this is what we need to do." I forget the position that I'm in (plant manager) and the impact that has on people...And try to think through something less than a gut type of response which has an impact which I still find flabbergasting at times...the reaction that I've caused I just never would have dreamed....

The department heads acknowledged his controlling tendency but also his movement:

...we aspire to consensus but don't get there most of the time. We don't quite grapple with disagreements and resolve them...there are individuals -- (the plant manager) is a great example -- whose actions
are autocratic but what he says is struggling with trying to reach a consensus (emphasis added; paraphrase).

...most of the time, unless it happens to be in an area that we know is a real sensitivity to him, and there are quite a few of those, we go for consensus.

Concerning those "areas of sensitivity", a manager recounted a former manager's quip about the plant manager's iron will:

As (a manager) used to say, "He has values that run to the center of the earth." (laughter) You're not going to change him on some stuff. It could just be minor stuff like whether or not we should be bringing spouses to dinners...

The department heads also recognized when the plant manager had trouble shedding his past. One referred to what amounted to a game in which the plant manager refrained from stating his own opinion about an impending decision but questioned others, "waiting for someone to reach the right answer, but he already has the right answer." Another department head saw it the same way:

...we are consensus oriented unless it happens to be one of (the plant manager's) funny buttons where he will overrule us or have us go rework it to finally till we get tired of working it and tell him we'll do whatever...he wants us to do...

And the plant manager knew he did this on occasion:

So I guess maybe I can go for consensus as long as I believe that what the consensus comes up with is the right answer (chuckles).

In all fairness, the plant manager made an exceedingly easy target. Department heads had less pronounced but similar tendencies. A department head said that he thought "people would look at me as pretty strong-willed also, but I think they would
see me as more flexible (than the plant manager)” (emphasis added). A second line acknowledged his own style:

"Well, I know I’m more autocratic than I should be. I would like to be consensus driven; that’s the ideal for everybody.” But fall into mode where am so interested in getting into technical detail as opposed to supervision detail, that I start working the problem, and people don’t want me to work it. They want to themselves. Just want direction at the helm. "So I have no doubt that I’m seen as autocratic."

No doubt a system which encouraged autocratic behavior would produce managers at all levels who acted it out, even against their best intentions. Those who have worked longer in the system are more likely to do so. All in all, consensus presented a conundrum for these managers. Management team members had not negotiated with each other what decisions they would make via consensus and which issues they would simply let the hierarchy handle. One way this showed up was in the plant manager’s waiting game, holding out for someone else to "come around" so he wouldn’t look like the "heavy". And on these kinds of "funny button" issues, department heads may have had to expend such inordinate amounts of energy, and perhaps political currency, that they decided the issue was not worth the effort. The speed of plant events requiring decisions and the tremendous task focus further complicated a change to consensus decision making.

My personal experiences confirmed the clash between speed, task, and consensus. I facilitated a two day off site at which departmental members were to decide how to rearrange people and sub-units to take best advantage of an additional
second line supervisor. Contrary to the beliefs of many, the department head did not have a preconceived outcome in mind. He sought a consensus solution. The decision, however, was going to be made in that two day period! -- "beat-the-clock-consensus", I call it. As a second line supervisor aptly noted in a different context but with relevance here:

People uncomfortable working with consensus. Nothing firm they can hold onto. We tend not to be very patient--want timetables...Have to make decisions...I like to work collaboratively...The pain is the amount of time it takes to explain to people what's going on...(paraphrase)
OTHER KINDS OF TEAMS

The table below shows other participative acts in addition to those of the management team.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>KINDS OF TEAMS</th>
<th>USES OF TEAMS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership Team</strong></td>
<td>Quality&lt;br&gt;* doubles as Quality Improvement Committee (QIC)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* charters, provides resources for, monitors quality teams</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Planning&lt;br&gt;* translates HQ goals and market needs into plant objectives</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* coordinates all departments to common goals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Career Development&lt;br&gt;* evaluates all second line supervisors</td>
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<td>* decides assignments and promotions for SLS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>* salary planning for SLS</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Coordination&lt;br&gt;* one DH shares budget with another to compensate</td>
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<td></td>
<td>for unplanned overrun in the other dep’t</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bartering&lt;br&gt;* one DH shifts customer contacts to his dep’t in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>exchange for employee from other dep’t dedicated to one of his functions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning about Consensus&lt;br&gt;* struggling with making consensus decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quality Teams</strong></td>
<td>(CIT) long term continuous improvement efforts on units, for equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Continuous Improvement Teams)</strong></td>
<td>operation, for any plant related issue (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Corrective Action Teams)</strong></td>
<td>(CAT) short term resolution of specific issues (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SLS Quest Team</strong></td>
<td>career planning for engineers to be reviewed by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership Team</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>define performance criteria for engineers, made</td>
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<td></td>
<td>recommendation to Leadership Team</td>
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<td></td>
<td>considers information and develops ideas about</td>
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<td></td>
<td>cutting fixed costs</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SLS Subgroup of Operating Supervisors</strong></td>
<td>work out policies for overtime, absenteeism for</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>operations units</td>
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<td></td>
<td>survey whole group about performance criteria</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Work Redesign Teams</strong></td>
<td>steering committee for overall effort</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>design team for central redesign effort (RTQ)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>pilot STS team during learning phase (defunct)</td>
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<tr>
<td>KINDS OF TEAMS</td>
<td>USES OF TEAMS</td>
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<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partnering</td>
<td>* replacing small contract work firms with one &quot;preferred supplier&quot; of engineering services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lab Team</td>
<td>* research new pieces of equipment to meet given criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* reach consensus decision on equipment to buy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Innovation Team</td>
<td>* multi-leveled team up to vice-presidential level studied innovation to develop Chemco model</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>* temporary unit developed consistent, uniform plant wide safety management practices (SMPs)</td>
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<td>* sponsor regular safety meetings in departments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Departmental Staffs</td>
<td>* work to support effective operation of the plant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical Project Teams</td>
<td>Maintain the Base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* expansions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>* repair, trouble shoot</td>
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<td>* scheduled maintenance, &quot;turnarounds&quot;</td>
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<td>Step Outs, Breakthroughs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>* plant improvements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Control Engineers' Team</td>
<td>* share control expertise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engineering Teams</td>
<td>* create Process Design Specs</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Process Design Teams)</td>
<td>* determine how to solve problem</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* share information, expertise directed at problem solution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Product Line Teams</td>
<td>* understand operations and processes and how they interact between units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* understand business issues but not set policy</td>
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<td></td>
<td>* understand how changing business climate affects what they need to do on units</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business Teams</td>
<td>* to integrate HQ and plant mfg and plant technical efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* to steward each product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* communicate from HQ to plant what business climate is like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* communicate from technology to plant what relevant research is being done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* communicate from plant what is needed, current issues</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* improve communication, highlight issues to be worked</td>
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Quality Teams

Quality teams were in evidence when I worked in the plant and, by the time of my interviews over two years later, had grown from approximately ten in 1988 to more than thirty in mid 1991. Generally, they were chartered to understand current work systems and how employees operated in them so that improvements could be made. Two varieties existed -- continuous improvement teams (CIT) and corrective action teams (CAT). There were twenty-four CIT teams and nine CAT teams. The former were long duration teams, some lasting four or five years, while the latter attacked short term problems, extending a maximum of about eighteen months. The CAT teams functioned like a real-time, serious suggestion box. Teams varied in size between four and fifteen people. Each team had a team leader and a sponsor. Among team leaders, the highest level person appeared to be a second line supervisor. Department heads sponsored twenty nine of the thirty three current teams, the plant manager one.

One of the division's documents, the "QUALITY COMMITMENT", stated that "Participation of every employee in the quality improvement process is key to its success." Toward that end, one second line manager estimated that forty percent of the work force was on some kind of quality team. Membership in both types of teams included representatives from the bottom of the hierarchy through department head level managers. For example, the Business Controls Awareness Team was a diagonal slice including wage earners to second line supervisors. One quality team on an
operating unit was all wage earners except one engineer. The Instrument Improvement Team had second lines, engineers of comparable level, two first line supervisors and four technicians. The (product) Strategic Planning Team even had department head level employees from headquarters on it in addition to plant engineers of second line level. The Quality of Work Life Team was all technicians.

When I was on site in 1988, quality generated a tremendous amount of activity. Crosby quality classes taught by the quality trainer and managers were going on every week. Many managers and engineers in the administration building posted graphs in their offices or outside in hallways showing quality related behaviors they were tracking. Wage earners in quality classes started a minor furor when, encouraged so strongly to participate, they began venting loudly about decades of perceived injustices. They were apparently unaware of the norm of cool politeness which prevailed in the administrative building. Second line managers gathered in twos and threes in their offices, in the hall, at lunch. They mused about headquarter’s decision to use Crosby training rather than let them develop their own training combining the more preferred gurus, Juran and Deming. Applying non-routine STS principles to their own work was another hot topic as well as how to synthesize quality principles, STS, and Just In Time. The special assignment manager created a training to do that and also had begun a pilot STS project in a small operating unit. One of our faculty and a then student were consulting with him as well as presenting workshops. The current quality coordinator, then quality trainer, was cleverly slipping leaders of their
nascent quality teams into a quality team leader course put on by a different division. I attended parts of this first rate training put together with that division's OD specialist by two members of an external consulting group.

Early teams were created only in operating units and were devoted exclusively to plant operating issues. This fit with both the intent of the 1986 mandate for more participation of those lower in the organization and also with this particular plant manager's zeal to include the wage ranks in the change process. A second line noted:

...if you look at the (quality) teams and what they are working on, typically they are working on things that affect the lower level echelon of employees, how the plant operates, how we meet spec, that kind of thing. The focus is more on the actual operations of the plant...Every area has a quality team.

He went on to say that, although department heads, second lines and engineers were often team members, the teams themselves focused on operating units or pieces of equipment. In fact, his comment was overstated. Some later quality teams did address very significant quality issues higher in the plant structure as we will see shortly. For example, another second line noted that

...there was a cost cutting team (CAT) which was put together to cut fixed costs...throughout (the division)...not people but maintenance dollars and...having sodas and cookies at meetings. Stuff like that.

However, it was true that the concentrated quality efforts aimed lower in the plant organization took managerial attention away from quality in managerial practice. And about some of the longer standing teams, an interviewee noted:
...some of these teams have been together too long. They need to implement, kind of get the things more ingrained into their day to day business.

As of September, 1991, some of the continuous improvement teams (CIT) were:

- Cooling Tower Reliability team (three of these)
- Instrument Improvement Team
- Mobile Equipment and Rigging Quality Team
- (Product Name) Quality Team
- (Customer) / Chemco Joint Quality Team
- Business Controls Awareness Team
- Quality of Work Life Team
- (Product Name) Strategic Planning Team

Corrective Action Teams (CAT) team names indicated their close relation to operating units:

- (Unit Name) Corrosion Team
- Fixed Equipment Roles Team
- (Plant Area) Pump CAT Team
- Tank Truck CAT Team
- Contractor Administration CAT

A cooling tower team, although a newer team, exemplified a team focussed on plant operations. It convened to solve any cooling tower problems and to understand
potential mechanical changes that could improve performance. Members brought in outside expertise to help them run the tower and to decide what changes would improve tower performance. The team also insured that all employees running the tower were properly trained. The Quality of Work Life Team, all technicians, was another example of a team at the operating level. The quality coordinator explained one accomplishment:

primary focus is...policy development in the social system of one of the work areas and is entirely made up of hourly technicians. They've done some real neat things...One of the primary problems you run into every year is there’s three shifts that have to work during the Christmas holidays...came up with policy with goal that everyone who wanted off on Christmas had it...first time it’s worked in my sixteen years with the company.

Technical product line teams were a newer kind of quality team. Although still geared primarily to operating concerns, they demonstrated a more strategic component: understanding how the business climate affected what they needed to do on units. In this plant a product line may have included multiple operating units. Maximum productivity for a product line then implied understanding the interdependencies of the involved operating units. Thus, quality team representatives from all operating units met to understand how the multiple units interacted as well as to learn operational information about other units.

For this particular product line of five units, five different contact engineers plus their associated control engineers needed to have a close working relationship to
make the overall product line run optimally. As outputs of the quality team’s efforts, these employees agreed:

--to share information

--to redistribute technical resources between units if unit problems warrant it;

--to understand the impact of other units' problems on each unit;

--to provide creative ideas to solve unit problems;

--to communicate to avoid surprises so that all members know what is going on in the "train" as a whole.

As a final example, among the support staff, a secretary’s quality team saved money on materials ordering by changing the requisition form to note the price of each item on the form. In this way the signing manager could see the dollar amounts he or she was authorizing. The plant manager sponsored this team.

TRANSFER OF LEARNING

Educational activities blurred into transfer of learning events as managers, professionals, technicians and operators became more sophisticated in the new ways. Below, I describe how they put to use their new information.

**SLS Quest Group**

The second line supervisors met monthly during lunch time. They talked about their concerns and reviewed progress on issues being explored by subgroups. In 1988, one major item they addressed was promotional criteria which the management team would use for rating the second lines themselves. After fussing with several versions,
they passed on their work to the department heads and plant manager for review and further additions. Their forward agenda as of December, 1988 included the following items, listed verbatim from a memo:

- Contribute to the SLS Performance Criteria List being developed by the department heads and (plant manager);
- Develop guidelines and ground rules for the 1989 rating and ranking session;
- Develop a system to establish and update priorities for work in Process Design and Engineering;
- Discuss how to best implement Corrective Action or High Involvement Teams;
- Provide a forum for developing consistent policies among the manufacturing departments. The Operating Section Supervisors agreed to meet on an as needed basis.

Notice that their efforts were directed toward generating standard operating procedures, policies, implementation tactics -- all highly bureaucratic measures related to task accomplishment. Developing themselves in "participative knowledge" or "participative interaction" only happened indirectly as they integrated quality or work redesign principles directly into the work flow. At the time of my interviews in 1991, the group was still tinkering with the appraisal system. They had shifted to refining criteria for evaluating engineers on key traits such as leadership, initiative, teamwork, attention to quality issues. As a second line noted:

For example, leadership is a quality we value. What defines this level person from this level person from this level person with regards to what sort of leadership they should be showing?
After surveying the entire group, a subgroup put together a detailed performance evaluation document. They then passed this version out for review among their peers. They later submitted a revised form to the management team for final approval. In addition to the appraisal subgroup, the operating supervisors met to discuss issues like overtime pay and absenteeism, insuring consistent policies across the plant. Recently, the whole group served as an information conduit about fixed costs.

In addition to this "for public consumption" kind of activity, I mentioned in the quality section how members of this talented and energetic group of managers met in twos and threes to talk about the more meaty issues they faced. I did not get data on the content of their backstage interests in my 1991 interviews.

Career development planning for engineers brought subsets of second lines together on an on-going, bi-weekly basis. A second line described efforts in one department:

Technical supervisors deal with 40-45 people. We put together plan for people, who's moving where. Take into account information from above...if somebody's (one of our engineers) going to be made a supervisor, we usually have indication, though not told. If position available outside plant, that's passed onto us; if person available outside plant to come in, its passed onto us, and we work people into right slots. Make plan that makes sense for everybody.

The bulk of the engineers were located in two departments, and so second lines collaborated occasionally on placement decisions as noted by one of them:

We work separately but also get together now and then to see if (there are) some areas to trade people back and forth.
The management team circumscribed the second lines' career planning for engineers. The ultimate outcome was up to the department head, often in conjunction with the entire management team. Department heads had different reputations for accepting the work of second lines. One commented:

We present plan to (our department head). He offers feedback, but in general accepts a lot of work we do.

Another said he did resent the hierarchy stepping in when they based their decisions on perception and ignored the hard work that second lines had put into the plans. He commented below:

Always veto power somewhere up there. But that's okay as long as veto power is exercising that authority based on right information and not perceptions; based on hard data...Supervisors' group gives things a lot of thought, and wouldn't be presented unless had some merit. Frustrating when it gets vetoed because a higher authority has that power and exercises it based on perception and doesn't take into account that this may be a well-thought plan and there are some good data points (paraphrase).

Given other data points, this second line's frustration seemed most accurate in the case of the low performer, whether rightly or wrongly labeled, for whom the second lines had designed an "escape" route which management then blocked. Another second line acknowledged the hierarchy at work. He went on to talk about consensus decision making as a stratified concept at Chemco at that time:

Not autocratic when (the department head) says, "This person has to go here, this person goes there." It's more that there are certain decisions that can be made at certain levels. Not yet at point where decisions we're capable of making are all given to us. We're not fully
empowered yet. But believe we’re more empowered than many other Chemco sites.

Researcher: Would it be accurate to say that within your peer group you’re much more consensus oriented than you are in your experience with management above you?

I’d have to say "Yes". We as a group of peers work by consensus, whereas when we work with our management, there’s most definitely a dominant-subordinate relationship. We have not crossed that bridge where we are all equals with different responsibilities.

Perhaps this manager meant that this system did not seem harshly autocratic, for one would have to conclude from what he has said that the management team did not share power on selection decisions when push came to shove.

**Work Redesign Efforts**

A major experiment prior to my interviews was a pilot STS project, conducted at one of the operating units. The special assignment second line, in conjunction with experts from our department, conducted a detailed variance analysis of the technical system and social analysis on a small unit. Mentioned earlier, this effort stirred great excitement beyond those directly involved in the effort. The considerable effort reflected serious intent to institute the 1986 mandate, using innovative concepts as they were meant to be applied. It also required management’s approval and pricked their serious interest at the same time. The experiment later folded. The actual operating unit was monitored from a control center with responsibility for many units, but only some of the employees running that control center were trained in STS principles. Lack of continuity of trained personnel translated into inconsistency in unit
operations rather than expected productivity gains. Nevertheless, it galvanized serious
interest in STS redesign, and continued study followed as managers visited redesigned
plants, some outside their industry.

As heir to that effort, the second OD specialist, in conjunction with an external
consultant, had in place a design team by September, 1991 for apparent total redesign
of the plant. I do not know the current status of this effort. I do know that the design
team was referred to as the Redesign for Total Quality (RTQ) as opposed to
something like the Redesign for Empowerment and Productivity. In my opinion this
reflected the mind set of a new divisional leader. With his advent, quality's
prominence increased, according to one manager I had known since 1988. For the
new leader, quality translated more easily into better bottom line results than did
participative management or empowerment. At the same time, all OD positions were
renamed in quality lingo. The first plant OD specialist, now at headquarters, had his
titled changed to Advisor-Quality Development. This further indicated the shift in
importance accorded quality.

**Partnering**

Partnering can also be seen as part of the plant's quality and work redesign
efforts. Once again, the special assignment manager, now a department head, drove
an innovative activity. He replaced many small contract work companies with one
very large firm which provided full range engineering services. By using a "preferred
supplier", he boosted project quality by reducing sources of variance associated with
multiple service providers. At the same time, he intended greater cooperation between
the employees of the partnering firm and his own. To the later end, I met with the
manager to design a workshop in which members from both companies could learn
about the working practices and organizational culture of each firm. Some time later,
he told me how his second lines struggled with whether to have separate safety
meetings for Chemco employees and the partnering firm or whether to combine in one
meeting. With a bit of coaching, he nudged them to take the more collaborative path:

In past, all contract engineers and contract design drafting people
working for my supervisors were invited to those sessions. So question
was, "Should (company) come to those meetings or have their own
safety meetings?

Researcher: Were you going to let them decide?

I had an opinion. I guess I would have been willing to go either way.
But net opinion was that we probably ought to invite them. The role I
played was to remind them that we have a big picture safety issue in
the plant where over history people have treated contractors as second-
class citizens. If somebody got hurt, the first question was, "Was it (a
Chemco employee)?" Had to remind them we had to get rid of that
mentality and for that reason should include them in the meeting. That
was my only contribution to the discussion.

Researcher's Personal Involvement

With quality classes, in house or consultant workshops, people jetting off to
quality and STS workshops and smaller efforts within departments, the plant bustled
with activity during the six months I work there. During that time, I led the meetings
and workshops listed below. I note in parentheses the effort's relationship to the 1986
mandate.
An interview--feedback procedure for a second line manager whose disgruntled wage earners complained about his efficiency orientation which they saw as trying to squeeze more work out of them (more participation by wage ranks)

An action research project in one department to assess internal and external customers' perceptions. Data were used to decide whether (and how) to reorganize or not (participatory action research; work redesign)

Cross training of lab technicians and field analyzer technicians (increasing career choices of lower level employees; improving teamwork)

Team building in an Information Systems group; directing transition to new manager (teamwork).

I also sat in on early discussions of the corrective action (CAT) team concept and helped chatty second lines make verbal space for more reserved wage employees to talk. After returning to the university, I lead or participated in the following activities as an external consultant:

Departmental members decided how to rearrange people and sub-units to take best advantage of an additional second line supervisor (consensus-decision making; participation -- referenced under "beat-the-clock" consensus)

Members of two departments worked on Project Work Flow Across Departments (non-routine STS; interdependence across unit boundaries)

Two departments met to decide if one unit of one department should remain where it was or be shifted to the other department to improve project flow across departments (work redesign)

Department head, second lines and engineers met and worked on early drafts of mission and vision statements to teach to all members on next day (management succession; participative management)
Other Efforts to Increase Participation

To this point, I have described programmatic efforts like quality, transfer of learning efforts like second lines cooperating for the career development of engineers, and individual, manager-led acts like the partnering or pilot STS endeavor. In addition, other pockets of participative activity popped up in this plant. The special assignment manager instituted a six month trial policy of inviting engineers to attend departmental management staff meetings. One engineer had attended while substituting for his second line supervisor away on special assignment. The business information he picked up helped him understand how his daily engineering work fit into larger plant goals, and he thought other engineers might benefit as well. The department head recalled the impact:

...as an engineering specialist, he found those conversations (business issues) fascinating and useful because he gained more insight as to what was going on so he could be a better civil engineer. To have a working appreciation of things going on that influence what people are doing.

Another noteworthy effort surfaced in the lab. The second line supervisor in charge of the lab shared decision making power. An example occurred when chemists and the master technicians had at least three viewpoints about which sophisticated testing equipment to purchase to meet customers’ requirements. The second line knew he lacked the technical knowledge to make the decision. Over three meetings, they considered factual information about equipment capabilities and maintenance costs before "all agreed on the machine" to purchase in that last meeting. He noted that it
"probably took one hour of "soft discussion" or group process discussion. The second line described the way he worked with his employees:

I am not technically competent to decide what equipment to buy. Trying to guide conversation to reach conclusion, though not necessarily consensus or best answer. I tend to be somebody who pushes from outside -- "Let's work on coming up with the right decision." I provide them with the tools, kibitzing, provide time tables, but I don't make the decisions. If it's something that needs to be discussed, I let the discussion take place. I'll add my two cents worth, but as a coworker. Don't tell them what decision ought to be. Meetings tend to be open ended...my people are learning they need to be self-regulating, and it's not something I've imposed on them. I've shaped them in that direction. (paraphrase)

I want to underscore that the second line knew he lacked the expertise to make the decision and had no apparent qualms about letting his subordinates make it. This clear delegation of decision making seemed to be the exception rather than the rule in this plant. The team itself was not self-managing yet but headed in that direction.

Curiously, it is not clear that the supervisor learned his group skills from any mandate related activity. In fact, he strongly suggested that he could only operate with more flexibility and fewer rules because he worked in the lab, an out-of-the-way part of the plant. About management, he noted that "...they don't know what I'm doing. Not scrutinized."

Two other incidents of collaborative activity bear mentioning because of the point they illustrate (as does the quality program). A second line participated on a team of self-selected participants charged to study innovation in other firms and develop a model for Chemco. Spawned during an annual division wide management
meeting, members included second lines all the way up to the vice-presidential level.

After monthly meetings over a year's time, he recalled that they "converged on a model that's pretty standard" and that a "tremendous amount of learning" took place.

The second incidence had to do with plant safety.

The plant manager reported a new push to standardize safety practices throughout the division and, to an extent, across divisions. He labeled this an example of the new spirit of collaboration.

So in my mind, it's clearly getting more collaborative...the other thing that is happening is a systems approach...for these Safety Management Practices, these SMPs. The desire to try to get a consistent system implemented throughout (the division) and then work on improving the system is just a ... different approach to running our business than we've ever had in the past...the initiative for that came from...somewhere up in the middle. But the top level endorsed it and said, "Thou shalt make it happen"...(emphasis added).

The point of these two stories, taken together with the quality training program and a Diversity program, is that when top management above the plant level stepped in and said "Do it", collaborative events happened. This phenomenon fits with the concept of the Machine Bureaucracy (Mintzberg, 1983) in which hierarchically higher elements dictate to lower ones.

SUMMARY

The Leadership Team created a lot of activity focussed on quality. If much of it was directed lower in the organization, this focus was in fact in line with the mandate's intent. They stimulated activity which resulted in massive involvement of
wage earners who had been uninvolved before. These employees became learners, casting aside the "check your brain at the gate" mentality. As time passed, quality teams got wider involvement up the hierarchy, branched out into problem solving across operating units and outside of manufacturing altogether into the other departments, as well as across departments for larger issues superseding departments. A paradox pervaded this activity.

All the management team members served as sponsors for quality teams, and the management team stewarded the quality process for the plant, but it is not clear that the management team ever turned the quality spotlight directly upon itself. For example, the locus of so much effort in operating units, while immediately plausible, does raise the question whether change efforts focussed low in the plant structure deflected attention from how all managers, but the management team in particular, worked to higher quality standards. One could argue that they used the hierarchy to buffer themselves from the kind of self-monitoring and surveillance they themselves did via quality teams. Continuous improvement teams typically reported to the management team every three to four months. None of the management team members mentioned that they tried to run their meetings by using quality principles or that they tried to make their decisions in this same way, perhaps parceling them out between the "vital few" and the "trivial many". No doubt the significant strategic planning process which compelled them to decide on primary goals for the plant could be construed as a quality intervention on behalf of goal clarity. As an example of an
opportunity missed, developing a quality way of making consensus decisions would have helped this team. Nevertheless, the managers in this plant as a group had become very sophisticated in their knowledge of quality, a significant learning step in a relatively short period of time. This ran the gamut from general knowledge of quality to highly specialized mathematical techniques and from talking to implementing. Also it was quite common to hear these managers say words to the effect that "we seek quality in everything we do".
Chapter 7: Initial Comparison of the Cases

The purpose of this chapter is to prepare the reader for the analysis of the cases. I do this in two ways. First, I point out the contrasts evident in group participation at the two plants. The plant management teams receive primary attention, more specifically, the topics of group dynamics, emotional expression, educational activities, and assumptions about people. The reader will recall an earlier discussion prior to the cases which foretold impending changes in the chemical plants but did not specify the form of those changes. Explaining why the team building efforts took such different forms comprises the second major part of this chapter.

THE MANAGEMENT TEAMS: CONTRASTS IN PARTICIPATION

Comparative Group Dynamics

A consistent asymmetry typifies the two management teams portrayed in the case material. In fact, this paired variation is the major message of this section. Both teams are highly task focussed and say they want to promote more teamwork among themselves and in their respective plants. Yet their methods are quite dissimilar. The Canadians concocted their own response to the 1986 mandate for change; the Americans, with a notable exception, generally followed a script handed down by headquarters twenty-five miles away. The Canadians developed themselves as a group and then extended their learning by establishing other groups. The Americans spawned lots of quality teams but steered clear of highly personal team development activities for themselves. The Canadians shared intimate personal stories with each other during meetings. The Americans preserved the typically sharp boundaries
between public and private life. The Canadians became self-managing, the Americans remained manager-led (Hackman, 1990).

*The Canadian Team.* As a unit the Canadians devoted hundreds of hours to group development activities. They studied personal leadership, emphasized group responsibility for members' performance and development, and constructed a personal support system from within the membership of the group itself. They expended their greatest efforts on themselves, and, following this initially high internal focus, then branched out to construct other teams, the engineering support groups and cohesive wage shifts being primary examples.

Hackman (1990) labels work groups as manager-led or self-managing based on two factors, the amount of control exerted by the manager and the degree of employee participation present in the work group. The Canadian management team moved to the self-managing level, a posture of shared control between plant manager and section heads. Evidence for shared control comes from the way this team met as a group to take responsibility for members' performance and development. The plant manager attended as a member, not as "the boss", a clear act of power sharing. The group as a whole offered feedback. High participation showed in several ways. The support net this group built required trust and sustained commitment from each member. Additionally, in interviews the participants conveyed a unanimous positive judgment of their group's efforts absent in discussions with American managers. In fact, the management team had the decided flavor of a classic, non-industrial T-group, attendant not only to the task but also to the socio-emotional needs of group members.
The American Team. In the American plant, the managers did not target themselves and their group's development for central attention and time. Instead, their primary contribution to teamwork lay in carrying out the quality training program ordained by headquarters and spawning a profusion of quality teams. From a handful in 1988 when I was an intern in the plant, quality teams grew in number to thirty five by 1991. By authorizing, providing resources for, and monitoring numerous quality teams on plant units, they took to heart that part of the 1986 mandate which urged more participation among wage employees. With the addition of a precise charter for quality teams by 1991, they added clear measurement and accountability procedures for the teams, albeit turning their creation into a daunting bureaucratic exercise.

The American managers remained in Hackman's (1990) manager-led mode for several major reason. Structure inhibited ease of transferring decision-making power lower in the hierarchy. As we will see shortly, the American management team worked in a larger, older, more traditional plant. In addition, they were embedded in the mammoth bureaucracy of the parent firm which dictated many policies and guidelines. A second brake on power sharing was the plant manager himself. Although he had the best intentions about participation, he grew up in the current system and had been successful in it. Shedding the past and adopting an entirely different viewpoint came slowly to him. Given this leadership setting, the management team struggled with self-managing elements, especially consensus decision-making. Remember what a department head said in the case:

...we aspire to consensus but don't get there most of the time. We don't quite grapple with disagreements and resolve them...
In general, this management team worked in a more issue oriented vein rather than the highly personal, transactional mode of the Canadian team. For example, in addition to consensus, they devoted time in special staff meetings over a span of several years to learning about strategic planning and then developing plans for the plant. Their response to participation was more idea, procedure, and results driven than visceral and personal. For this management team, participation occurred primarily "out there" among the wage earners. They were less inclined to incorporate the concept of shared leadership among themselves.

An Exception. The "special assignment" manager innovated on his own when still a second line supervisor. He was one of a few who developed participative ideas into outcomes independently of headquarters. While managing an operations unit, he implemented cohesive shifts, work teams which maintained the same complement of employees over time. He developed the quality/JIT/STS training during his special assignment and used it to educate those at all levels of the plant and some at headquarters about work redesign and quality. He led a pilot STS project on another small plant unit. Later as department head, he spearheaded the engineering partnering project in his own department and the strategic planning effort within the management team. Whereas the Canadian management group marshalled creative energy, a highly achieving individual pushed many of the innovative efforts at the American plant, first as a second line supervisor and later as a member of the management team.

Emotional Expression
Based upon my face to face meetings with them and an initial reading of the interviews, stark differences stood out in emotional expressiveness within each management team. Three of the six Canadian managers spoke animatedly about the changes in their plant, and all spoke with one voice, portraying the same, clear theme - "Our management group is doing novel things which excite us, and the team is the source of the changes". Several referred to their activities as "the movement". The three American managers offered varying viewpoints on the same subject, and they were much more matter of fact and analytical in discussing change related activities both in the team and outside of it. It was as if the changes were one of a number of on-going activities. For the Canadians, the changes were the activity. When responding to an early question, "What accomplishments are you most proud of?" the Canadian subjects "took off", talking animatedly about the change process and teams. This question did not serve as the same sort of stimulus for the Americans.

The heart of the contrast in emotional expression goes much deeper than how managers verbalized about participative activities. Recall from the cases that one use of the Canadian management group was as a support net. The team took care of tasks and reserved time to cultivate emotional support for team members as well. None of the three members of the American team interviewed referred to giving or receiving emotional support within their management team. In fact, several of the second line supervisors interviewed talked about the lack of support they experienced at work, even from members of the management team. The differences were striking. A Canadian section head talked about how they shared feelings "at a deep emotional
level". Another confirmed the role of the plant manager in encouraging expression of feelings:

As a leader of the organization, he's done a lot to try and create more of a Leadership Team of people that want to help each other, that want to support each other....(the plant manager) is the type of individual that, as you get to know him, he's very open...he shares his issues that are going on at home; he shares his issues that are going on at work...he's always trying to create an atmosphere where it's ok to talk to each other, to try and support each other.

An American second line supervisor talked about the recognition and nurturing a sports team can give and how he missed that at work:

...you get that individual nurturing...from the team...that's something that we miss very often. We don't know how to do that very well...we struggle so hard for...your own pats on the back that you've forgotten how to give them to others.

Another second line was more pointed about emotional needs and emotional coolness at work in these two excerpts:

When's the last time (my department head) said he appreciated me working for him in two years even though he's better at that (chuckles) probably than the other(s) (department heads)?...it's very hard to get your emotional needs met...

The other thing is you mentioned we're a polite organization?...It's coldly polite though. It's proper. Experiences outside of this in terms of some things I've done for my personal growth, my church activities and things like that. You know, people give each other hugs. Men hug each other. There's warmth and concern and humor.

One source of the difference in emotional tone between the two plants resided in the leadership style of the two plant managers. In fact leadership is one of the major topics to which I devote a full analysis chapter. Note the contrasting level of comfort with which the two managers approached emotionally laden situations. As
indicated above, the Canadian plant manager modeled emotional sharing by relating sensitive events from home and work during team meeting time. By contrast, the American plant manager challenged a second line supervisor who nominated his department head for a quality award because, in the opinion of the second line, that act might stir up competitive feelings among the other department heads, feelings the plant manager did not want to address. In general, the Canadian team exuded a socio-emotional quality absent from its American counterpart. They gave evidence to the claim made by Herb Shepard (1970) that participants in T-groups frequently learn for the first time that qualitatively different kinds of social relations are possible.

Educational Activities

Educational activities such as trainings, workshops, and visits to other firms abounded at both sites. Both plants demonstrated fine examples of learning environments in the workplace, especially given the press of work associated with life in a production organization. The Americans used education primarily to enhance task work, and their activities had a decidedly cognitive flavor. The Canadians used it for task work and socio-emotional growth as well. Both groups participated in workshops to learn the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. The Canadians augmented this training about personal and interpersonal interaction styles with other team building training, using external consultants until their own group process allowed them to operate independently. By contrast, the Americans brought in consultants to learn about quality and about work redesign -- routine and non-routine STS. They conducted a pilot STS project. They launched an engineering partnering activity in one
department, establishing one preferred provider of engineering services. They devoted
time to strategic planning. In general, the U.S. team tended to focus on larger system
interventions, changes at the departmental or plant level. The Canadians emphasized
small group development, their own and then others as the way to affect the larger
plant system. One of the managers expressed the enthusiasm of this group of
managers:

I’m very proud of what I’ve learned...of that process of learning...It
makes you feel alive...I think I’ve had a big influence on our
management group and what we stand for.

Assumptions About People

As a final comparison and review of the two management teams, think of them
as adopting different basic assumptions about people, assumptions which in turn
affected how they managed change in the plants. The Canadian management team
espoused a holistic assumption which encouraged developing people in concert with
increasing productivity. The Americans employed an instrumental assumption,
highlighting an efficiency orientation to running the plant.

The holistic perspective views human relations in terms of a person’s many
facets and possibilities -- his or her non-work as well as work self, present
competencies as well as those still to be realized. Thus, teams at work became
legitimate vehicles for human development as well as a means to improve
productivity. Participation in teams turned into a process of growth of the members as
well as a way to contribute to technical efficiency. This view of participation coincides with the Canadian team's emphasis on team building activities and their strategy of changing the organization by changing blocks of its individuals in small groups. The safety support net exemplified the holistic approach, tying together behavior at work and home.

Helping employees solve non work problems such as alcohol or drug abuse makes sense to the holistic advocate because these problems have safety implications at work. Because they seek both exciting human and technical possibilities, holists approach work with an experimental frame of mind. From their vantage point, the rules and standardization of bureaucracy limit them. For example, headquarters questioned a novel project team composed of managers, professionals, technicians and operators for taking so long to decide what kind of equipment to buy. The team held its ground and took the extra time because they knew they were integrating people who had not worked together before and they anticipated the future payoff.

Instrumental assumptions cast human relations in terms of utility -- what you can do for me and vice versa -- in pursuit of efficient production. From this perspective, the rational change strategy advances productivity, and participative teams become useful as they serve the overarching goal of increasing efficiency and productivity. This is consistent with the emphasis on starting quality teams in the operating units rather than undertaking extensive training building efforts in the management group itself. As a concern, employee development took a second order priority unless it directly affected efficient plant operation. For example, the social
analysis of an STS redesign made sense to the American managers because its direct impact on the technical system was apparent. The added value of advanced team building activities was less obvious to these more instrumental managers. Their location in a traditional bureaucracy and the not idle presence of a large parent firm drove this instrumental orientation. The Americans had an appreciation for the considerable stabilizing effect and coordinating efficiency of a well managed bureaucracy. They also acknowledged and accepted the congruence between an instrumental assumption and working in the plant which was part of a larger bureaucracy.
FACTORs ASSOCIATED WITH VARIATION IN TEAM BUILDING
EFFORTS AT THE TWO PLANTS

In the last section, we noted how the kinds of group participation differed at the two plants. From the more bureaucratic plant came a large number of quality teams in operating units. The other plant yielded a concentrated team building effort within the management team, followed by attempts to duplicate these self-managing teams in other plant departments. Now, we turn to why the plants took such different paths in their participative efforts. A confluence of explanations emerged from the data, some plant related, others economic in nature. Three categories provide a useful way to discuss explanations: 1. the relative sense of urgency to change at each plant; 2. the limits or constraints upon change; and 3. clues to probable directions of those changes.

Urgency

Economics. Economic, industry-wide and plant-related factors combined to create a greater sense of urgency for change at the Canadian plant. Two straight years of financial losses prior to 1986 prodded the Canadian site manager to begin his own reorganizing efforts in advance of the corporate mandate. He commented about this below:

We had actually got to the point in late '85, early '86 where because of our Canadian concern for the amount of red ink that we had in '84-85, I had formed a group...that involved one of the senior managers and our HR person...we were doing brainstorming on how we would really organize if we were starting from the bottom up.
Before he could finish the plan, senior management from American headquarters called for the reorganization. By contrast, the American site manager had no prior knowledge of the change. He said:

I had come over here in October of '85 to be the plant manager of this site...and then six months later in April of '86, I was told by my bosses that there was going to be a reorganization that was going to be corporate wide. We were going to downsize the number of executives we had. And it could have some impact on how chemicals was organized and, therefore, my job.

Red ink was not the only factor prodding the Canadian managers to consider changes at the plant.

Added to the reality of losing money, the long term development plans of Chemco's Canadian arm backfired, and the 1986 reorganization caught Canadian plants with stockpiled engineers. As noted earlier, in the early 1980s, some primarily oil supplying countries sought to increase their wealth by building their own (or more) refineries and petrochemical plants, products. Canada was one of those countries. In preparation for further penetration of the global market, Chemco began hiring engineers and placing them at existing plants until development plans called for their reassignment to new projects. An incipient recession coupled with the increasing reality of global overcapacity squashed development plans. Twenty percent of the salaried work force left the multi-plant Canadian research site as a result of the restructuring. Almost all left of their own volition, enticed by attractive early retirement packages.

Exacerbating the sense of urgency, the general economic picture in Canada at the time was considerably more bleak than in the United States. In June, 1992,
Canada's unemployment rate was 11.6%, an eight year high and the highest among industrialized nations. At the same time the US unemployment rate of 7.8% was at its high point of this recession (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 8 August 1992). A year later in July, 1993, Canada's unemployment rate was still at 11.6% (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 17 August 1993). However, the backbreaking economic factor was the free trade agreement enacted in 1989. It put Chemco's Canadian plants at a severe competitive disadvantage. The smaller specialty chemicals plant was designed to compete only in the closed Canadian market whereas the US commodity plant was planned and built to compete on a world wide basis. Even after adding capacity in 1989, the Canadians simply could not produce the relative volume of product that their American counterparts could. In addition, the US plant was better buffered from economic forces because of its size and the kind of product it made.

*Commodity or Specialty Chemicals Plant.* Commodity and specialty chemicals plants in general operate under different degrees of uncertainty. For example, large commodity plants frequently buy feedstocks from their own refinery and typically sell to customers internal to the company as well as to outside customers. In fact, they often sell to specialty chemicals plants. In effect, they have both guaranteed customers and a steady source of raw materials. In contrast, specialty chemical plants sell to outside customers, thus exposing themselves more directly to the whims of the market. They often develop their products in concert with customers to meet particular specifications. This time investment and accompanying plant set up changes make switching to new customers undesirable and difficult. Specialty chemicals plant
personnel must be highly attentive to customer relations in such a competitive environment.

The striking emphasis on understanding and improving interpersonal relationships inside the Canadian plant (as well as outside) was consistent with the increased emphasis on marketing and customer service required by the business changes of 1986. Although they could not ignore service relationships, the commodity chemicals managers’ key issues related to maintaining costs and plant efficiency, given their low operating margins. A specialty chemicals plant must jump a crucial added hurdle to succeed.

Unlike the commodity plant, which operated on low margin, high volume sales with guaranteed internal customers, the specialty chemicals plant made its money by charging a high margin on a low volume of sales. High margins were the key to its profit. The two product lines sold small volumes to targeted external customers. Thus, they wanted to sell the highest grade products they could develop since they could charge more money for them. As international competitive factors -- new entrants, global overcapacity, currency exchange fluctuations -- exert downward pressure on vital profit margins, the specialty chemicals plant, with its small volume products and limited capacity, was squeezed more than the commodity plant, a volume producer harden to operating on thin margins. As a result, the specialty chemicals plant entered the period of the 1986 reorganization with a strong sense of urgency that they had to improve dramatically.

**Constraints on Change**
Interorganizational Relations. A peculiar set of organizational arrangements resulted in increased discretion to make changes within the Canadian branch of Chemco, unavailable to the Americans. This set of arrangements allowed Chemco's Canadian managers leeway to significantly change their reward system after the 1986 restructuring. These changes, explained in detail in the next chapter, were consistent with an emphasis on teamwork and a shift away from unitary attention to personal achievement.

Chemco's U.S. and Canadian arms belonged to the firm's same regional section, the North American branch. Each had a separate divisional headquarters, both of which reported to the same corporate headquarters. At this point the relationships became a bit less straightforward. While Chemco's corporate headquarters was law for the American side of the business, it was more like "suggested law" for the Canadian side. This difference had to do with differences in the parent firms.

The American and Canadian parts of Chemco were affiliated with different parent firms, the American part owned by an American firm, the Canadian part by a Canadian firm. Although Chemco corporate (an American firm) issued policies and directives for the entire petrochemical business, the Canadian plants were not legally bound by them, sometimes taking their lead from their own parent firm. This was not just an organizational distinction but a legal one, enforced by the Canadian provincial counterparts of the American Securities and Exchange Commission. An example may help. At least yearly, Chemco senior management held meetings attended by management from the level of plant manager on up. In these settings they discussed
their vision for the future, new strategic directions and that sort of thing. Although Canadian managers attended these functions and intimated that they would have been remiss not to, they were not bound to attend them. They also attended analogous meetings held by their parent company. The Americans never considered not attending the meeting, and they were not invited to such meetings held by their parent firm.

Another convoluted twist. The parent firm of Chemco’s American arm owned a large block of stock in the Canadian parent firm of Chemco’s Canadian arm. Although it exerted authority on the decision-making process all the way down into the American side of the chemical business in which I researched, the American parent could not dictate decisions or policy for the Canadian chemical business. Again, the Canadian equivalent of the Securities and Exchange Commission forbade this by law. It could, however, exert considerable influence at stockholders’ meetings of the Canadian parent firm.

The critical point is that these arrangements resulted in loosening the linkage between American authority and the decision-making process at the Canadian plant. To underscore this point, the post 1986 set of organizational arrangements allowed Chemco’s Canadian managers discretion to significantly change their reward system in a direction consistent with an emphasis on teamwork and a shift away from primary attention to personal achievement. The Americans at the plant level could never make such changes.
Buffering. An additional constraining source can be the relationship between plant and headquarters. The US plant was an easy car ride from its headquarters whereas the Canadian plant was a jet flight away from headquarters. Even though plant managers exist to free headquarters of direct involvement in plants, the Americans knew that their top divisional brass could drop in if a situation warranted it. Additionally, the Canadians had a key positive relationship at headquarters. Several managers, including the plant manager, stated that the specialty chemicals division was well buffered from headquarters' counterproductive acts because the Vice President of Operations liked what they were doing at this plant.

Clues about Directions for Change

The major clues about directions for change reside in the nature of the personas of the two plants, the number of hierarchical levels present, and the style of the two plant managers.

Plant Personas. The larger of the two product lines in the specialty chemicals division began as a distinct plant in the early 1980s and was a maverick from the start. Even though good safety reasons existed to build it away from the other plants, the firm built this plant near the others expressly to seed new ideas and spread them to its more staid siblings. As a manager remembered in a paraphrase:

It had always been on the leading edge from '83 on. The decision to build it on versus off site hinged on using it to create change in the existing chem plant.

From the beginning this plant had its own functional expertise for maintenance, design work and engineering when all the other plants drew resources from centralized
groups. Although not a greenfield plant per se, it had that flavor. So for three years prior to reorganization, it's members experimented and took a bit more latitude in the way they operated than their counterparts. The American plant had fifty eight percent more employees than the Canadian plant. A larger, more traditionally bureaucratic organization, it also lived not far from the watchful eyes of headquarters. Much more so than the Canadian plant, it seemed to be an example of Mintzberg's (1983) machine bureaucracy in which the value of control is paramount:

...the Machine Bureaucracy is a structure with an obsession -- namely control. A control mentality pervades it from top to bottom (p. 167).

Control was the preeminent value at Chemco, generally. With the constant emphasis on cost control and efficiency, one would not expect a commodity plant to change quickly. An incremental, studied pace was more consistent with its makeup.

**Hierarchy.** Comparing the case materials indicates an association between changes in hierarchy and the presence of self-managing teams. In 1986 the Canadians cut an additional layer of plant management than did their American counterparts. This left only two levels of engineering managers in the plants--the plant or manufacturing manager and section heads. The reduced hierarchy challenged section heads to address increased spans of control and created an occasion to introduce self-managing teams, which the Canadians did. We saw that the management team itself was a self-managing team and that section heads began experimenting with this same format. In the American plant, the reorganization presented no corresponding need to react to an increased span of control, and the number of self-managing teams referenced in the case was few, the teams temporary. The association between
reduced hierarchy and self-managing teams, however, was not so pat as it appears. The Canadians had other alternatives.

Highly control oriented managers could have retained control of potent duties, performed them in a more perfunctory way and delegated minor or distasteful tasks. If a bit less control oriented, they might have concentrated only on critical tasks and appointed informal caretakers for lesser jobs, thus adding back a bit of hierarchy through informal "supervisors". A laissez faire manager could have simply let things slide and "managed by exception" as predictable problems surfaced. I lay out these options to emphasize that using teams in response to increased span of control was not a foregone conclusion, but a choice. However, the decreased hierarchy and increased spans of control described in the case created a strong incentive to do something rather than nothing.

*Turnover Data.* The hierarchical shift was also related to management turnover data. After 1986, the decreased organizational layers left fewer slots for career paths. One would expect longer tenure in jobs. Although scanty and not precisely comparable, the data on section head and department head turnover during this time period suggested longer stays for the Canadian managers.

At the time of the interviews, two of five section heads interviewed had been in the job four years or a little more. In April, 1992, the last time I spoke with several managers, the average length of stay for five Canadian section heads was exactly four years. There had been no changes in management since late 1989 when one of these five became a section head. By contrast, in the major departments at the
U.S. plant there were four management changes between 1988 when I was there and the time of the initial interviews. Another change occurred before I returned seven months later to give my interim research report. Also, only one department head remained from the cadre who worked there in 1988. The special assignment manager served as a department head for three years during this time period and commented to me that this was the longest assignment of his career.

The key point in these data is that longevity of service created a chance for the Canadians to develop more cohesiveness as a team. Longevity also goes against the general American, individualistic career pattern of rotating good performers every several years and is more consistent with a collective view, even if induced by circumstances.

*Plant Manager Style.* Earlier in this chapter, I spoke about the contrasts in the plant managers' styles. Remember that the Canadian manager took a seven month sabbatical prior to this position to gather new ideas. He then had an almost immediate and positive introduction to teamwork when he found himself on a team with technicians who wanted to reunite two sides of a split operating unit. The American plant manager had been successful in the traditional system.
Prior to the Analysis Chapters

In conclusion, the Canadian plant seemed poised for more change and more innovative kinds of changes than the American plant for a number of reasons. It did not enjoy the enviable economic buffering of the larger plant, and, as a consequence, had to entertain more drastic measures to remain profitable. It did gain some room to maneuver for several reasons. It was remote from headquarters where it had a patron. It was part of a small division in the parent firm's eyes, and, as such, could experiment a bit more, according to the human resource manager. In fact, one of its product lines had been a maverick from its inception, chartered to seed changes to its nearby sister plants. The new plant manager was a charismatic personality who believed strongly in teams and was not shy about communicating his opinions to headquarters. The plant manager even had a patron there who believed in his work. Finally, because of the complex set of interorganizational relations described earlier, management across the entire Canadian site had the flexibility to institute systemic changes that would have been unimaginable in the American plant. This is an essential distinction between the two plants. One of those changes is the topic of Chapter Eight, my first analysis chapter.

In the analysis chapters, I argue that three primary mechanisms associated with variation in collaborative behavior between plants were human resource systems, the leadership of the plant manager, and national culture. Chapter Ten addresses subtle influences in American and Canadian culture which set in place conditions more and less receptive to participation. The leadership styles of the two plant managers are the
main topic of Chapter Nine. I also discuss each plant manager's role in particular group phenomena observable in the management teams. In Chapter Eight I assert that altered human resource practices at the Canadian plant were congruent with efforts to institute more participative practices. I turn now to that discussion.
Chapter 8: The Effects of Human Resource Systems On Participation at Chemco

As just noted, because of the nature of interorganizational relationships, the Canadians were able to alter their human resource systems. This allowed them to change appraisal, selection, and career development practices, changes which help account for the different kinds of teamwork apparent in the two plants. I argue that the new practices were far more favorable for participation in teams than the old ways still in use at the American plant. To substantiate this claim, I analyze the premises on which appraisal practices and selection decisions were based, and I compare models of career development. Four sections compose this chapter. The first three address appraisal, selection, and career development respectively. The final section considers the impact of the comparative practices on the nature of interpersonal relations in each plant.

APPRAISAL AT CHEMCO

Chemco operates a two stage performance appraisal system. First, managers meet with their subordinates on a yearly basis to discuss individual performance. Second, managers also participate in a series of meetings called rating and ranking meetings. Here, they aggregate information from individual performance appraisals into a body of comparative data used later in selection decisions. In a rating and ranking meeting, managers of the same hierarchical level measure more junior managers or engineers against their peers and give each person a number and label to represent standing within that group. For example, in the US plant, the plant manager and department
heads meet as a team to evaluate all the second line supervisors. In outline form, the
system works like this:

**American Rating and Ranking Method**

**Ranking:**

Salaried employees in the same group are ranked from 1 to N based on
their performance.

**5 Ratings:**

- Outstanding
- Excellent
- Very Good
- Good
- Needs Improvement

Cut off points are established to define the five ratings listed above. The N employees are then apportioned to each of these five rating
categories.

**Result:**

Each of the N employees has a number (ranking) and a label (rating) which together show relative standing in that group.

As an example, consider second line supervisors (SLS) at one US site. Let’s assume there are approximately thirty SLSs reporting to six department heads. The
department heads and plant manager meet in lengthy sessions to rank the SLSs from
one to thirty, one being the best. Then, they fit the SLSs into the five performance
categories -- Outstanding, Excellent, Very Good, Good, and Needs Improvement -- so
that each second line has a ranking number and a performance label. For example,
numbers 1 through 4 might signify "Outstanding", 5 through 11 "Excellent", and so
on. The standard Rating and Ranking system is founded on the following premises:
1. Each of our employees is uniquely talented, some more than others.

2. Their differences can be measured.

3. Employees are measured in small increments by rating and ranking so that we can identify the most talented for potential senior management positions and so that we can fit all other employees into appropriate positions.

Prior to 1986, the Canadians shared the identical system just described. However, they changed their system soon after the reorganization. In outline form, their system works like this:

**Alternative Canadian Rating Method**

Rankings: **NONE**

3 Ratings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Contributors</th>
<th>--upper 10 to 15 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Valued Contributors</td>
<td>--85%-90% of people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Contributors</td>
<td>--as many as there are, usually no more than 5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Result: Each employee has a rating only.

They dropped the ranking element altogether and reduced the rating categories from five to three. Each person is rated as either a High Contributor, a Valued Contributor, or a Non-Contributor. For example, if the thirty second line supervisors mentioned earlier were under this system, each would be assigned to one of the three performance categories. They would **not** be ranked from one to thirty. Nor would any of them necessarily be put into the Non-Contributor category. The altered Canadian system operates from these premises:

1. There are a few superior people whom we must prepare for senior management. Generally, they are so
outstanding that there is little disagreement about who they are.

2. There is a large group, all of whom are highly talented and more or less indistinguishable in terms of a comparative rating system. The effort involved in trying to differentiate these individuals causes enough ill feeling to outweigh dubious gains. We will treat them as having equal value.

3. There is a very small group who do not contribute enough. We must develop this group or coach them out of the firm if they can not improve to our standards.

Based on the analysis below, I conclude that the American system, designed to make fine gradations between peers, accentuates competition and highlights individual initiative and achievement. The Canadian system works similarly for the ten to fifteen percent considered top performers. But for the bulk of its salaried employees, the Canadian appraisal system minimizes individual differences in performance and underscores the notion of "equal value" among the largest segment of employees. A collective concept, "equal value" is consistent with efforts to establish collaborative teams. I restate this below as a proposition.

Proposition: High vs. Low Differentiation Appraisal

The Canadians switch to a performance appraisal system which moderates differentiation between most individuals by labeling one large group as "Valued Contributors". The intent of this name is congruent with establishing teams that have a collaborative emphasis. The highly differentiating American system strongly reinforces individual effort and self-interest, values that run counter to teams in which members easily adopt the group’s agenda rather than their own.

Those At the Top and Bottom. Assuming momentarily the accuracy of ratings and rankings, both systems outlined above serve to accelerate the very gifted and brake those with unrealistic expectations. They perform the objective of finding those
few for the top and forcing the impractical to take a harsh look at career goals and options. As one American said, "It helps you see you won't be the best." Not everyone aspires to be president, and some do so erroneously. Thus, both systems find and compensate top performers. The Canadians do it without numbering them. And both have a few employees who are the dregs, referred to as either "Needs Improvement" or "Non-Contributors". (Actually the Canadian term would be more offensive to me were I its recipient). Where the systems differ dramatically is in their treatment of the large group in the middle.

Those In the Middle. Let's begin by reviewing the premises of each system.

The appraisal premises for US CHEMCO were:

1. Each of our employees is uniquely talented, some more than others.
2. Their differences can be measured.
3. Employees are measured in small increments by rating and ranking so that we can identify the most talented for potential senior management positions and so that we can fit all other employees into appropriate positions.

The premises for CHEMCO CANADA were:

1. There are a few superior people whom we must prepare for senior management. Generally, they are so outstanding that there is little disagreement about who they are.
2. There is a large group, all of whom are highly talented and more or less indistinguishable in terms of a comparative rating system. The effort involved in trying to differentiate these individuals with numbers causes enough ill feeling to outweigh dubious gains. We will treat them as having equal value.
3. There is a very small group who do not contribute enough. We must develop this group or coach them out of the firm if they can not improve to our standards.

Taken together, the American premises accentuate an individual construct, the unique value of each person. In contrast, the Canadian premises call attention to a group construct, the equal value of all members. The first and second American premises taken in context are consistent with the notion of equal opportunity, the offspring of individualism. Each uniquely gifted person can compete for more advanced management positions (premise one), but some are "more unique" than others (premises one and two). Stated in its baldly competitive form, the promise of equal opportunity does not ensure equal results, a declaration that makes perfect sense when finding a few for the top (premise three) represents a major goal. An American second line described how obvious competition is for department head and plant manager level jobs:

They (SLSs) are in competition for the department head jobs...And one of them is going to be at the bottom. So one of them is going to be a bottom performer by definition...A couple of them are going to become department heads but not very many. And of the department heads, a couple of them are going to become (plant) managers but not very many. It's very easy to see who is succeeding and who is failing. That visibility of success and failure is so high.

The large middle or "Valued Contributor" group reflects a different intent when compared with the finely discriminated Excellents, Very Goods and Goods in the traditional American system. In combination with altered career development practices (described later in this chapter), the "Valued Contributor" brings to mind the collective concept of equal results rather than the individualistic one of equal
opportunity. This large group will be treated as if members have about the same
talent and rewarded accordingly too. A manager described it this way:

That is one of the luxuries...you get of that Valued Contributor group is
what you are looking for is not "What are the guy's failing(s) that put
him below somebody else's feet on the standing totem pole. Instead,
you look for "What are the ways that you can help maximize that guy's
contribution and help him to see his contribution such that it gives him
the satisfaction to want to do more?" The competitive spirit is just a
very different one (here)...

The manager who is a good developmental coach still wants the best individual effort
from each person. But this desire to develop each person takes place against a less
competitive backdrop.

Peer Comparison and Zero Sum. The American system, essentially one of peer
comparison, is actually a zero sum game which penalizes some talented people from
the outset because it automatically places them in "below average" categories
(Thompson and Dalton (1971). These authors studied appraisal systems in two
technology based firms employing electrical engineers and concluded that:

We have been describing evaluation-feedback systems that involve some
type of peer comparison, which game theorists would say are zero-sum
in nature...if there are ten men in a department working at different
levels of effectiveness, by definition, five of them are "below average"
(pp.403-404).

Or in our case, if there are N second line supervisors to be fit into five performance
ratings (labels), two fifths of them will fall into below average categories
automatically. Half will receive rankings that place them below the median. From the
data are several quotations underscoring the zero sum nature of the system:
They (SLSs) are in competition for the department head jobs....And one of them is going to be at the bottom. So one of them is going to be a bottom performer by definition...

..In supervisory ranks it's one or the other. If he makes it, these guys don't.

The Darwinian flavor apparent in these quotations reflects the high value on self-reliance, achievement, and competition--the three defining characteristics of individualism. Thompson and Dalton (1971) go on to talk about the effects of this zero sum game on the morale of the engineers they studied:

Men rated average resisted the designation. The morale of those rated below average suffered substantially; work slowed and anxiety mounted.

I doubt that work slows at Chemco. But one Canadian manager claimed the old system was demotivating to employees:

...the old system develops the few...That's very obvious when you look at the way performance is evaluated, the way money is given out...the way career development even is focused...you...motivate and charge up and satisfy those (few) people very greatly. But the other people--eventually it's just a job.

An American manager who hired in from another firm also found his first rating and ranking experience deflating:

First year, boss gives 10% raise and says doing well; then six months later, I get performance review that says I'm a 3.0 (average in former lingo). At (old firm), I always had excellent performance review. Didn't understand mixed signal (here)...Found out later that it's typical (getting average review coming in). Unique experience. At (old firm), I got feedback on good and bad points. Provided training to help you with shortcomings.

Rating and ranking results can be a rude awakening for employees who heretofore have excelled in college and prior work experiences. To these high achievers, "Very
Good", the middle category, is only average, and "Good" translates as a "D" on their report card!

*Creating Winners and Losers?*. The outcome of the pooled appraisals is quite important because of the direct link to compensation and promotional opportunities. A Canadian section head described the effects:

There was a ranking list, and...somewhere in there that was my name in a spot...if I was number 51, I was better than 52 and not as good as 50. I mean that's just the way it was. So 50 got more money than I did and 52 got less. And boy they could tell the difference...They paid us different...number 1 on the list got the opportunity before anybody else did.

High performers are more likely to be promoted to choice assignments since a central feature of the career development system is to prepare them for the top. In fact, the Canadian human resource manager suggested that they created artificial winners and losers in the old system. He said:

People that we have traditionally identified as above average performers, a lot of times we've set them up to be above average performers because we've given them better opportunities, ah put them in situations where they get better visibility...we've created artificial winners I think. Some of the people who have languished at the bottom of the performance spectrum have been there through no fault of their own. I don't believe that it's possible to have the differentiations in employee performance that we've tried to force thorough our performance management differentiation schemes....

As noted in the section head's comment above, over time even small numerical differences in ranks translated into substantial financial discrepancies. A poor score caused legitimate concern because ratings can "stick with" a person and affect future opportunities (see next section). Additionally, an employee can receive a low evaluation simply because of a bad fit between the person and the job.
Raters' Opinions are Subtly Altered. Another oft underplayed aspect of performance evaluation is the system’s effects on those who do the ratings and deliver the good and bad news. Thompson and Dalton (1971) argue that one of the strongest negative impacts of zero sum appraisal is its effect on managers’ perceptions of employees who score below the mean:

Perhaps the strongest unrecognized effect of a zero-sum evaluation system is the impact on management’s thinking. If a manager knows that he must eventually tell all his men what percentiles they fall in, he is almost forced to begin thinking about some of his men as below average or as bottom of the heap (p. 406).

I contend that, either intentionally or inadvertently, managers look for and compile anecdotal data which backs up their negative appraisals of the below average employees. They do this if for no other reason than to resolve their own cognitive dissonance about the evaluative process. As Miner (1972) notes, "It is hard to pass judgement on a fellow man [or woman], especially if that judgement will become a permanent part of his [or her] company record."

Summary Comments. The US system heightens the evaluative aspect by spotlighting small individual differences. The Canadian concept of "equal value" downplays comparison and personal differences for the largest group of the employees. The stark differentiation between American second line supervisors with similar aspirations who win, place, and draw exacerbates competition in a plant where management says it hopes to instill a cooperative, team oriented spirit. Although contradictory, this procedure is neither unusual nor reprehensible. No doubt excellent project work goes on quite smoothly in this setting as it does in hundreds of
companies with similar systems. One tradeoff is that managers can not expect teams in which members place a premium on openness and interpersonal trust to grow and flourish in such surroundings. Eventually, employees develop ill feelings from (repeatedly) losing out to their peers, even those they like and respect. Cool, circumscribed relationships result. Employees who "grow up" in a system that pits peers against each other are more inclined to hold an "I" rather than a "We" perspective when they participate in group activities.

The large "Valued Contributors" group has an inherently collective accent, implying that, "As a group, we all contribute similarly high value". "Valued Contributors" must certainly show variations based on diverse project experience, engineering subspecialty, and seniority. However, the Canadians chose to emphasize their similarities and strengths rather than their differences. This change de-emphasizes competition and encourages a climate compatible with introducing self-managing teams. Given their past history with the same appraisal system the Americans still have, this substantial change constitutes hard evidence to employees that the plant management team is committed to building a setting conducive to teams.

THE SELECTION SYSTEM

**Position Planning**

Chemco managers plan future manpower needs, fill vacancies, and award transfers and promotions in closed meetings called *position planning* meetings. For example, the plant manager and department heads meet to discuss second line
supervisors. Rating and ranking data comprise a central part of their discussions, especially when contending second lines are being considered for an immediate opening. Position planning can become quite complex because it often involves a string of connected decisions. Suppose a department head is promoted to a manager’s job at headquarters. The management team must not only fill that position, most likely with a high performing second line supervisor, but must also backfill the vacancy it creates at the second line level and so on. This action may involve figuring in candidates from other plants or even overseas plants. Everyone generally has an idea via the grapevine who the top contenders are. But after a decision is made, the management team does not inform other candidates for the slot why they were not chosen. They may not learn that they were considered.

**Open Posting**

Job posting, while not universal, is a post-1986 selection method used in the Canadian plant in conjunction with position planning. Notice of a position is posted publicly on bulletin boards for all to see and is accessible to anyone who wants to apply. The notice lists a job description and minimum qualifications. At Chemco Canada, this method, common to industry for years, is called open posting which distinguishes it from "closed" and secretive position planning meetings. It is never used in the American plant to fill management positions.

Posting did not come as policy from Chemco’s Canadian headquarters but evolved at this plant when a high performer left for another assignment, vacating his section head position. In talking it over, the plant manager and others developed this
alternative selection practice in conjunction with a representative from headquarters.

To underscore how dramatic a departure this was, note the comments below from an American and then a Canadian manager:

When they did this, it was like shot heard round the world. I got a fax of a fax of a fax...as the process was formed the policy people were getting nervous...

That activity sent shock waves throughout all of (Canadian parent firm)...5 years ago, 6 years ago...that activity would never even have gotten launched because it would have been nipped right in the bud. It would have been squashed before it had a chance to get off the ground.

A little while later, the other plants on site adopted open posting.

Procedurally, a team formed to determine criteria for a specific job, post a vacancy, interview candidates, make the decision, and provide feedback to all applicants. By level, the open posting team included the manager to whom the candidate would report, some of the subordinates the person would manage, peers, and usually an external member from a different department or division. The Canadians chose at least two section heads (department heads) using this method. It is unclear whether plant managers could be selected in this manner.

**Selection Premises for Position Planning**

1. Selection is a management prerogative to be exercised in secret.

2. Information prior to and after selection decisions must be tightly controlled.

3. As we make choices, we must be mindful of employees’ schedules for advancement, in particular those of top ranked people.
Selection Premises for Open Posting

1. Selection is not management’s privilege only, especially not that of one layer of management alone.

2. All candidates will receive accurate feedback about their qualifications compared to the job’s criteria.

3. Selection is based on performance for a particular job. We select the best candidate for this particular position although mindful of the career development wishes of those applying.

Proposition: Open vs. Secret Selection

The multi-leveled selection teams used by the Canadians operated in an open and public way, thus encouraging future participation of team members and candidates. The secret and closed position planning meetings used by the Americans reinforced hierarchical relationships and encouraged self-reliance among candidates.

Both management teams used the private position planning method. The Canadians also used job posting to fill management positions. This method is open and public, team based, and participative. In a classic article, Alfred (1967) cautions about the effects of closed versus open staffing procedures. He underlines four potential flaws in the closed staffing method:

1. it omits feedback to those considered but passed over for a job;

2. it makes the current manager’s good opinion of the employee too important to the person’s future;

3. it leaves the employee too dependent on the current manager’s (limited) knowledge of opportunities in the firm; and

4. it invites the selection of persons socially similar to those making the selection.

All of these patterns except the third are apparent in selection practices at US Chemco.
Lack of Feedback

One of the Canadian managers recalled the lack of information under his old system, a version of which was still in use at US plants:

I didn't like the other system...because you never knew what was happening. You never knew what people thought of you because they never told you.

A bit overstated, his comment speaks to the lack of comparative data, not the failure to communicate clearly during individual performance appraisals. The Rating and Ranking system generated curiosity about one’s numerical standing vis a vis one’s peers. But having generated the numbers, managers then tried to downplay them in discussions with their curious, competitive subordinates. When I worked at the American plant in 1988, managers followed a policy of telling subordinates in which third of the ranking span they fell if they asked but did not divulge the actual rank number. Merely having such a numerical system stimulated questions about it.

By contrast, in the Canadian system, there was no numerical morass to circumnavigate since no one was ranked. Those who applied for a posted position automatically received feedback whether or not they got the job. An employee could apply simply to conduct a reality check on his or her current performance level. Thus, it opened up a communication channel to help individuals monitor their level of expertise in a way unavailable under position planning. To emphasize the point, a collective structure --the open posting team-- was associated with a positive event, increased access to career related information.
The critical point relative to staffing and feedback concerns the individualistic notion of self-reliance. Limiting selection information increases uncertainty about future career options and reinforces the idea that employees must rely on themselves to manage their careers. If frequently reminded that others do not take care of them, then employees lose interest in joining up in groups except for the most surface tasks (Zander, 1982). They find ways to take care of themselves independently. To underscore this point, to the extent that the secretive selection method constrained honest conversation about present and future career prospects, it ultimately encouraged self-reliance and discouraged cooperation. In this instance, the Americans modeled a concept of "team" as a secret society which tightly controlled information by relying on hierarchical authority.

**Management's Good Opinion**

Position planning, together with rating and ranking, intensified the inherent dependency relationship between superior and subordinates working in hierarchical organizations. Withholding information about performance and about selection decisions reminded subordinates who was in control. Excellent performance alone did not insure career success. Astute employees knew they must find ways to stay in management’s good graces, circumstances which almost guaranteed that subordinates would not speak their minds openly.

Second lines depended on the good will of department heads and the plant manager for pay increases, good lateral moves, and promotions. Department heads depended on the plant manager and others at headquarters who knew them and their
abilities. The plant manager depended on the good will of his headquarters boss and others. The Canadian manager of the engineering group put his finger on this very issue when he talked about how their old system, the current US system, used to work:

...The most important thing in your happiness or your success in the organization was the extent you were able to meet your boss’s needs. And, in the control organization where...he or she determines your advancement, your potential, your career development, the type of work you get, you name it, it’s no wonder...

More senior managers acted as fickle gatekeepers in this web of dependency.

By contrast, open posting took decisions out of the hands of a select group of managers and placed the locus of selections within a team representing multiple levels of hierarchy. The procedure created a setting in which a small group could practice participation. Decision making authority formerly vested in managers who met in secret shifted to a team which came under more public scrutiny. This more open process freed employees from three outcomes: a boss suffering from myopia about opportunities; a boss with overriding self-interest in retaining excellent workers to construct a personal empire; or evaluation by a boss with whom the subordinate had a poor relationship.

Although hierarchy serves many useful purposes, here it worked against frank discussions of career information. I state this very old news to underscore the point that individuals must factor social etiquette as well as performance into career plans. While working there, I routinely heard second lines grouse about decisions that the
Chemco management team or a department head had made. Yet, in mixed meetings
with these very same managers, the grousing evaporated.

Unfortunately, employees carry into group settings the same deferential
communication patterns they learn in hierarchies. For example, when inevitable
conflicts arise, group members must overcome strongly felt inhibitions and fears of
reprisal in order to discuss issues directly with their superiors. When this can not or
does not occur, many groups develop a reservoir of unspoken topics which hinder the
group’s development and, ultimately, its essential task performing ability. In contrast,
successful experiences in groups such as the open posting team increase the likelihood
that team members and fairly treated candidates will participate in future teams. More
open and public treatment of candidates by teams encourages future trust in team-
based efforts.

**Birds of a Feather**

Sticklers for making data based decisions in their technical work, engineers
devises analogues such as the ratings and rankings for social decisions. However, their
data orientation did not immunize them against the subjective and common corporate
tendency to choose candidates like oneself or one’s peer group. For example, a bold
leadership style might gain kudos for a young engineer at Chemco while a peer’s
finesse in a behind-the-scenes style in which he taught others to lead without
showcasing himself might go unnoticed and unrewarded. Kanter (1977) pinpoints why
managers value social conformity:

Social criteria...can also ensure that managers reproduce themselves.
Keeping management positions in the hands of people of one's kind
provides reinforcement for the belief that people like oneself actually deserve to have such authority (pp.62-63).

The secretive position planning procedure was especially vulnerable to the insidiousness of social criteria because the plant management team, in conjunction with its counterparts around the system, answered to no one for run-of-the-mill selection decisions. One manager acknowledged his selection was in part based on similarities shared with management:

And to some extent, I think he probably pulls people in ...promotes people that...line up with similar values to his own. I hate to say this, but he promoted ___ and me both. And we probably do something in terms of judgement or whatever that he likes, or I don't think he would have promoted us.

Having thorough personal knowledge of these managers, I know them both to be highly qualified. The social component of selection decisions did not promote incompetence at Chemco. It did restrict access of those seen as subtly or perhaps more obviously "different" from the current management group. Thus, fewer kinds of people participated in the higher levels of management. Even more to the point, position planning inadvertently modeled the concept of "team" as an insulated bunch of like thinking persons.  

In contrast to position planning, open posting resisted the influence of social criteria for several reasons. First, the process was more open and public. Team members judged each person's performance against external, posted job criteria. Since all candidates got feedback, they could compare notes if they want, thus encouraging the selection team to tell a consistent and true story. Secondly, the selection team was hierarchically diverse, reflecting multiple viewpoints. This broader spectrum of
opinion worked against subtle imposition of cliquish selection requirements. In sum, the team itself had a sense of collaborating on this effort, and those seeking a position, whether or not they were chosen, had the experience of trusting a group to give them direct comments about performance.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

**Proposition:** Group and Personal Development vs. Individual Skills Development for Task Completion

At the US plant, a basic assumption of personal uniqueness, combined with a key mission to identify a limited number of high performers for the top, perpetuated career development practices which focused on the individual's skill development for task completion and personal advancement.

At the Canadian plant, a basic assumption of equal value implied intent to identify opportunities for a broad section of employees. This intent combined with structural brakes on rapid career progression resulted in career practices that emphasized group as well as personal development.

Any organization must survive and remain viable to continue providing jobs. Part of that survival depends on a steady stream of talented employees, and career development practices differ on the surest way to maintain that stream. The view in the American plant supported finding the best people and moving them rather quickly through a series of jobs to the top where they could strengthen the firm by the decisions they made. Remaining employees filled in the rest of the jobs, many of which were excellent positions. Below, a department head from another American plant described the system in more detail:

...and...in addition to doing the Ranking and Rating, we identify a person's potential...early on...That's done at the department head level...when they are just coming in, you say they are potentially ___ level which is an engineering associate department head level...if you
get any information that indicates really they're going to do good technical work but we don't think they're going to be able to get that far, (i.e. into management) or we see some chink in the armor...we'll say, "Well, _ is probably as far as the person's gonna go."

...And what you do after a person has been with the company probably, oh I'll say 5 years, you identify the high potential performers. And that's somebody that you think can go to a _ level job or greater (plant manager or above). Those are the people that are going to be considered for higher level Chemco jobs.

You can see the way the Chemco system is set up is it's there to provide high performers, or perceived high performers to fill the slots of the corporate level management level hierarchy. That's really what the system in my mind is set up to do...And then as a secondary thing, you provide good, intelligent, hard working people that fill the jobs at the lower level in the plant and the organization to get the job done. But one of the key things is to identify those high potential performers to become the next president or chairman of the board or whatever (emphasis added).

This traditional system, used successfully by many firms, placed a premium on personal high achievement or what Chemco employees referred to variously as initiative, ownership, a strong sense of urgency to make things happen. Regardless of new programs for participation, Chemco still strongly valued this individualistic perspective. Referring to this system, a Canadian manager said that "we believe the old system develops the few, probably the ten percent, at the expense of the many."

*The Winning Formula.* Becoming one of the few who reaped the greatest financial rewards came from moving quickly to the management ladder and climbing it as high as talent and circumstance permit. Given the talent pool at Chemco, those who aspired to top management had to know the winning formula right from the start.

A Canadian engineer headed for management remembered his hiring interview:

...you go into this big office...real nice furniture and impressive, wood panelling on the walls and the guy sits there and he is a big imposing person...and you are just a tiny engineer looking for a job. He was
asking questions like "What do you want to do in ten years?" and...the answers I think that they expected and...that I gave were..."In ten years I expect to be in supervision"...They were hiring people that will aspire to leadership type positions, and if they worked out, fine! And if they didn't work out, then they had their technical career.

The Canadian human resource manager substantiated this viewpoint:

...if you take a look at the input forms that people would give during their career development discussions, their performance appraisals, they all tended to say the same thing because they understood what the winning formula was...if my real desire was to be a research chemist or a research chemical engineer stuck away in a corner somewhere, I'm not going to really say that...What I'm going to say is, "Well yeah, I'd like to be the supervisor or manager of a group" because that's...the best path to be rewarded on.

**The Canadian System**

In contrast to the notion of "develop the few", the Canadian's "believe long term organizational success will be based...on the extent that we are able to develop all the people". This aim reflected the systemic change from finely graduated rankings to the broad concept of the "Valued Contributor". The change also meant focussing a bit less attention on moving top performers. To underscore the general difference, the Canadian system's intent was to broaden that group for whom challenging work could be found, making a special effort to find a good fit between job and employee as often as possible. The Canadian human resource manager exemplified this point of view:

If we can change our organization and make it OK for that individual to say, "Well this is what I really aspire to be and this is where I feel the most comfortable" and if we can put 'em in that position and reward them appropriately...then I think we will be a richer organization for it.
Elaborating on the concept of a good fit between person and job, another manager said:

...to translate the goals and objectives of the organization down to sharper and sharper detail, to the point that an individual can find himself and understand the purpose of what he's doing in terms of the greater purpose of his work group or his work team and the organization as a whole.

Note the individual and collective accents combined. When done well, articulating firm goals brings out the employee's unique contribution against the backdrop of membership in the whole. The person does not lose himself when joining in the group agenda, and no one gets caught up in the divisiveness of whether Joe is a low "Outstanding" or a high "Excellent".

On the other hand, listen to an American second line who described how individual initiative was key to success in the American plant:

...we're moving a little bit, but we're still 95 percent individual focussed. And I'm not going to get into it, but the Rating and Ranking system has to drive that. I've always said if I was a supervisor and did my job and my group functioned well, that means I'd fall out in the middle somewhere. What gets me above the middle is my individual contribution in whatever I do.

He went on to note what he thought was an imbalance between demands for personal versus team related contributions as spelled out in his recent appraisal:

I'm looking at my own personal (form). This is a very recent...a one page summary...what the person has done in the last year -- strengths, weaknesses and future goals...just did mine on me. For the Yearly Contributions, if you look at what's highlighted there...The focus on my participation as far as working as a team with my group and generating good ideas and everything else. It's a small piece of accomplishments. The other accomplishments are very, very individually oriented, and that's what's important to this organization...This box is full, but my participation as a supervisor over a group of people is clearly
insignificant... The rest of those that are filled in are individual contributions outside of my base job.

The system generally rewarded individual action rather than teamwork and smiled on those who put forth extra individual effort. In contrast, the Canadian system emphasized contribution within the framework of the work unit. Let’s look at the contrasting creations coming from each.

**The US System: Hipo Man**

The quintessential high performer in the US plant was known as "Hipo Man" (pronounced "Hypo"). He (and an occasional she) exuded "extract of individualism".

An American manager, on the high performance list himself, had this to say:

I’d say we’re all different to some degree, but we have probably more in common than different...I think we all share a similar work ethic. Our styles are probably similar in terms of effectively being able to communicate your ideas, taking the rudder in your hands and steering the ship, the guy at the helm, bringing things to closure, high sense of urgency, high degree of ownership.

Remember that in our discussion of selection, I noted how secretive selections combined with social criteria exclude diverse types from Chemco’s management elite.

The manager above went on to say:

What they are telling us now is that’s the classic definition of the HIPO man that we're now supposed to be changing...The diversity people, the diversity consultants. They’re telling us that we can’t use that as a role model anymore. Unfortunately, I don’t have another one that I can relate to that is maybe a little more diverse that also achieves the outstanding results...there’s one female and one minority on the high potential list. The rest are white male, are all- American.

Another manager’s metaphor supported the search for "Hipo Men" as a major part of the development process. He said:
The model that was described by a senior Chemco person, the distillation theory of people, is you bring in all the people and you take the best people up top and the rotten people you throw out the bottom.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines distillation as "Any of various heat-dependent processes used to purify or separate a fraction of a relatively complex substance..." Note the key words "separate a fraction of" in the definition and implied in the quotation. This perhaps too starkly drawn metaphor does underline a major purpose of the linked appraisal and selection procedures: early identification of those select few who can take the heat and rise to the top. Another likened career development at Chemco to a "cookie cutter". He opined that:

...we probably have a tendency to want to cookie cutter what good performance looks like...they are one sided. They are very strong but all the same characteristics. Or they tend to be...

Although men and women learned excellent leadership skills, they were too often unwilling to be patient followers when in groups, he said.

As a way to partially offset the reward system, the plant had a two tiered recognition system which could be used to acknowledge excellent team efforts and individual efforts as well. Department heads had between five and ten gift certificates in the amount of fifty dollars to award. From a different pot supplied by headquarters, anyone could spotlight special contributions. The quality coordinator noted that the system was used to recognize five Quality Teams of the Year. He also said:

It's not utilized as much as it should. Matter of fact, we have money left over in it every year.
Group Development

The Canadians had their share of Hipo Men and until shortly after the reorganization, they operated in the same way as the Americans. But they moved to a group focus in career development, mirroring the evolution of the Leadership Team into a self-managing group.

They discussed their performance and career aspirations openly in the group and solicited constructive feedback. The plant manager attended as participant like the other members, not as boss. He talked about how far they have come:

Some people really fessed up on what they thought they brought to the party and where they thought they needed help. Some other people, from the team’s point of view, were not realistic at all in what they thought they did well and what they thought they could improve. And the team opened up, but said it in a way because I think we’ve grown so much, that was very constructive. ...To me, now you’ve got a powerful team...in the past, the team would not have confronted that. The team would have said, "Fine, good job, good self-assessment" and go on, knowing full well that nobody in the room agreed with what the individual is saying about himself. Not this time. This time the team said, "We have some problems here" and openly talked about it. Would have never happened in the past.

The group development trend caught on in this plant, and a technical section head used what he learned to organize his engineers into four support groups which managed their own work assignments and career development:

For development and performance feedback...we’ve gone to what we call support groups...we’ve separated the twenty three (engineers) into four separate groups, and those groups are totally responsible for each other’s career development, for each other’s performance improvement...I don’t sit down with people individually...

The section head’s role changed as well:
...role is much more one of trying to help that process to happen. So it's very important for us to try to develop a relationship of trust and openness with the people in our groups...to the extent I am a judge and jury...it goes against the kind of organization we want to create (emphasis added).

This account is markedly in contrast with the closed nature of position planning and as well as the rating and ranking method.

As evidence of the conversion to the more group oriented way of working and handling career issues, several engineers on assignment out of the country during the entire time of the shift still saw life the old way. Remembering phone conversations with them, the section head recalled his surprise when these people invariably used the old framework to talk about their return:

...most of the people who work there have been in the group now maybe four or five years, and this is really just the way things are...there's been one or two new people who have come in to the group in the last year or so, and they...pretty quickly adapt to those norms...that's not a big source of conflict right now... --"How can I...shine?"...as an individual in a....collaborative or team based setting---...it's just very obvious to people that they have a chance to develop and grow and make a contribution like they never have before. And they don't have to worry so much about appearances...it's a very liberating feeling for most people.

But I know there are people -- right now we have a couple people on assignment -- ...every time I talk to them they ask me about their next promotion. They ask me, "Will I have a supervisor job when I come back?"...those aren't the sort of things that are all that highly valued or that important. They're not the sort of things people talk about.

Conclusions. Several points stand out about Canadian career development practices. They address the degree of psychological safety apparent in that group, the use of emotional expression, and the movement to mutual dependence. First, engaging in direct discussions about sensitive career and appraisal issues attests to
extraordinarily high levels of psychological safety, openness and trust which opened the way for helpful critiques and suggestions about each others’ performance and developmental goals. Secondly, the more the expression of accurate emotions (in addition to thoughts) are present in appraisal and career development discussions, the more likely a session actually advances the development of the person. Emotion reaches more of the person and links him or her more fully into a career development discussion than does a perfunctory meeting. If a person tells her real feelings in an appraisal session, others involved get a better idea of what is important to her, what her real goals are, how she can move toward them, and how other group members or a manager can help. In response to a manager’s suggested next move, the dependent employee may say a bit reluctantly, "That will be fine." That comes across quite differently than the person who says:

What I really want is this. I’ll feel disappointed if I don’t get it this time and not well rounded until I do.

Most of us are more likely to state our feelings about career opportunities when we know we can trust and depend on others. A group setting with well trained participants is a forum that encourages this kind of dialogue.

Third, the group’s ability to discuss these issues signaled a shift to mutual dependence and away from self-reliance among the managers and professionals in this plant. This shift enabled them to stop tip toeing around each other’s conflicting aspirations and discuss normally secret promotion and career development issues head on, taking the sting out of the competition inherent in any work group where a few vie for limited promotional options. In this flatter organization with fewer career
opportunities than their American counterparts, open and honest conversations about sensitive career concerns brought these managers closer together. They thought they had more to gain from helping each other than from competing. They chose a collaborative strategy, not an individualistic one, to pursue career development.

In contrast, the Americans remained hampered since the parent firm's long arm kept the basic nature of human resource systems in place. Chemco managers in the American plant could make only "vernier adjustments" to their systems. Remember from the case their efforts to tinker with the Rating and Ranking procedure and their positive change of performance reviews to include data from peers, subordinates and customers. Yet overall, the American reward system still strongly honored individualism in the form of personal effort and high achievement. A recognition system did draw attention to worthwhile team efforts. But many used this same system to reinforce strong individual effort. In other words the the recognition system was used haphazardly rather than strategically to induce teamwork. The plant did not even always use up all the headquarters' money in the recognition pot. Steven Kerr's (1987) catchy article title, "On the Folly of Rewarding A while Hoping for B" describes this system to a tee. He says:

Most coaches disdain to discuss individual accomplishments, preferring to speak of teamwork, proper attitude, and a one-for-all spirit. Usually, however, rewards are distributed according to individual performance...It is therefore rational for players to think of themselves first and the team second.

In business organizations where rewards are dispensed for unit performance or for individual goals achieved, without regard for overall effectiveness, similar attitudes often are observed...The organization therefore often is in a position where it hopes for employee effort in the
areas of team building, interpersonal relations, creativity, etc., but it formally rewards none of these (Kerr, 1987, pp. 420-421).

With a powerful reward system still in place, the American managers retained their self-reliant attitude in pursuit of career success and, in part, depended on their superiors for advancement. Mutual dependence was not a strategy familiar to them. They continued to focus on development of individual skills for task completion and to put themselves in the best position for promotions.

**HUMAN RESOURCE SYSTEMS AND RELATIONSHIPS AT CHEMCO**

**Proposition:** Rivals vs. Colleagues

The competitive individualism reinforced by Chemco’s selection, appraisal and career development methods turned peers into rivals at the US plant while the group oriented practices found in the Canadian plant encouraged peers to become colleagues.

Competitive individualism makes fitting use of the psychological distance typical of Americans’ attenuated relationships with their work mates (Hsu, 1981). Employees can overlook their self-centered behavior much more easily when competing with those they label acquaintances, not friends. Distance allows self-interest to expand. A systematic way to maintain distance and feed self-interest is cleverly built into many corporate development programs for managers. Managers move from job to job every several years to acquire the "breadth" necessary for effective management at more senior levels. The moves weaken their ties to specific departments, groups, or functions and cultivate a stronger bond to the more abstract "company" (Kanter, 1977). In addition, the moves build corporate commitment as Kanter (1977) notes:
...transfers serve to reduce the efficacy of commitments other than to
the corporation... Corporations...create organizational loyalty by ensuring
that for its most highly paid members the corporation represents the
only enduring set of social bonds other than the immediate family
(p.66).

As a practical outcome, managers retain the knowledge and perspective gained in
earlier positions but weaken their affiliative ties to former units. This enables them to
honor corporate goals above past affiliations when making decisions. By giving up
ardent ties to former groups, senior managers establish the emotional distance needed
to make rational decisions. This accurately reflects Chemco's career development
system, the goal of which was to "develop the few" for the top "at the expense of the
many". The Americans in the case found themselves in just such a system.

By contrast, with more leverage to change their system, the Canadians
ameliorated the competitive spirit without dampening either the desire to achieve or
effective plant operation. In both plants, structural, systemic and group process
elements came into play in ways that influenced competition and urged peers toward
either colleagueship or rivalry.

Structure. Three structural elements stood out in the Canadian case -- the
smaller plant size, the physical location of one product line, and the removal of a
management layer during reorganization. The smaller plant size meant the smaller
number of people working in the plant had more chances to interact with each other.
One of the two product lines was situated in a bunker, a concrete structure out in the
plant which housed the control room and almost all plant employees -- operators,
technicians, engineers as well as section heads. This arrangement, highly atypical of
chemical plants, increased interaction dramatically. One manager said, "I'd say we are real family based..."

The removal of a management layer left a "flatter" organization in which employees in remaining hierarchical levels found themselves working more closely with one another than before. Only engineers and first line supervisors separated the wage earners from the management team. In addition, as length of time in the job increased because of reduced opportunities in the smaller hierarchy, groups of employees had more time to become cohesive units.

Systems. Anchored in the concept of the "Valued Contributor", the Canadian Rating and Ranking system differentiated much less severely between salaried workers than the American method, thus dampening the sense of competition evident under the old plan. By underscoring the similarity rather than the uniqueness of employees, Canadian management set a climate favorable to closer affiliation between co-workers. An American who worked in both systems tied together the notion of the "Valued Contributor" and a reduced sense of competition in this passage:

That is one of the luxuries...you get of that Valued Contributor group is what you are looking for is not "What are the guy's failing(s) that put him below somebody else's feet on the standing totem pole. Instead, you look for "What are the ways that you can help maximize that guy's contribution and help him to see his contribution such that it gives him the satisfaction to want to do more?" The competitive spirit is just a very different one (here)...

Group Process. Early on the Canadian management team members engaged in guided team building efforts to help them reach their goal of becoming a self-managing team. Members saw the group as a place to learn, to development, to
support each other. The latter two constructs were particularly inimical to
competition. Three section heads tied the reduced competition to their developmental
efforts. One said:

...we all understood what we're trying to achieve as individuals. So
there's no question about...does that guy really want my job or not?
Well I know he is (does). But it's not a matter of him trying to get it
from you. He's aspiring to that role as I'm aspiring to something
different. It's not a competition. It's a help in that way.

This man distinguished between a desired position and the person presently occupying
it. Competing for a position does not have the personalized, antagonistic undertone
that "competing for your job" does. Another manager corroborated the reduced
competitive air in the division, attributing it in part to the plant manager's efforts:

As a leader of the organization, he's done a lot to try and create more
of a Leadership Team of people that want to help each other, that want
to support each other. So it's become less threatening. A combination
of that and I mean I am and I was always in competition with all the
other section heads. But again, taking a different perspective on things,
I don't feel nearly as threatened or as vulnerable by leaving myself
open in some areas.

Paradoxically, even though he vied with peers for the same scarce jobs, he did not feel
threatened sharing very personal information with them. The reality of competition
did not go away, but again the ego-involved, personalized edge dropped away. They
grew to know and like each other personally, thus closing the distance which fierce
competition needs. The third section head spoke more about reduced inter-unit
competition rather than interpersonal rivalry:

...you might have some friends at work, that sort of thing. But in large
part...groups didn't mingle well together, that sort of thing....they would
compete within themselves and...for example the mechanics versus the
operations folks throw rocks at each other. And that still occurs today,
but I think it’s improving. And I look at again the concept of some couple of things we’re trying to do which is safety support net.

The one American manager who worked in both countries supported the notion that competition differed in the two locations:

...The (area where the US plant is) is a much more competitive environment, and I don’t know any way to explain it other than to have to live in both. It’s just very competitive environment in terms of making a contribution and especially at the managerial level...It’s really striking in a lot of ways. To me of all the striking differences between a (plant from each site) is the competitive spirit between people in parts of the organization and that ambition. That’s just a strikingly different character.

The highly personal bent of team building activities helped break down hierarchical role relationships between plant manager and section head, section head and engineer, section head and first line supervisor. Employees came to know each other as people rather than relating more strictly from prescribed roles. For example, the plant manager attended group appraisals as member, not boss. The operations section head used the term "equal member" to describe his status in the shift leader team composed of first line supervisors. The technical section head saw himself as a facilitator rather than judge and work assigner for his subordinates. More personally, in stark contrast to the US managers, these managers shared truly private feelings about work and even their home lives. As a consequence, they treated each other more like friends and less like titles.

In summary, the primary assumption underlying relationships among salaried employees in the Canadian plant was that co-workers are colleagues, not rivals. They worked and interacted with each other on the basis of mutual dependence rather than
independence. For example, they said a kind word to each other on a tough day or helped each other out by actually easing a member's work load temporarily. They asked for help from one another. They met together in groups to discuss one of work's most sensitive issues, performance evaluation. They not only complimented each other but also critiqued each other in a supportive way. They even offered tips about how to reach future career objectives. In contrast the Americans worked in a system which amplified competition.

Structure. A perennial complaint of managers and employees is the ability of bureaucracies to slow down decision making. Decisions affecting people way down the hierarchy may be controlled by those closer to its zenith. This situation described human resource systems at the American plant. The larger American plant, part of divisional and corporate hierarchy, was embedded in the much larger hierarchy of the parent firm. The parent firm dictated major policy guidelines for the human resource systems mentioned throughout this chapter, for example the overall direction of reward systems. Thus, at the plant level, managers lacked the flexibility to change that their Canadian counterparts had. They could tinker with the innards of the rating and ranking system but never replace it wholesale. They were able to add peer, customer, and subordinate input into performance appraisals.

Systems. The Chemco human resource systems converged in a way that encouraged rivalry rather than colleagueship. Mentioned previously, the highly differentiating appraisal system finely graded peers by talent. The secretive selection system left employees to speculate and gossip among themselves about the bases for
its decisions. The career development system coincided with the others, enacting an analogous ranking process by finding better positions for those headed to the top. In the midst of all of this, managers needed ways to minimize the conflict. In one case, at the time a second line was promoted to department head, another contender received a lateral move to a nearby plant. While the winner rejoiced, the loser was whisked away to a new position, a move that spared him and management from dealing with any unresolved feelings.

GROUP PROCESS

Recall that initiating consensus was problematic for the US plant management team. Colleagues may find it laborious, but they can eventually come to consensus on issues. Rivals find consensus much more trying since it smacks of "giving in", being persuaded by others, ultimately sharing the same viewpoint or sharing power. One way rivals succeed is by differentiating themselves from others, by advertising how their uniqueness is more advantageous to the firm than someone else's. So staying a bit aloof and maintaining some "proprietary" viewpoints are to one's advantage. This was especially apparent among managers, much less so among technical professionals at Chemco.

A former second line who was working again on the technical ladder had an informative perspective on competition. Having seen both, he commented on the difference in competition on the technical and management career tracks. Referring to the technical field, he said:

It's not the competition where I need to do something more than somebody else so that I'll be recognized instead of them. It's not the
question where there's one slot and three people, so one of us is going to get picked and the other two will not. We (professionals) can all progress together and learn together...

He also commented that criteria for technical excellence were more clear cut than those for managers. I would add that they were much less open to social criteria than managers' performance criteria. He went on to say that the competition for the title of senior engineer, the most coveted prize, was muted. Among many process design engineers were just one or two senior engineers. These people generally stood out over time and were acclaimed by their peers.

As in many large, traditional firms, competition must unfold decorously, and Chemco's rivals were a quietly competitive bunch, not given to unseemly outbursts. Several circumstances reduced the potential for negative affect associated with competition and held this etiquette in place. Conversely, no strong forces countered with positive affect. The control paradigm of the Divisional Form (Mintzberg, 1983) fits hand in glove with a chemical plant's technical need for tight control of plant changes. This was evidenced in the local technical dictum, "Don't screw up!" I maintain that an analogous social dictum, "Don't blow up!", capped any untoward social expression. The "cool" second line or department head can handle any social situation, even losing out to a peer for a desired promotion. Blowing up could indicate a chink in the interpersonal armor as if one could not handle the heat of being a high performer. Such a norm helped would-be managers bring their behavior in line with the norms governing the technical system.
Another safeguard for second lines lay in the curious fact that they were their own best friends and the most "groupy" of the several engineering management levels. They far outnumbered department heads, acted the most like a group as pointed out in the case, and shared a common lot in that they were, in effect, dependent on each other for social life at work. They competed and became friends at the same time.

A source conserving the appropriate etiquette derived from the fact that, as enacted, the US mandate in no way countered the rationality that imbues engineering work and overshadows the emotional content of work life. Engineering itself draws heavily on analytical rather than interpersonal skills, and participative interventions tended to be cognitive as well. The quality field is filled with quantitative technology appealing to engineers. Strategic planning is definitely a cognitive topic as is STS work redesign.

In closing, it is not that these men and women were unfriendly toward each other. They were cordial, and some were good friends. But they were less intimate with each other at work than their Canadian counterparts and much less likely to talk about non-work issues except in pairs or after work on the ride home or perhaps over a drink. And some did regard the environment as emotionally cool as pointed out in Chapter Seven. On balance, this plant's ambience was more attuned to the competition of rivals than the dialogue of colleagues. As we have seen, colleagues participate in different ways than do rivals.

Endnotes

1. The third item does not seem to be an issue at Chemco. Department level managers participate in a series of formal, discipline specific meetings called "networks". For example, managers of Technical Departments in each plant belong to the Technical
Managers' Network. One of their agenda items at yearly, worldwide meetings is career development for those they supervise. They also contact each other between times via phone, a computer network, and attendance at other, non-network meetings.

2. In fairness to the managers at the American plant, diversity training, begun prior to my interviews, has potential to alter selection decisions over time. Managers I knew personally were greatly affected by the diversity training both in attitude and behavior. Because position planning itself is firmly implanted in the culture and demanded by the parent firm, there is little likelihood of even a partial switch to open posting. This limit notwithstanding, the Chemco managers are bright, well intentioned people. As they shift the definition of HIPO MAN to include more diverse peoples, the composition of management teams and selection teams will change as will team dynamics. They will begin to address issues such as the meaning of participation in selection and career development decisions as well as how lower level employees might know that management acts as a team.
Chapter 9: Leadership and Group Behavior

In this chapter, I describe how each plant manager deals with control in his plant. I think link this stylistic issue with three other key topics for each management team: 1. stage of group development attained; 2. level of skills in working as a group; and 3. the team's standing with respect to Chemco's theme of control versus empowerment.

The plant manager is the last link in the chain of command extending from corporate headquarters to divisional headquarters and, finally, into the plant itself. Exploring the leadership methods of the two managers reveals their impact on participation in teams and the extent to which their own teams follow a collective or fragmented agenda.

The plant manager sits atop the plant pyramid as ultimate judge of affairs in his factory. The formal hierarchy provides the structure from which his power flows. Two important points about the plant manager bear mentioning. First, just as he (or she) has final authority within his sphere, he accepts the legitimacy of headquarter's authority over him, despite any disagreements he may have with them. He wields considerable power but is not immune from it either. As Shepard (1965) points out:

In effect, every member at each level in the pyramid makes a bargain whereby he agrees to allow the level above to determine his behavior within limits, in exchange for certain resources he needs for survival and well-being (p. 1120).

One of the other managers commented on the power of plant managers:
It's interesting how much autonomy these plant managers get to really run their organization how they see fit as long as they get the bottom line and they make things happen and get things done. But in terms of their style ... they have a big influence on the organization. I kind of view them as the old governors in the Roman Empire. The governor would go out, and he was on his own and (would) report in....

Secondly, he has options about how he exercises authority— as stern autocrat, benevolent dictator, laissez faire "do nothing", or participative manager, to name a few. Based on an analysis of these two men, I developed the proposition stated below:

**Proposition: The Plant Manager and Control**

To address the issue of control, the Canadian plant manager built personal relationships with and between his section heads and engaged them in consensus decision making. This approach, in concert with a three year team building effort, resulted in their becoming a full-fledged self-managing team. The American plant manager exercised control primarily through personal authority although he used consensus decision making as he learned and grappled with it. His history of a more authoritative style combined with lack of ease with consensus decision making kept this team in the manager-led mode.

I turn now to a discussion of the Canadian plant manager.

**THE PLANT MANAGER FROM THE CANADIAN CASE**

**Shared Control Through Personal Relations**

...he's always trying to create an atmosphere where it's ok to talk to each other, to try and support each other.

The Canadian plant manager believed building constructive personal relations between group members provided the basis for control of the plant. Instead of controlling through personal authoritative acts, he shared control with his section heads
by building trusting and open relations with them. For over three years, he and his section heads dedicated regular time to developmental activities. Even employees in the other division mentioned this engaging, charismatic man by name when asked to describe a high performing manager. Employees transferred from yet another division to work in this plant because of its innovative character, fueled in large measure by this man.

**Management Meetings**

As mentioned in the case, both his seven month sabbatical and his first team experience had a forceful impact on the plant manager's future actions. For him, the 1986 mandate signaled his clear break with the past, and he let his direct reports know at the outset that he was going to run things differently. A section head spelled out:

the plant managers's position:

We’ve spent a lot of time over the last few years really trying to work on our meeting process to try to really behave as a true team in the meetings. (The plant manager) *very early on...made it very clear that he would not settle for the old way of doing things.* The old management meetings around here were basically people would lobby (him) before the meetings, saying...this is what we should do what...maybe bad mouth another section head...in the end we would look to (him) to make the final decision. Like if there was a conflict of views, well that was (his) job to make the decision. But, he made it very clear early on that we’re going to succeed as a team or we’re not going to succeed. And we’re going to make these decisions to where every one can live with them. And we confront and resolve conflict that may be there, and that we work through it together and that there was no way he was going to let us off the hook by solving our problems for us...

Our meetings...are still far from the ideal. But *we have come an awful long way in making decisions more collaboratively and really*
allowing everyone the chance to express their feelings on every issue...we do make efforts to try to bring people into those decisions (emphasis added).

The plant manager practiced what he preached, modeling the openness and directness he wanted to encourage among his section heads. A section head talked about how the plant manager himself shared openly:

...he’s very open, very...he shares his issues that are going on at home; he shares his issues that are going on at work...he’s always trying to create an atmosphere where it’s ok to talk to each other, to try and support each other.

**A Key to Shared Control: Group Performance Evaluations**

The particular performance evaluation practices developed and used in this group give substance to my claim of shared control. Below, the plant manager described the meetings:

People can be very honest, non-threatening. There’s a relationship that develops between the players, almost a personal relationship. Like we’ve gotten to the point now one of the exercises we did in December was we actually did our so called appraisal review as a team.

Researcher: Your appraisal reviews?

Yep, instead of me doing it one-on-one with the people who work for me, we actually came to the meeting prepared with questions like "What am I trying to accomplish here?" (emphasis added).

Without belaboring the group performance appraisals and career development meetings discussed earlier, four relevant points stand out in the context of group leadership.

First, the plant manager spoke about how personal the relationships had become.

Secondly, no one interviewed resisted his attendance as a member instead of leader of
the group. He had his say, and others did not give his view added weight. By contrast, in the other Canadian division’s management team, members did not always know how to take their plant manager’s comments, at times misconstruing his statements for decisions. As a section head in that division said:

(The plant manager) has to "get over" the sensitivity about influencing the group with his opinion, and the group has to be mature enough to trust him that he is expressing an opinion, not an agenda we have to come to. Our team is not all the way there yet.

Thirdly, the appraisal sessions broke down hierarchical relationships even more. Appraisal typically reinforces status difference between boss and subordinate and stimulates competition between peers. By contrast, these peer critiques actually promoted closer relationships and reinforced their status as colleagues, not rivals.

Fourth, and most importantly, they covered both strong and weak points of performance in the sessions. Expressing constructive criticism maps directly to the concept of group leadership of the plant. That managers engaged in straight talk without glossing over problematic data about each other trained them to bypass the "no bad news" syndrome. Psychological safety combined with trust in other members meant that these managers could bring up problems and react quickly before they became large, perplexing, costly, or dangerous. They could also discuss innovative, partially formed, ideas without fear of ridicule from peers. Thus, the capability for straight talk affected both the quality of plant operations and effective pursuit of business goals.
Shared Control Dispersed

The section heads in this management team created numerous teams in the plant, giving evidence of dispersion of shared control. I simply list them below since they were discussed in the case.

- **Engineering Support Groups.** The twenty plus professional engineers were organized into four self-regulating teams of four to six persons each. They determined work assignments and coordinated all project efforts among themselves. They also conducted peer appraisal reviews and career planning sessions.

- **A technical project team composed of all levels of hierarchy including and below section head finished a major expansion project in six days rather than the "normal" eighteen days of similar past projects. This multi-level team planned the project, selected and ordered equipment, did the design work and stuck it in the ground.**

- **Cohesive shifts.** An operations section head established more continuity among process technicians on operating units by changing the procedure which had allowed some of the wage personnel and/or the shift supervisor covering a unit to change daily.

These instances of transfer of learning show that the section heads had learned to act independently of the plant manager.

**Influencing Others Toward Participation**

As a final piece of evidence for shared control, note that the plant manager prided himself on his gift for influencing other managers to toward a more participative viewpoint:

I'm really proud that I'm able to do that. I'm able to influence large groups of people to do things differently...And influence because of me, not because of my position. That's the important part of that message. It's easy to influence as a department manager and not because of who
you are, what you stand for. I have actually seen some of the people who work for me change in the last three years. There are some individuals that have dramatically changed their management style to use that expression. They are not the same as they were four years ago.

Researcher: From what to what?

I’d say from a more control oriented to the more participative. I don’t know if those are the right words or not, but they have changed as people. They do not manage and work with people the way they did four years ago. Their whole view of people has changed.

A section head corroborated this by talking about his own changed approach:

I’m very satisfied with the position I’m in in the organization...I would...strongly point at the last probably four or five years where I think my work experience has really changed my whole life; it’s...become a very rewarding, fulfilling experience.

The plant manager wanted to draw the best out of each individual and get his or her commitment to plant goals. The technical section head explained how he himself did this with his engineers:

I guess this is our organizational model almost boiled down to nothing. It’s to make it very clear where we are going and what’s important, what we value. And secondly, develop our people to the absolute greatest extent to increase their capability and leverage as much as we possibly can...But, within those two contexts, the people themselves really determine what needs to be worked on (emphasis added).

When clarity about the vision exists, a manager can distribute decision making widely because employees see the relationship of the decision to the vision (Bennis and Nanus, 1985). The Canadian plant manager accomplished this by empowering his section heads while still ensuring control of plant operations.
THE PLANT MANAGER FROM THE US CASE

The Benevolent Autocrat Learning about Consensus:

...he's got values that go to the center of the earth...

In this plant the plant manager himself commanded through his personal authority. I referred to his management team as manager-led (Hackman, 1990) in the case, meaning that the plant manager himself exerted a high degree of control, and department heads participated in a more limited way than was true in the Canadian team. A likeable, knowledgeable man, the plant manager supported initiatives for teamwork, specifically through the quality improvement process. He was especially fond of methods that increased participation for wage earners. He promoted consensus management in principle, yet, as noted in the case, past experience restricted his ability to apply it. Having spent his entire working life at Chemco and done very well in this hierarchical, traditional system, turning on a dime and embracing participative management practices proved difficult for him as it was for many. Consensus management, a primary "buzz word" in this management staff group, pointed up his contradictory tendencies. Here is what he said:

I think it's changing...it's...something I wrestle with personally...going through this diversity training with a number of other people from different cultures...you learn that potentially there is more than one truth...My whole life, I've believed there's one truth, there's one best answer, and if you know what the best answer is, you ought to implement it. What you find is that's not always best received...I think we vacillate depending on issues, but I think the frequency of issues that get worked by consensus is greater as time goes on. Now when I
say that we’re by consensus...I’d say we probably strive more for consensus than we do a dictatorial...approach. But we’re not totally consensus.

From my personal knowledge of him, I sensed that the diversity workshop was a watershed in his adult development, further opening him up to changes in his management style. With affection, I dub him the benevolent, consensus-seeking autocrat.

**How He Enacted Control**

Whereas the Canadian plant manager enacted control through developing personal relationships with his section heads, the American plant manager mixed consensual and autocratic elements but clearly retained his grasp on the plant. He is a man who stated his needs in an unambiguous way on issues, large or small, about which he felt strongly -- his "funny buttons" as one department head referred to them. Yet, he tempered this behavior with a growing application of consensus decision-making as he acknowledged above and as his department heads noted in the case. He was malleable on some issues, firm on others. He knew he needed to change in the post 1986 period as he noted in this passage:

...you just couldn’t have as much control...as much say in matters. There just had to be more delegation...and you relied on people more. You just had to rely on people more.

He intended to move from a more manager centered to group centered form of control. He sometimes found this difficult in practice.
Management Meetings

Unintentionally, he sometimes disguised his strongly held views. Rather than issue direct orders, he might let his managers come around to his viewpoint (and decision) as they "did battle" with him on specific issues. As stated in the case, members of the management team at times sensed that he would simply wait them out in meetings or over time until they "saw" his point of view. A department head explained how this worked:

...(he) will feel strongly that something needs to happen and bring it up as an issue, but will not even state his opinion. Will ask questions if people aren't saying it needs to happen. Game where trying to play consensus game, waiting for someone to reach right answer, but he already has right answer. Can't put issues to rest unless we reach his answer. (paraphrase)

In comparison with the Canadian team, the meetings of the American team were more centered around the plant manager. Yet there were times when the team used a consensus process. This alternating back and forth shows that the plant manager was engaged in his own thought process, working out how he felt about retaining control and about sharing it with others via consensus. As a result, management team members as a group experienced confusion about exactly when consensus could and should be used. He could not offer but so much leadership on this issue because of his own ambivalence about it and inexperience with it. Coexistence of control oriented practices and consensus oriented practices kept the management team from
reaching a point where they more naturally began to think "we" or "team" as the Canadian managers began to do.

As stated in the case, the plant manager made a convenient target. Department heads in this team were strong willed as well. One of them indicted himself while commenting on consensus and leadership:

...this plant tries to do a lot of stuff by consensus...I’m not saying that input shouldn’t be gotten into that (strategic direction). But...in the end, the leader has to set the charge as to where we’re heading, what’s important, what should we be working on. Where does that person want to see us three years, five years down the road?

The Canadian plant manager might rejoinder that a management group is perfectly capable of coming up with a joint direction for a plant once members shed the notion that the decision must be vested in one particular individual. In fact, this joint decision making raises commitment to the plan. In the quotation above, the individualistic point of view associated with an autocratic leadership style plainly comes into view. On the key issue, one person should make the decision for the group.

Younger managers in department level positions as well as up and coming second lines did not get there without a large dose of strong willed behavior. They could have benefitted from someone with a strongly participative style to challenge to their thinking. This plant manager could not do that. He was not immersed enough in the idea and practice of teams to see all the opportunities to enhance teamwork while serving production goals as well. Although the first OD specialist worked with them,
he moved to headquarters in less than two years' time. The second OD specialist also worked with the management team for a time but then became heavily involved in the work redesign project.

**Details, Details, Details!**

Like many technical managers, the plant manager found it difficult to stay away from the "hands on" part of the work. Upon his arrival on the job in 1986, safety problems legitimized his penchant for keeping tabs on the details and poking around throughout the organization, especially in operating units. This trend continued, and, during my internship, managers almost without exception muttered about his preoccupation with details, his over involvement in day to day operational activities. This had decreased but was still an issue when I interviewed in 1991. Detail orientation notwithstanding, the OD specialist used to say of him, "He can run the hell out of a plant" which is what Chemco had trained him to do and wanted him to do. His high needs for personal involvement in some decisions had certain consequences.

Operating department heads and second line supervisors in operations must have been put off by his habit of frequently checking in with them for information. Some could have felt as if he did not trust them, regardless of his intent. On the other hand, from his viewpoint, he was ultimately responsible for the plant. There was another side to his detail orientation. He enjoyed getting involved in tactical decisions as much or more than strategic ones. For example, he took headquarters' quality
program and had the training classes and quality teams up and running quickly. However, he would have found it less to his liking and tougher to develop a comprehensive participative strategy for the future. As a department head said:

I sometimes think we and (the plant manager) ... make decisions on the wrong things but don’t make decisions on the things that we need to be making decisions on...

He was saying they all have the tendency to get mired in the tactical rather than the strategic.

ACHIEVED STAGE OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

Proposition: Trust vs. Power and Influence

By cultivating conditions of trust, openness, and safety, the Canadian team reached the group developmental stage of trust/intimacy. The American team never reached this stage, struggling instead to resolve issues of power and influence.

The Canadian Team. Two pieces of concrete evidence substantiate the claim that the Canadian team members trusted each other and reached the group developmental stage labeled intimacy (Neilsen, 1988). First, establishing the support net concept, even if in its early stages, reflected a marked shift from self-reliance to mutual dependence. Team members blurred the boundary between the public and private life to help each other with personal and family problems. The second data point is the group performance appraisal sessions. Here managers spoke bluntly but with good will about each other’s shortcomings as well as accomplishments.

Managing the sensitive issues inherent in this evaluative process indicated movement
through and beyond power and influence issues. The team did not just leapfrog to this stage of trust.

*The Learning Group.* I noted in the case that one of this group's stages was called "Learning in the Group, Decision Making in Individual Sections". I characterized this third step as one in which the group highlighted learning about leadership in their meetings and left the actual decision-making for section heads to deal with alone back in their sections. The group designated meetings as a time to be in a learning mode, not in a "manager" mode. Enjoying the sense of inclusion based on the shared agenda of learning about leadership provided the time necessary for the "learning, sharing group" to develop. The less obvious result of this pattern was to delay coming to terms with inevitable conflicts that coordinating across sections would bring out. The idea of "team" took hold while they were all together but faded when they were alone. Naturally, their pattern of avoiding conflict came cloaked in individualism -- making decisions about running the sections *alone* without coordination! This is especially slippery to see since the section heads spent their "alone" time developing great kinds of teamwork. As pointed out in the case, the two section heads in operations and technical units coordinated their activities anyway based on having worked with each other over time and on their having been "friends since university". Remember that personal friendship was the plant manager's ideal for group membership. The group overlooked this serendipitous example of how to work together. Later, they realized the systems theory principle that changes in one
subsystem affect other subsystems and need to be coordinated. A section head summed it up like this:

So it's how do you create change that's right for the business, not necessarily right for an individual group. And it's those points that are driving us I think back together to manage as a team and manage the decisions as a team.

The American Team -- (Counter)Dependency. The American plant manager's authoritative and detail oriented style stimulated dependency and counterdependency reactions among his subordinates. For example, by badgering operating department heads about details such as the amount of overtime worked on units during a weekend, he treated them as if they were out of control, to use a quality metaphor, and needed his intervention to restore them to control. In addition, they might have perceived his continued visits for information as a lack of trust in their abilities to run their departments. He in turn probably saw this as simply part of his duty as the one person ultimately responsible for the plant. Just this sort of behavior stimulates (counter) dependent responses -- grumbling to others about the plant manager, trying to be out of the office when he came by, "misplacing" information temporarily (all invented responses, not from the data). That they did not find a way to "call" him on his behavior and reach an independent or interdependent stance with him about it testifies to lingering authority relations issues and conflict in this management group. This flavor of authority issues and a developmental point characterized by power and
influence come through when comparing the way the two teams operated. A second
line supervisor saw it like this:

(The plant manager) is a strong personality, very strong desires, but
supervisors (department heads) who work for him play a very important
role in leveling (his) influence. Temper his strong desires through logic
and working behind scenes among selves to come up with consensus in
own group, then convince (him). Not everything done way (he) wants
it. Latitude to department managers (paraphrase).

The plant manager himself spoke about his ambivalence with consensus. He was,
however, an easy target, a fledgling candidate to lead a group in the use of consensus
decision making. At least some of his department heads admitted to being quite
strong willed themselves. They could easily have projected their own difficulties with
consensus onto the plant manager. The upshot was a team with substantial unspoken
conflicts, indicated by a decision making process which worked smoothly at times and
not at others. A second line saw their way of helping each other out as a form of
bartering:

Not much opportunity to see how they work between themselves.
Perception is that they don’t work as much by consensus as much as by
bartering, e.g., I’ll do things for you and you do things for me....
Sometimes I think they keep score to keep even....One was with regard
to customer contacts. We have customers who want to come visit, who
want information, want us to visit them, whatever...Operating
supervisors...were complaining about being overloaded and wanted to
give up that. No doubt they are overloaded...more so than anyone else
in plant. (Our department head) agreed to take on responsibility within
our group with caveat that in return he wants instrument technician
dedicated to material balance. So, I’ll do something for you, but you
need to do something for me.
Without being too rough on this very common practice of bartering, it does hint of primary mentality behavior that would not be apparent in a group in which the members were colleagues who supported one another. In contrast, think back to the description of the new way in which the Canadian plant manager ran his meetings:

The plant manager) very early on...made it very clear that he would not settle for the old way of doing things. The old management meetings around here were basically people would lobby (him) before the meetings, saying...this is what we should do what...maybe bad mouth another section head...in the end we would look to (him) to make the final decision. Like if there was a conflict of views...But, he made it very clear early on that we're going to succeed as a team or we're not going to succeed. And we're going to make these decisions to where every one can live with them. And we confront and resolve conflict that may be there, and that we work through it together...Our meetings...are still far from the ideal. But...we have come an awful long way in making decisions more collaboratively and really allowing everyone the chance to express their feelings on every issue...

This plant manager sent a crystal clear message from the start that he would address conflict head on.

**GROUP SKILLS AS A PARTICIPATIVE COMPETENCY**

**Proposition:** Initiative and Group Skills

The intense emphasis on imparting "initiative, ownership, and a sense of urgency" to management candidates produced HIPO MEN and other highly talented managers who were superb at leading and "doing" but who often lacked the requisite skills to follow and to be effective members when working in a group.

Through their three year team building and personal growth experience, the Canadian managers learned these skills for effective participation in groups.
Chemco was bursting at the seams with doers. Recall the manager who spoke of "cookie cutter" development. As a consequence of the power of the HIPO MAN model in shaping career development practices, the "cookie cutter" stamped out managers raised on initiative, ownership, and a sense of urgency. "We drill it into them," one second line said. The manager who described the cookie cutter phenomenon ascribed four important outcomes to it, all related to individualistic behavior. The cookie cutter stamped out employees who:

1. **lead and act but can not follow:**
   
   ...we probably have a tendency to want to cookie cutter what good performance looks like...they are one sided. They are very strong but all the same characteristics. Or they tend to be. One way it might show up is too many (leaders) and not enough (followers)...

2. **keep up such a pattern of almost indiscriminate achieving that they have trouble staying in their organizational roles:**

   ...people are dissatisfied frequently to play a role...Let me give you an example...as (a) Department Head, I have a role to play...that is not...to determine what direction we head from a business perspective...I have a very execution oriented role...this does not play into my natural interests (chuckles)...this is a constant struggle that I personally have...If I don't play this role properly, then we're going to suffer...I don't see everybody looking at it that way.

3. **act like corporate "ball hogs". They think they must make every decision and always make the right decision:**

   (they) think the key to their personal success is to score all the points. They hog the ball...The work equivalent is people who believe...that for them to be successful is to demonstrate first that they can make every decision and secondly that they can make them all right (correctly).

4. **lack group process skills.**
Because it's somewhat cookie cutter, when we get into a group situation, we frequently have not a good balance of skills brought to the party...as a result of everybody kind of aspiring to that same thing...I do frequently see us having too many of the same approach... you get into a group...You need a Devil's Advocate; you need a doer; you need an idea person...You need somebody who cheers the team up when they get down. We frequently are missing some of those roles...

Everybody's kind of coming at it from the same angle of attack. A way the diversity thing shows up, I think.

These four skills show a pattern. The first three --leading to excess, role breaking, and ball hogging -- when enacted with a bit less zeal, cluster together and exemplify the skills in the action taking quadrant of the Executive Skills Profile (Boyatzis and Kolb, 1991). Group process skills are representative of the interpersonal quadrant. This rift between action oriented and interpersonal skills is consistent with the variation noted already between the two plants.

Chemco's penchant for individual action bred an excess of leaders, a tendency exacerbated by the amount of work to be done and the unrelenting emphasis on action indigenous to plant environments. This brand of active "leadership" certainly generated performance which any firm wants and which is especially in synchrony with the harried ambience of a plant. Ball hogs were a special case of leaders, the penultimate individualists, always leading and always right. These were Chemco's relatively few superachievers, the kind who step on others as they ascend to the top.

Individualism also played out as continued emphasis on initiative, going after challenges wherever they were, (as taught and rewarded early on) and not enough attention to one's organizational role and the specific duties which went with that.
This extra-role activity could actually serve as an innovative way to bust through the bureaucratic constraints of circumscribed roles and to attack work based on people's true interests and the plant's critical tasks if it were done in a planned, orchestrated way. As it was, however, this behavior had the potential to cloud clear lines of responsibility, muddle coordination, and encourage stepping on each other's turf. It created conditions unfavorable for development of teams except when highly visible interdependencies overrode this blind spot.

Developing high performers is a necessity in for-profit firms, and Chemco's best had a phenomenal ability to bore through complex task work. But doing so to excess came at the cost of managers with limited group skills. When zealous achievers worked in groups, many of them found it tough to be mere followers, adopting some of the well documented roles which effective groups need. Nor could one expect the kinds of self-managing groups the Canadians had, barring some sort of major intervention. Another cost accrued from social conformity, the perpetuation of like thinking, like acting people -- the "diversity thing" as one manager put it. These products of the Chemco cookie cutter will have to unlearn much of what they know to become highly participative managers, one of the main objectives of the 1986 mandate.

**CONTROL VERSUS EMPOWERMENT**

**Proposition:** Manager-Led vs Self-Managing Teams
The activities of the manager-led management team in the American plant were congruent with the control paradigm, essential to effective operation of a Machine Bureaucracy.

In contrast, by using a team building strategy, the self-managing Canadian team empowered its managers. Sharing power, internalizing control, and using the group itself for development all point to collaboration and consensus practices.

In the US plant, two major ingredients came together to favor the perpetuation of control rather than empowerment of managers. The structure of the firm and the style of the plant manager guided the kinds of participation available to this plant.

As a successful product of this traditional, hierarchical system, the American plant manager had internalized its ways of thinking and acting. His style, even though changing toward the more participative, retained a high degree of control. Five years into the change process, his best efforts were laudable but still reflected his past socialization into the firm's values. He had been trained to run a plant expertly, not to think up a new paradigm for running the plant. In addition, his preference for involvement in tactical matters encouraged instituting programs within the existing structure rather than dreaming up new structures for the plant. The story of how structure reinforced control is a bit more complex.

At the US plant, a fine learning environment existed in which many positive kinds of teamwork occurred (quality teams and follow-up activities). Managers made changes representing the best practices possible within the tight confines of bureaucratic organizing (the partnering effort, a pilot STS project). But participation in the US plant ultimately meant designing team-oriented applications which increased
knowledge or skills and provided some business information while preserving key decisions and control of rewards for those representing the status quo. Participation came down to trying to gain higher commitment from employees for buy-in to the status quo (Pasmore and Fagans, 1993). This may at first seem untrue until one remembers that the status quo itself was shifting slightly, as orchestrated by headquarters.

Major participative efforts came from two sources, headquarters and interested individuals at the plant. First, headquarters said, "It's time to do quality, and you will do it the Crosby way". Secondly, interested people on site instituted significant improvements. The special assignment manager was one of these "instigators" but not the only one. But these initiatives, whether educational or actual changes, in no way challenged headquarters' authority. For example, no one pushed headquarters to let the plant run as its own profit center, making its own strategic decisions about markets and products. The management team did not encourage the second lines or engineers to hold their own performance appraisals among themselves with the appropriate department head sitting in to have his or her equal say. Even the special assignment manager, when adding an additional second line to his department, used a structural solution, never thinking to try switching to self-managing teams of engineers and technicians as an alternative (nor did I and I was advising him at the time!). Ideas such as these, particularly the profit center idea, would have had little chance of
success because of Chemco’s organizational form, the Machine Bureaucracy (Mintzberg, 1983).

Remember from Chapter Four that Chemco shifted from a matrix form with product lines and specific functions to product groups. Acknowledging contingency theory (Morgan, 1986), the new configuration illustrated management’s struggle to find a better fit with the organization’s changing environment. Intending to be more market sensitive, Chemco shifted to a Divisionalized Form (Mintzberg, 1983) in which “divisions are created according to markets served and are then given control over the operating functions required to serve these markets” (p.216). In a bit of creative naming, the author lets on that Form is not content, and Chemco is divisionalized in a most circumscribed manner. Mintzberg (1983) writes that:

...the Divisionalized Form works best with Machine Bureaucracy structures in its divisions, and...drives these structures...toward the Machine Bureaucracy form (p.219).

The amount of decentralization can be quite limited, from a few managers at corporate HQ to a few at divisional HQ. While granting decision-making power to divisions, corporate HQ coordinates by monitoring quantitative performance measures (return on investment, profit and sales growth). The form which most lends itself to this standardization of output variables is the Machine Bureaucracy with its easily operationalized goals. In particular, high reliability operations (Weick, 1987; Roberts, 1990) such as a petrochemical plant are called safety bureaucracies (Mintzberg, 1983).
Given the chemical plant's values of control, reliability, secrecy and safety, this organizing form helps explain the theme of control versus empowerment. Mintzberg (1983) notes that

...the Machine Bureaucracy is a structure with an obsession -- namely control. A control mentality pervades it from top to bottom (p. 167).

Control was a preeminent value at Chemco regardless of level in the hierarchy. At the plant, engineers had to assure the integrity of capital intensive equipment and the safety of employees and the community. At divisional Headquarters, managers maintained a performance control system to monitor plant outputs as they in turn were monitored by corporate headquarters. Positive performance meant retaining control of decision making associated with each level of the firm. For our purposes, the punch line is that participation had to fit into this strict control paradigm, not the other way around! Thus, headquarters dictated a quality program, and the management team developed quality teams at the bottom of the hierarchy where they could be easily controlled.

The Canadian Plant

At the Canadian plant the interaction of structure, systems, and plant manager's style favored empowerment of managers. The Canadian plant manager's sabbatical prior to entering this job indicated his openness to considering how he might manage differently. Early in his tenure he had a successful experience in a multi-level problem solving group. Structural factors were in his favor too.
Although the Canadian parent firm was every bit as bureaucratic as the American side of Chemco, this division was a small one in the eyes of its parent firm.

The human resource manager said:

The chemicals division is a small division, so we've had opportunity to experiment bit more, be a bit more liberal in our approach to things, to try some different ideas. I think we chased sort of the Deming approach to quality long before anybody else did.

In addition, this particular plant had a maverick reputation and was seen as a source of new ideas to nearby plants. Given these conditions, the plant manager took a particular road toward empowerment, a road inimical to the choices many managers would make. Schein (1988) notes that:

One of the greatest fears U.S. managers have of groups is that responsibility and accountability will become diffused. We need to be able to identify who is accountable for what, even when the realities of the task make shared responsibility more appropriate (p. 382).

The plant manager did not have this fear and in fact did just the opposite.

Herb Shepard (1965) was one of the first to note that participants in laboratory training groups frequently learn for the first time that qualitatively different social relationships are possible:

Most of our population grew up trained to the scheduled discipline of industrial, bureaucratic, and scientific life, willing to spend their lives obeying some people and commanding others, sufficiently starved for love and power to be willing to devote energy and creativity to climbing the status and money ladder and excelling others (p. 261).

The Canadian group was able to buffer itself from the central bureaucracy long enough to experiment socially and reach a new level of personal relationships through
their three plus year developmental journey. In essence the Canadians shifted the
locus of control from the plant manager only to the plant manger and his section
heads. In turn the section heads used this new model of leadership to concoct novel
applications for their sections. The shift to a participative paradigm received a
decided boost from altered reward and compensation systems, unavailable to the
Americans, as well as a maverick heritage and the site's relative obscurity.

Managers create more empowering relationships when they stop treating each
other strictly in instrumental ways—what you can do for me and what I must do for
you. These managers passed beyond the purely instrumental by personal sharing with
each other and by beginning to care about each other as people as they developed their
safety support net concept. They legitimized conversation about each others'
backstage as well as front stage worlds. (The Americans, if they bridged this
boundary at all, did so in pairs of friends, not in their roles as managers). At first,
self-disclosure was a means to learn about each other and to build their team. Later it
became a way of clarifying and cataloguing their individual talents -- strengths that
might be directed at work. As they came to know people's talents, the team could
then organize work and implement a plan based on this enlarged menu of member's
talents rather than operating from constricted job descriptions and bureaucratic patterns
of action. Asking for help, seen as an admission of weakness or limitation by the self-
reliant individual, became an opportunity for the group to demonstrate how well it
functioned. In effect, seeking help became a signal to the group to direct the most
appropriate talent and resources to the problems of the collective. Working in this way demanded a certain selflessness that belies our cultural training. Raised to take full responsibility for our actions, we resist the concept of partial responsibility, one central to productive group process. The group member forever redoing someone else's adequate work signals how tough this shift can be.

Self-disclosure was one avenue which helped the Canadian section heads become colleagues rather than rivals. It relates to this proposition about control and empowerment in several ways. As the group matured, control became less of an issue because the plant manager did not fear that his managers or professionals were out of control. In contrast to the American situation as I have outlined it, the Canadians controlled the plant through friendly acquaintances and personal friendships because they could count on the power of the group's process for three reasons:

1. they were colleagues;
2. they had practiced shared control;
3. they had demonstrated the ability to transfer the learning of shared control from the management group to their particular sections.

Control was not a clear and present danger in Canada. At the US plant, the plant manager acted as if his operations department heads were somewhat out of control as noted in his frequent visits to collect data from them. The reports of too much initiative and people overstepping their roles indicated an out of control development process.
Conceptually and practically, self-disclosure exists in tension with secrecy. The Canadian plant management group was disclosing, the US management team secretive. They made selection decisions in secret and maintained tight control over promotional information. Self-disclosure is a major key to bypassing exchange relationships with fellow workers. Its use indicated that the Canadians invoked secondary mentality solutions to the problem of the inherent contradiction between control and empowerment (participation). Instead of conflict and compromise, they engaged in collaboration and consensus (Shepard, 1965, pp.1128-1129).

They learned that "group" does not mean individual selves are lost. This more mature group process did not cancel out individualism but actually accented it as people came to know more about each other. Yet the novice’s image of groups often contains the belief that all members must conform to reach the team’s goals. The real process is quite different. It is legitimate to share feelings and thoughts about oneself or other topics even when those feelings and thoughts are quite different from those of others. In fact only in "an interpersonal atmosphere of trust and openness" (Shepard, 1965, p. 1127) can individuals truly develop beyond the authority and dependency issues intrinsic to and exacerbated by the control paradigm of the machine bureaucracy.

ENDNOTES

1. Autocratic or any other label is often a matter of degree. This plant manager was judged by his subordinates as the most participative of the plant managers comprising this division of Chemco. Nor are their comments just second hand. Some have worked in the other plants. Of course, they have peers and friends in the other plants as well. Comparing him with the Canadian plant manager renders his tendency to control more prominent.
Chapter 10: National Culture and Participation In Teams

The previous two chapters addressed the influence of obvious forces contributing to changes in participation at the chemical plants. I turn now to the less apparent impact of national culture. Few would question the effects of human resource systems and a plant manager’s leadership at the plant level even if they argued about the relative weighing of those factors and others. Culture’s mark is more subtle but nevertheless present.

Recall from our discussion in Chapter Two that the American emphasis on self-reliance evolved from three related events -- the revolution; frontier life and expansion; and the English core value of individualism. Revolutionary beginnings implied the rejection of old institutions and latitude to experiment with the new in politics and social life. A weak central government increased the focus on equality for the many. The absence of strict status differences allowed equality to take on a concrete reality beyond its appeal as an abstract principle. Survival on the frontier demanded an adaptive capacity embodied in the notion of self-sufficiency, a literal criterion for survival initially. This same demand gave rise to the entrepreneurial spirit. The concept of individualism was a core value in England, evolving from the Enlightenment and the Protestant Reformation. Individualism is inherent in the credo of the United States. The goal of society is:

"Life, liberty, and the pursuit of (individual) happiness".

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By contrast, the counter-revolutionary beginnings in Canada embraced French and English organizing methods from government, class structure and the ecclesiastical realm. These highly structured, hierarchical models provided effective societal controls to solidify the citizenry in mind as well as location against a large, threatening, and somewhat unruly southern neighbor. The counter-revolutionary basis, added to an historical debt to the concept of noblesse oblige, combined to forge a very different goal for society:

"peace, order and good government".

Already apparent is the focus on the individual in the US credo and the implied focus on group rights over individual rights in the Canadian credo. A "good government" is a strong one in which the citizen and state, individual and collective, are more closely connected.

Although time has brought momentous changes to both countries, these same tendencies are still apparent on a national level. An effective national health plan, greater acceptance of redistribution of wealth, an environment more favorable to unions -- all indicate a greater acceptance of collective sentiment in Canada than in the United States. Below, I have included data from the Canadians and Americans as well as a few citations which together give voice to the different flavors in these two cultures.
Canadian and American National Images

I think there is one thing Canadians don't like being called and that's "Americans"!

The jurist Thomas Berger has pointed out that in its constitution Canada has not only established individual rights but also (something which distinguishes our Charter from others) collective rights -- those of its two founding peoples to special linguistic and cultural status and those of its provinces to equalization payments (Kilbourn, 1988, p. 9).

...it's not black and white...but...the United States has much more a tradition of celebrating the individual hero. And I think that's a sort of metaphor that's very strong in the American psyche...of rugged individuals who tamed the West and who made the country...what it is...that's a very important part of what...Americans grow up with. Canadians grow up with less of that. We are...a little less self-confident...some of this is just size in the world...we're a pretty minor player in the world, have a lot of lack of confidence, a lot of self doubts. We don't have as nearly as strong a national identity...

I think there is a stronger feeling of we have more of an obligation to look after other people. It's more of an every-man-for-himself, every person for themselves in the United States. But it's only a question of degree.

Fact that US is huge entity to the south works on minds of Canadians. US dominates media, economy. And US owns so much of Canadian business. It's offensive to Canadians to be taken for granted by Americans. (said by American manager in Canada)

Have you been to any of the Canadian plants?

Went to network meeting there but did not tour plant. Was 5-6 years ago.

Yes, have been to safety conference...ten years ago; toured the plant.

No data. They get every other Friday afternoon off. I would like that.
Have not been...Been to Canada once in high school...
No exposure...

Authority

Canadian cities are not only more lived in twenty-four hours a day but are generally cleaner, safer, and more orderly than those in the United States...the violent crime rate of the Canadian metropolis is only 10 to 20 percent of that of the American (murders average 70 a year in Toronto but 700 in Detroit)... (Kilbourn, 1988, p. 20).

Canadian mythic figure: the Royal Canadian Mountie

American mythic figure: the cowboy

People

Our business magazines don’t glorify CEOs like they do in the states.

I think there’s less show boaters (here in Canada)... They are exactly the same people through the conference that always stand up that, you know, they kind of want to see their faces seen...They want to be at the front end of always looking like they are the contributors and the go getters...I think it’s demanded much more of them...That gets eaten up. Nobody sees through that...Those are the folks that move in their [American] organization...

Socialized medicine; universality of all social services; taking money from rich to give to the poor. Something about us that makes that OK. We are heavily taxed here and it is accepted.

...in Canada I think there is a stronger feeling of we have more of an obligation to look after other people. It’s more of an every-man-for-himself, every person for themselves in the United States. But it’s only a question of degree.

...there is a more genuine concern for people and people’s feelings and the effect of our actions on other people. And I guess I don’t want to make a big judgement on this. Like at times that very much gets in the way of Canadian’s ability to get things done quote unquote.
Individual Recognition

US plants: if they set production record, they make more hoopla, publicly talking about it, writing about it; public declarations or event to talk about it. (Here), we'd tend to be not quite as comfortable about recognizing an individual's merits publicly, always been that way.

I believe it's in all my (recognition) letters, and everyone has seen it. If you were to say... how many times do I see the words "initiative and ownership", ...if it is less than 80% then I will eat my hat. The reason they were given that award was that they came up with their own idea, and they did it on their own, and they didn't bother anyone. They just did it, and it was successful.

Innovation and Change

My perception is more progressive management... A skit was done by the Canadians about (Chemco)... their management endorsed this (video) tape and could laugh at it. That tape and presentation makes me believe they have bought into work redesign.

There's no question in my mind that across the board, the Canadian side... is more progressive than the non-Canadian side (including Europe). (Canadian Chemco) was bold enough to go to ..[different R&Rs system]... Across the board, these guys seem to embrace innovative, creative new things before we do. This is my biggest observation about Canadians.

I will weave the themes of this data into three propositions suggesting how national culture may influence participation in teams at the two petrochemical plants.

Proposition: Inclination to Participate

The Canadians possessed an inclination for participative action that the American managers did not share. This distinguishing bent has its roots in Canada's decidedly more collective orientation in concert with a slightly different variant of individualism.
In general, Canadians naturally tend to see themselves as more connected to the larger social entity whether that be the work group, the firm, or some larger community. National health care, a comprehensive welfare system, and greater tolerance of unions are examples of the collective tradition in Canada. Americans naturally tend to see themselves as closely tied to their families and otherwise more casual and choiceful about their associations be they work, clubs, churches, community centers, cities.

This greater social cohesion among Canadians is born of a cultural belief in the legitimate authority of a strong state, a point established in Chapter Two. Recall that the presence of the stronger bond between citizen and state grew literally from the need for a defensive group solidarity. The model of Old World monarchy with its emphasis on allegiance to a higher authority fit the need to locate settlers in close physical proximity and then to inspire a group sentiment against the perceived threat of expansionist ambitions by the southern colonies. Implicit in Canada’s monarchical tradition is the collectivist notion of noblesse oblige, the benevolent care taking of all those who show allegiance to the state.

Americans followed the classical, liberal, Lockean tradition which favored a weak state, a primary function of which was originally to protect the private property of its many individual citizens. Citizens went their own way as long as they stayed within the rule of law.
Both nations borrowed their high regard for individualism from the English. English individualism refers to legal or political equality only. The Americans went further, insisting on social and economic equality as well (Hsu, 1981). The English compartmentalized political equality from other forms. They lived quite comfortably with a stringent class system which structured social inequality and greatly hindered economic equality for the lower class. Recalling our discussion of elitism from Chapter Two, Canadian culture more closely reflects these same themes than does American life.

Social and economic equality are bedrock American ideals closely connected to the concept of self-reliance which we added to English individualism to create our own variant. Self-reliance in combination with our strong value on meritocracy assured that the individual would have social and economic equality as well as political equality. Our brand of individualism had a defiance about it in revolutionary times.

The flip side of our fierce independence and insistence on economic and social equality is a lack of connectedness to others outside the family. Hsu (1981) speaks directly to this issue when he notes that:

...those who are members of fixed and permanent human groups in which they may satisfy their social needs enjoy a higher degree of certainty in life than others reared in individualism and especially self-reliance who insist on being judged according to their individual merits (emphasis added) (p.131).
This plays out in a competitive work setting in the following way. In an organization which values self-reliance and individual initiative, employees who want to succeed find ways of differentiating themselves from one another. Firms reinforce efforts at personal distinction or self promotion through reward systems and career development systems which recognize individual accomplishment. This encourages individuals to develop personal strategies and play the success game close to the vest. Using terms I established in Chapter Eight, rivals feel less connected to their peers than colleagues. As a blessing, Americans can attain a higher standard of living than any other people on the earth. The price many pay is getting swept up in the frenetic pace of competitively driven work, stepping on top of each other on the way up, or moving all over the country in search of the next best opportunity. None of the three is a particularly good way to build a network of close and lasting friendships.

The data below from Canadian managers are consistent with a Canadian predisposition to participate, based in a collective orientation and a slightly more temperate individualism. The following comments reflect a collective disposition:

Socialized medicine; universality of all social services; taking money from rich to give to the poor. Something about us that makes that OK. We are heavily taxed here and it is accepted.

...you see it reflected in things like our social programs whereas in Canada I think there is a stronger feeling of we have more of an obligation to look after other people. It’s more of an every-man-for-himself, every person for themselves in the United States. But it’s only a question of degree.

Our benefits packages are better than in US. Much more government intervention here and as result, our working environment is different. A local
steel company here went bust. In US, they would just shut it down. Here they will try to save it unless it's impossible.

The following remarks speak to differences in the competitive spirit, an indication of a less intense form of individualism:

It (the organization) is not as competitive and hard nosed as it should be; is quite content to stay that way. (And my belief is that it should change, will have to change).

The Europeans see us as not being same as (the Americans). They see the (American) groups (plants) as being much more competitive, less collaborative...(A plant) shut down for five months in early '80s. (Another plant) gloated.

More tolerance of pace. Sure we want to "Be the Best". But we don't have to "Be the Best" yesterday... We don't have that constant competitiveness; different level of it. It's OK to achieve some personal things rather than material things;

**Proposition: Distinctive Contexts for Collaboration**

The Americans created contexts for collaboration for those lower in the hierarchy. The Canadians created contexts for collaboration with each other. The American behavior reflected a preference for hierarchical control, horizontal solidarity, and a genuine, mandate inspired wish to be more egalitarian -- teams for all! The Canadian behavior indicated a preference for the softer group control. This is consistent with a cultural value of elitism which engenders class solidarity.

The American management team's primary target for creating quality teams was the wage earners, those at the greatest hierarchical distance from themselves. The 1986 mandate did stipulate special attention to those at the bottom, and this was one of the American plant manager's great personal concerns as well, almost a screening criteria for those wanting to move into management. It reflects his personal desire and
the corporate will to be more egalitarian. Power relationships will stay the same, however. That "We create teams for you" implies that "You couldn't do it without us", a lingering note of paternalism common in large, traditional American firms. Perhaps it is cynical, but, in a real sense, participation becomes a benefit just like health insurance for the wage earners. At the same time that it is egalitarian, it induces more commitment to the firm via the coercion and compromise tactics identified with hierarchy and the primary mentality (Shepard, 1965).

The Canadian management team's primary target was itself. Members then created similar teams with others like them, namely the professional engineers. The Canadian manager and professional engineers hold in common the shared elitism of university training. Historically, post secondary education was much less available to the general public in Canada than in this country as recently as 1960. Data for that year indicate that 30.2% of twenty to twenty-four year olds attended college in the states whereas 9.2% of Canadians in the same age group attended university (Lipset, 1968). Thus, developing teams for themselves and those most like them can be seen as reflective of class solidarity, a softer way of enforcing social control than hierarchy but given to more chance for interpersonal flare ups that rules and procedures down play. Heightened solidarity for themselves and others like them in "the movement" meant less interest in working with dissimilar others like those contentious wage earners. Obviously, this was not an issue for the more egalitarian Americans who generally dislike distinctions by birth, wealth or class (Hsu, 1981). To be fair, the
Canadians expended great efforts in trying to bring the team concept to the wage earners. However, that is not where they began nor where their successes lay, a topic of concern for the final chapter.

Class solidarity is not strong in this country, and the US managers did not extend any special effort to empower the second lines, those most like them and those also next in line in the hierarchical cascade. Appraisal and selection kept the second lines seeking management's good graces. The management team retained at least rubber stamp control over second line supervisors' career placement decisions for engineers. Even at this, the second lines showed great enthusiasm for learning and experimenting with mandate related changes, incrementally to be sure. In fact this group provides the clearest example of the tendency in cultures of individualism for peers to get along much better with each other than with either bosses or subordinates. Solidarity is a horizontally stratified notion at the US plant.

It is not too far fetched to think of the relatively small management team as the "parents" of the relatively large group of "teenage" second line supervisors. Even though competitors, the second lines got along better among themselves than with their "parents" at the top. Interpreted culturally, this behavior mimics the tug between parents and peer group for the attention and allegiance of adolescents. One needs the control of hierarchy and strong reward systems to oversee these still conflicted former teens who would disparage more senior managers, the CEO or even the president at the drop of a hat.
Advantages accrue for these "adolescents" whose "parents" can do nothing right. Within their group they can grumble and complain about why the top guys went ahead with that canned Crosby training rather than letting them work up something clever using Juran and Deming as well. This and their more productive activities allow them to practice change safely without being responsible for it like the overworked section heads in Canada once they lost the layer below them. Second lines also get to do some minor acting out against authority (their persistent grumbling) while still gaining approval (albeit coolish). And an unknown few are actually apprenticing themselves to the management team as they learn by enduring the highly evaluative appraisal and selection system. When their turn comes at department head, these few will know just how to do what they have complained of with their former peers and a new crop of second lines.

**Proposition: Self as Instrument vs. Self as Member**

The high performers at the American plant bore the distinct mark of US competitive individualism. Socialized to exhibit initiative, ownership, and a sense of urgency, the high performers were self-reliant and saw themselves as powerful instruments for achieving the firm's ends. In contrast, the Canadian Chemco high performers relied on themselves and others. They began to take on a more group oriented posture after the 1986 mandate. They worked just as hard but were more attuned to people and working with others as members of the team.

**Self as Instrument**

A consistent pattern of evidence shows that self-reliance was strongly valued at the American plant and to a greater extent than in the Canadian plant. Over and over
managers talked about initiative, ownership, and a sense of urgency as key competencies for success for those who wanted to move into management and up the management ladder. In Chapter Nine, I noted four tendencies which resulted from the "cookie cutter" approach to career development used at the American plant. They were:

- ability to lead but difficulty following;
- a pattern of almost indiscriminate achieving that impedes managers from staying in their organizational roles;
- the presence of "corporate ball hogs", people who think they must make every decision and always make the right decision.
- the lack of group process skills.

The special assignment manager, a high performer himself, described the "ball hogs" as the most independent, least team oriented achievers. To their credit, the US Chemco management recognized their hyper initiative. A draft by second lines of performance requirements for engineers even listed "...insisting on leading team" as a trait to watch out for. These data converge to support the notion that American high performers generally were highly competitive and task oriented. They clearly saw themselves as potent instruments of achievement.

The Canadians supplied information which confirms this proposition. The Canadian plant manager from the plant not discussed in the case had recently spent several years working at the American site. He commented that the:
...task orientation is higher (at the US site); this is a description; I'm not sure it's good or bad...They're much more competitive, for example, (between plants). We don't blow our horns enough.

Several section heads also remarked on the intense competition and extreme task focus apparent from their visits to the American headquarters:

Sure we want to "Be the Best". But we don't have to "Be the Best" yesterday... We don't have that constant competitiveness; different level of it.

Like I think when I go to meetings in the United States, there's a tremendous task focus: what is the job, what are we going to produce, what are we going to get done, how are you going to measure it, how are you going to do it faster. Whereas in Canada, a little more on, and again it's not black or white, just a little more of an emphasis on the people: how do people feel about it, a little more time to hear everyone's opinion, get everyone on board.

Additionally, the one American who had worked in both sites talked about competition as the definitive distinction between the two:

It's really striking in a lot of ways. To me of all the striking differences between a say (American) plant and a (Canadian) organization is the competitive spirit between people in parts of the organization and that ambition. That's just a strikingly different character.

A section head mentioned perhaps the most incisive comment about the differences.

He spoke directly about a contrasting sense of agency between Americans and Canadians:

...the other big thing, if I was to look at what's different between us and has always been different and is still different is the degree of self-confidence that we have versus the (American Chemco) people...having a lot more self-confidence at an organizational level than we do. Like we are constantly doubting ourselves, and I think this is a very
Canadian thing. And lack the boldness and just certainty that we can achieve it that I think really characterizes parts of the organization I see in (America).

It would be difficult to regard oneself as a powerful instrument of action with the intensity that these American managers displayed while doubting oneself simultaneously.

**Self as Member**

Conceptually, think of the self-as-member notion as stemming from two sources: a greater concern for other people in more collectivist Canada and a borrowed English individualism to which was added fewer drops of self-reliance. Consider part of a definition for teams advanced by the American special assignment manager.

This man said that, for him, a team existed as long as it had an objective while noting that his wife was involved in several groups where "just the sense of caring for other people and wanting to be a group" was enough to sustain her interest. For him, that was not true. He said:

...to feel good and to feel like everybody belongs. That's important to her. She'll work hard at that. OK. And I guess for me, it's not a big motivator. For me it's like the team and a group oriented thing, it's the means to an objective...So without an objective, I personally get a little lost...I can't get into the groupness as much.

This highly task oriented definition of a team is consistent with what Canadian managers said about the Americans and also with the generally polite but cool relationships hinted at by a few American managers. The warmth and overt expression present among the Canadian managers were uncommon at the American
plant. This emotional difference is also consistent with Hsu’s (1981) analysis of American self-reliance. He writes:

> Runaway individualism forces men to keep their thoughts but especially their feelings from each other (p. xxvi).

By contrast, the Canadian plant manager endorsed setting up the oft mentioned support net concept for his team. It clearly introduced a caring element and encouraged section heads to become members with each other as well as instruments of accomplishment. In fact, they superseded the self-as-instrument position based upon their experience of "Learning in the Group, Decision Making in Individual Sections", one of their developmental stages mentioned in the case. They learned first hand the coordination problems attendant to ignoring the systems principle dictum which says that changes in one subunit affect other subunits of the system. This is not to suggest that departments in the US plant were not well coordinated. They were. But the interpersonal aspects of working together were much more developed in the Canadian plant management group. As the plant manager remarked about his staff’s group performance sessions:

> People can be very honest, non-threatening. There’s a relationship that develops between the players, almost a personal relationship.

This personal quality was evident in the American plant among pairs of managers or self-selected small groups but not among the management team as a whole.

Additional evidence for the self-as-member notion resides in what a section head from another plant said about the Canadian plant manager. He said:
...I think his group, his teams would say he’s a high contributor because of what he does for the group...People who have gotten to high contributor by their own, call it devious or individualistic approaches, will generally not be supported. If you put their name on a bulletin board test it wouldn’t make him a high contributor. People will say, "Holy smokes; where in the hell did you get that?"...There’s recognition on the site that it’s good to do that, to be a team oriented person. It’s not just what management thinks... (emphasis added).

Passing the bulletin board test is a Canadian emic term defining an informal, after-the-fact selection process which either validated or panned the formal process. This man went on to say that, generally speaking, the only time more instrumental individuals passed the bulletin board test was in cases requiring technical competence only. Two additional pieces of data highlight the generally reduced emphasis on the individual’s personal achievements and the more pronounced attention to "people issues" at the Canadian plant. First the other Canadian plant manager talked about how celebrations were different:

We’re more reserved, conservative, less flamboyant in terms of celebrating task achievement. US plants: if they set production record, they make more hoopla, publicly talking about it, writing about it; public declarations or event to talk about it. (Here), we’d tend to be not quite as comfortable about recognizing an individual’s merits publicly, always been that way. Roastings take place in both places. They are more politically motivated for plant organization to make sure that they are publicizing their achievements; we don’t do as much as we should. They’re much more competitive, for example, (between plants). We don’t blow our horns enough. It would probably be more group than individual recognition. (emphasis added)

The Canadian plant manager from the case talked about the different flavor of US Chemco senior management meetings when compared to those of the Canadian parent
firm. The distinction had to do with an emphasis on people which he described in this way:

Now the (Chemco statements) describe the same thing, but it seems more hollow and not as deeply understood. A very specific example. In the (Chemco) vision, a lot of words about having the right business strategy, the importance of technology, the importance of being cost competitive...Our group went back with a very strong message that there's nothing in there about people...Two years later its still not there...You go to the (Canadian parent firm) presentation and it's everywhere. I mean the word "people" jumps at you...when you come out of the two meetings, at least me, and it's because of what I'm looking for, I come up feeling different. (pause)Interestingly enough to see, that when you actually see the words, they are not that different. But...it's the kind of warmthness in the way that it's rolled out that feels different.

The Canadians seem to have a "people set", anchored in societal values. They showed a less intensely competitive, more personal quality of relationships consistent with the notion of the self-as-member. This group-focused mindset makes participation in teams more approachable for the Canadians while it remained a paradox for the Americans.
Chapter 11: Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this research report was to convey how and why two segments of the same company created different responses to the same mandate from corporate headquarters. The specific research question was:

Given similar mandates for participation, what factors explain the variation in the forms which participation took in two petrochemical plants?

Participation in teams was the focal point of this endeavor.

At the outset, I noted that participation and teamwork embody a paradox in North American culture. Teams are collective structures with a common agenda, yet their members in this culture are better schooled in accomplishing individual goals than group goals. The theoretical constructs of individualism and collectivism aptly capture this tension between group and personal goals. Because of their conceptual relevance, my analytic question was:

What factors influence a team of managers to be more or less oriented toward individualism or collectivism (personal goals or the group’s goals)?

I used data to show that this dynamic encouraged members in some groups to function in self-interested ways while nudging those in other groups to join wholeheartedly in a shared agenda. Self-managing teams sprung up in the Canadian plant, manager-led teams at the American plant.
Summary of Findings

I argued that four prominent factors explain the divergent participative character of the two plants five years into their change efforts. First, in Chapter Seven, I underscored the role of plant size and type combined with economic circumstances in establishing a greater sense of urgency to change at the Canadian plant. This discussion included the related factors of amount of hierarchy at each plant, turnover rates of section heads and department heads, recessionary and industry-wide attributes, all of which affected the two plants differentially. Second, I examined the role of human resource systems in Chapter Eight and claimed that appraisal, selection and career development practices at the Canadian plant were more consistent with team-based efforts. Thirdly, in Chapter Nine the plant managers’ styles were contrasted. The authoritative style of the American manager and the consensus-oriented style of the Canadian manager were associated with the creation of managers-led and self-managing teams, respectively (Hackman, 1990). Style affected the developmental stage reached by each management team and choices made about other kinds of teams to create. The Canadians came to trust each other; the Americans worked on power and control issues. Lastly, the final analysis chapter showed how contrasts in national culture exerted a subtle influence on readiness for participation itself. For example, the strong value on individualism in American culture is not mediated by an explicit belief in the physical and social welfare of all societal members, even at the cost of high taxes as is the case in Canada. The chapter also
addressed how control mechanisms played out differently in common corporate
bureaucracies. The Canadians adopted the informal control of group process while the
Americans retained the formal control vested in hierarchy.

Below, I make a series of concluding points which help tie together the results
of my analysis. As promised in Chapter One, I also provide a descriptive model
which characterizes the variety of participative responses found in the data. I end by
stating implications of this research for both theory and practice.

Organizational Structure and HR Systems

Key Learning: Favorable conditions for participation obtain when human both
resource systems and organizational structure promote this
orientation.

The Canadian management team established a new structure based on informal
control. Group members shared control because they had developed personal
relationships with each other. Altered systems of appraisal, selection, and career
development favored group action rather than individual action and supported the
modified structure.

The structure and systems in the American plant were not aligned to favor
higher forms of participation. Authority-based formal control prevailed. For example,
headquarters ordered quality training and quality teams; plant management instituted
them. Also, the plant manager remained the center of power in the management team.
The parent firm would not allow revisions of human resource systems.
Reinforcing teamwork depended upon an under utilized recognition system and support from managers just learning about participation themselves. They in turn were circumscribed both by their own socialization into the ways of the firm and by the constraints, routine, and complicated procedures one associates with the term bureaucracy as Crozier (1964) uses it.

**Key Learning:** When organizational structure and human resource systems do not match, valuable participative efforts can still occur. However, they will serve the status quo rather than confronting it.

As Pasmore and Fagans (1993) note,

Because OD is sanctioned by those in power, it rarely involves an invitation to change the essential nature of the system or the distribution of power within the system (p. 25).

The kind of participation consistent with US Chemco’s control paradigm is a form of teamwork that encourages greater commitment to the status quo while supplying some increased skills, business information, and even limited decision making in relatively unimportant matters.

**Key Learning:** In a large, traditional organization, highly participative efforts will occur in either out-of-the-way places or when buffered from hierarchical constraints.

Although the intent of many American managers was on the side of participation, they were stuck in a structure with unsupportive systems. The clearest example of a team approaching self-management occurred in the lab, an out-of-the-way place able to side step the surveillance of the plant hierarchy because of its
relative unimportance to essential plant operations. Other teams with high levels of participation included two task forces, one to study innovation, the other diversity. One had members whose levels spanned the entire stretch from entry level manager in the plant to vice-presidential level at headquarters. Membership in the other also rose well above the plant hierarchy. Both had champions at a high level of the firm. Diversity in particular was an idea whose time had come at Chemco. The two task forces were enabled to side-step hierarchy temporarily because they were non-routine tasks for which the hierarchy was not suited (Perrow, 1986) and because these two efforts gained legitimation above the plant hierarchy where ability to downplay hierarchy on occasion is more common.

The Influence of National Culture

**Key Learning:** National cultures provide unique soils for the seeds of participation. As a result, participation grows in diverse ways in bureaucracies common across nations.

The support net concept was one of the distinguishing features of the Canadians' participative efforts. One would expect Canadian managers in general to be more receptive to the concept of a support net than their American counterparts. The Canadian emphasis on the welfare state is the source of the idea of group care-taking. This was then reframed as the support net and applied in a work context. This greater receptivity toward helping and being helped was one element that propelled the Canadian management group to take participation further than their American counterparts.
By contrast, a culture whose soil requires a heavy dose of Machine Bureaucracy to control employees in organizations is less nourishing to higher levels of participation. One could argue that the Canadians, with their inherent respect for authority, had internalized the values of those in authority and could respond more readily to the softer control of a self-managing team while still working in the firm’s interests. They needed little organizational control and relied more on social and self-control. In contrast, the naturally fractious and authority-resistant Americans needed a stronger hierarchy to align them with the firm’s goals and hold in check their penchant for pursuing self-interest. A command and control hierarchy combined with culturally attuned reward systems assured allegiance and kept the US managers in their places. But this strong use of control in turn set limits on the kinds of participation one could expect.

**The Importance of Group Process Skills**

Many managers do not grasp what effective teams can accomplish. Their perceptions are so colored by a sense of individual responsibility that switching to think in terms of "team" is not natural for them. Lacking direct experience in a team guided by the hand of a skilled facilitator, they rarely understand or recognize stages of group development nor their accompanying behaviors. They do not realize that teams can be productive without heavy handed external controls. Minus this background managers have good reasons to distrust teams.
On the job, a plant manager finds that he must assert tight control over the group because members take off on tangents, argue about the silliest things, and waste precious time diverting his agenda. Personality conflicts erupt as project deadlines approach. If the group is actually "storming" and he does not know they will go beyond this in a few more meetings to start "performing", he understandably finds ways to clamp down on them.

Resentful of tight control, savvy staff members conjure up ways to cancel out the plant manager's influence or anticipate him and form coalitions to work around him (Dalton, 1959). The less political or more dependent submit cheerlessly. They capitulate psychologically, their creative energy sapped and given over to meeting minimal standards. In turn, managers on the receiving end of the antics of formidable political opponents or the anemia of listless members quickly come to see the misplaced faith all this interest in teamwork represents. They want to clamp down even more tightly. The group never fully develops.

**Key Learning:** Central to developing participation in teams are participants who can be members as well as leaders, who understand the basics of group dynamics, and who can serve as process consultants for the team.

Effective teams need members who understand the dynamics of behavior in the group and can alter the group's process positively when the current pattern obstructs task completion. For example, interpersonal conflicts can disrupt the group. So can
disputes arising because members represent different organizational units with conflicting objectives.

Through their protracted team building activities, the Canadians evolved specific, on-going mechanisms -- the support net concept, group appraisals -- so that they automatically continued to need and use their facilitation skills.

The US team learned the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (as did the Canadians), had intermittent process facilitation, and even watched videos of its meetings. But these interventions were not on-going and did not "stick". The data in the case do not indicate that this team kept coming back and learning more about its own dynamics. In fact, the American managers took a characteristically cognitive route, studying quality, STS, Partnering, strategic planning, Bass leadership. As valuable as it is, cognitive strength alone does not build any management group's ability to regulate itself better. In fact, it underscores the absence of an affective component in the US management team.

In his recent book on how leaders are developed, Conger (1992) points to emotional insight as one of four necessary avenues (along with cognitive models, feedback, and skill building). This along with feedback is the kind of learning we saw in the Canadian group. He goes on to say:

It is on the level of emotions that I believe our greatest learning can often take place and lead to behavioral change. We do know from research that the more levels of an individual -- emotional, imaginative, cognitive, and behavioral -- are engaged by a learning experience, the
more powerful the learning will be. This is the distinct advantage of the personal growth programs (emphasis added) (Conger, 1992, p. 167).

An effective group does need enough internal skill to manage conflict and attend to group maintenance issues while keeping in mind that its objective is task completion. These abilities assure members that they can face conflicts and come out on the other side of them without tearing the group apart. The Canadians got there in large part because of their team building efforts of which emotional sharing was a primary part. By contrast, the Americans in the management team could not count on their interpersonal process because they were rivals, not colleagues.

The Canadians' success in this area does not mean that a team has to go to the extent they did to become highly effective. In fact, in many American and Canadian businesses, breaching the boundary between private and public life to pursue personal growth is culturally incompatible and a sure route to failure, no doubt scaring off many members from future participation in teams.

Management education as well as leadership training points to the need for attention to group skills. Porter and McKibbin (1988) report that corporations express "moderate satisfaction" with the state of business education today. Most relevant to this discussion, the authors report that:

Corporate executives and managers are not nearly as impressed with students' (especially MBAs) "soft" skills as they are with their analytical skills, motivation, and content area knowledge. In fact, according to corporate directors of college recruiting, the number one ranked basis for making differential hiring decisions among MBA
graduates --- the principal characteristic they are seeking -- is leadership/interpersonal skills (pp.303-304).

The team needs both leadership and interpersonal skills. As we saw earlier, Chemco had a certain kind of leadership to spare.

With respect to leadership, Drath (1990) argues that the developmental stage from which most managers operate requires that they act in ways inimical to effective group membership. Drawing on Kegan’s concept of the institutional stage, Drath (1990, p.488) argues that two major skills, "the development of detached relationships" and "toughness in decision making", help managers act rationally and objectively but handcuff them when circumstances force those relationships to enter a more personal or intimate sphere (when they become intense and are no longer mediated by the task)...(p. 491).

In these conflict ridden moments, institutional managers react aggressively or pull away in avoidance according to the author. Neither behavior is adaptive in a team setting. Managers in the institutional stage need strong interventions to become more participative. Conger’s four learning modes provide one alternative. The Canadians showed other options -- a highly participative leader, a changed (group) structure, a physically different layout (the bunker). Barring such interventions, we can not expect an "institutional" manager in a traditional organization to generate more than status quo oriented participation. Drath’s data reinforce what we have learned in this research -- that since teamwork is paradoxical in America, its success in a business
setting depends in part on conscious attention to cultivating the interpersonal skills for membership in groups as well as leadership of them.

**Participation: A Hard Sell**

At the beginning of this report, I stated that participation was a timely topic if not a new one. The concept of participative management arose from work in organizational psychology that began in the 1940s and 1950s (Lawler, 1993). Lawler notes that "such writers as Lewin, McGregor, Argyris, and Likert stressed the desirability of organizations' being managed in a more participative and democratic manner" (1993, p. 178). As more and more companies respond to global pressures by seeking more involvement from their employees, they face a tough battle for several reasons. First, employees at the bottom and in the middle of firms have endured so many versions of frequently empty participative endeavors that they see any new attempt as the newest "Flavor of the Month." Repeated exposures have bred cynicism about involvement strategies such as job enrichment, Quality of Working Life, employee participation groups, management by objectives and a hundred variants of these. The second hurdle is another key learning.

**Key Learning:** Participation is a "hard sell" to most US businesses.

Most interested firms only dabbled with participative management until the 1970s and 1980s when competitive pressures finally got their undivided attention. Even now, although high involvement plants exist, they reside within traditional
organizations (Lawler, 1993). There are not enough good models for firms that want to learn. Lawler (1993) claims:

In discussing what an organization should look like if it is to optimize employee involvement, it is necessary to be speculative...since no operational example exists of a high-involvement organization (p. 180).

Participation, especially in its more high involvement forms, has not caught on in American business for several reasons. First, it stands in fundamental opposition to management ideology. Ledford (1993) puts it well when he says:

Modern organizations are designed to ensure hierarchical control and internal stability -- two basic virtues of the bureaucratic form of organization. Intensive employee involvement efforts are often resisted by managers because of threats to control and stability, even if they seem to produce improvements in performance (p. 150).

He goes on to say that advanced forms of participation rely on creating employees who relish business challenges and negotiate frequent technical changes flexibly. But again, managers perceive highly skilled employees like these as undercutting their own authority. It causes managers to wonder in what image they would redefine their own jobs if they empowered those below them. Ledford (1993) makes the additional point that although most managers can spout the rhetoric of high involvement, few know how to do it. It is here that our profession must step up to supply more complete road maps.

A second impediment to participative action in American firms resides in our strong belief in utilitarian individualism. Frankly, businesses have seen no need to change because they have made lots of money the old way. For-profit firms have
never been quick to respond to moral arguments such as participation’s appeal to the value of human dignity or increased democracy in the workplace. As economic entities, they naturally take their cues from the market.

Actually, this hard nosed approach is no surprise. Cross cultural studies substantiate it. The values of individualism and collectivism are best invoked for strikingly different purposes. Triandis (1989) writes that:

Collectivists exchange love, status, and services better than individualists do; individualists exchange information, money, and goods better than collectivists do...relationships that evolve [sic] production and distribution of exchangeable commodities should be regulated by individualist values... (p.105).

We excel in economic transactions because they engage our strongly held beliefs in self-interest and self-reliance. Sharing decision making power, knowledge, business information, and control of rewards -- the definition of high levels of participation -- emphasizes mutual dependence, the centerpiece of collective thought. Therefore, for American business men and women to engage in high levels of participation requires unlearning some deeply held basics such as standing up for yourself and your personal interests first. We have such an ingrained sense of ourselves as independent agents that shifting to a model of shared and partial responsibility to complete task work comes slowly.

Despite this cultural drag, research by the Center for Effective Organizations suggests that employee involvement practices will increase in this decade. Based on intensive research efforts, their best hunches indicate that employee involvement will
grow in the 1990s although its most popular forms "will continue to be the safest ones and those with the least impact" (Ledford, 1993, p. 162). They are hopeful enough to predict that high involvement companies, not just plants, will come to pass by the turn of the century.

**Varieties of Participation**

In the first chapter, I said that I would characterize the variety of participative acts found in the research data. To that end, I present a descriptive model of participation in teams, based in the research data. As I discuss the bipolar dimensions of the model, I fit in very specific definitions of teamwork which came from the research subjects. These definitions are participants' personal meanings of the word "team", based in their direct experience. (Although true to the meanings, I have changed the wording slightly.) Their definitions permit a phenomenological understanding of managers' experience of participation in teams. The meanings pull our attention away from text book definitions to what managers actually think and feel when they work in groups. Specifically, these definitions help us see how managers react in groups with more or less collective and individualistic character. The model summarizes learning gleaned from the cases.
DESCRIPTIVE MODEL OF PARTICIPATION IN TEAMS

**TEAMS WITH COLLECTIVE TENDENCIES**

- At the Top
- Personal Relations
- Holistic
- Expressive

**TEAMS WITH INDIVIDUALISTIC TENDENCIES**

- At the Bottom
- Legitimate Authority
- Development
- Affect

**Location**

The American management team created participation for employees lower in the organization while the Canadians first created participation at the top among themselves. In the case of the "delegated participation", the thirty-five quality teams, I hypothesize that

the management team found it more feasible to create a context for participation for others below them than to change their own context.

Buffered from external troubles, they sensed no emergency that required unusual responses. Their behavior was strongly circumscribed by the rules of the Machine Bureaucracy, and amplified by their embeddedness in the parent firm. Department head positions turned over relatively rapidly and were filled by persons similarly socialized, not potentially more participative managers from outside the firm. The
plant manager's position, the most powerful one, did not turn over rapidly. None of
the "regular work" dropped out of the way to allow more time for participation.
Under these conditions, a plausible response consisted of quickly instituting a quality
program beneath them where they did have discretion and could do things differently.
Then they could experiment incrementally with other forms of participation among
themselves and in their departments, the special assignment manager moving much
gerater than his peers. Given the hectic nature of plant work, constraints upon action
independent of headquarters, and a direct "suggestion" from headquarters to institute
the Crosby quality program, it is easy to understand how the management team could
delegate participation to a lower part of the organization. Predictably, no evidence
indicates that quality teams received decision making power over essential parameters
which were part of headquarters' performance control system.

Teams At the Bottom. At first these quality teams were staffed almost
exclusively by wage earners. Later on, teams included engineers, second line
supervisors, and a sprinkle of others on up into the ranks at headquarters. Early
quality teams and later ones still directed at wage employees or highly localized
operating problems were essentially reincarnated quality circles, conceived as parallel
activities. Ledford (1993) claims that "the parallel-organization model is distinctly
limited as an employee involvement strategy" and is "too fragile to constitute an
effective long-term strategy" (p.156). He is none too complimentary of quality teams.
He writes that:
In general, when the leaders of the quality movement have anything to say about employee involvement, they embrace the parallel-organization model... "Quality circles" have been resurrected as "quality action teams"... but the basic group design has remained the same. Once again, managers see the need for some form of employee involvement, and they turn to the easiest and most conservative form... There is a legion of consultants and trainers ready to help them with well-packaged programs for establishing quality teams (Ledford, 1993, p. 164).

Pasmore and Fagans (1993) pan these same quality teams for a different reason.

When teams address local and not systemic issues, members get no practice in systemic thinking and, consequently, develop low levels of participative competency.

_Teams At the Top._ Interestingly, the Canadian team’s approach represents a flip flop of what one usually sees. The literature bulges with accounts of participation at the shop floor level that falters as it moves upward. Here managers participated among themselves, but the effort faltered on the way down. There is a certain irony in this. Strategically, the best chance to improve this small plant’s productivity depended upon harnessing the discretionary energy of all levels of the work force. Managers and professionals fairly rapidly made the connection between self-managing teams and competitive advantage. Protected by a contract and employed by a parent firm that had never laid anyone off non voluntarily at that point in time, the wage ranks balked, slow to see the situation’s urgency. Notably, the human resource manager commented that Canadian unions in general were much less swayed by the "global competition" argument than American unions.
In hindsight, perhaps the Canadian management group should have made communication with and education for the wage group their highest priority. They administered their own cultural shift to teams beautifully. But while drawing within themselves to learn about a new kind of leadership appropriate for the changing times, they did not or could not bring along the wage ranks at a comparable pace.

Most interestingly, both their company union affiliation and the prevalent social welfare net mind set in Canada were contextual influences encouraging among the wage earners an essentially non-competitive, "we-will-be-taken-care-of" attitude, despite the new competitive environment. They had several definitions of team that actually got in the way of joining in the participative efforts. Paradoxically, one definition was collective in origin, the other individualistic. In the first case, team was defined as follows:

- Team runs counter to my past; management was my adversary; now they want me on "their team"?

While management may see "team" as a simple vehicle to complete work more effectively, many wage earners experience it as giving up a staunchly held identity and switching allegiances. Secondly, remember that the plant manager reported that some of the best performers among the wage ranks enjoyed their status and did not see why they should buy into "this team stuff". A second definition of teams is:

- Team cramps my ability to stand out.
Joining the team means giving up status as an outstanding individual performer. Canadian wage earners were not alone in this definition. It came through clearly in the American plant and somewhat in the other Canadian plant.

If their plan for wage earners was to develop self-managing teams which also valued personal relationships and relied heavily on an affective component, this was not a good fit with working class values. Ironically, the American content oriented quality teams might have been a better starting point. With their focus on control charts and the nuts and bolts of operations, quality teams tap the concrete learning mode heavily. The Canadian plant manager spoke about the difficulty many wage earners had learning about teams through conceptual means such as training and conversation. The Canadian experience brings to the fore an issue for any group bent on change.Pasmore and Fagans (1993) point out a misleading assumption often made:

While we would not expect excellent performance in a technical task without adequate training and preparation for employees, there appears to be an assumption that all employees are naturally prepared and ready to participate given the opportunity (p.15).

Employees do not necessarily possess a participative competency. For example, when conditioned to take orders rather than take charge, they will not automatically exercise leadership and decision-making abilities in a group setting. Participation requires that they learn and apply their new knowledge to make decisions. The Canadian wage
earners were not ready to become involved in shaping their own future while management was.

**Development**

*Hipo Man.* Underscoring the developmental nature of participation, Pasmore and Fagans (1993) note that it can be an instrument "to develop...individual participators" as well as "to transform social systems" (p. 24). This lack of participative competence can appear anywhere in the hierarchy. The American managers distilled superior talent for task accomplishment and for advanced leadership roles at the price of their own meager group and interpersonal skills. The term HIPO MAN admits excessive attention to a narrow, though highly desirable range of behaviors. Every company wants achievement oriented managers. But the Americans lack of group conflict solving skills affected their consensus decision making ability. One of their definitions reflected this.

- Team is a slower conundrum when we use consensus to make decisions.

Some experienced a lot of time trying to get consensus as wasted and frustrating. They never clarified which decisions were to be made by the consensus process and which were not, nor did they have enough success experiences for consensus to become appealing to them.

*Holism.* The Canadian managers grew in a more holistic way, developing themselves for work and for life. They improved their group skills. Several said
increased confidence as parents or spouses came directly from their team experiences. This does not mean their path would work for everyone. Blurring the public / private boundary as they did would be counter normative and unsuitable in most for-profit American and Canadian firms.

What is distinctive in this staff group is that they began to see each other as whole persons -- workers, spouses, fathers, mothers, community members. Their relationships and learning extended beyond the individual person and even beyond the boundary of work itself. As a manager on loan from an American division to another Canadian plant so aptly put it:

Talk to a manager up here...they are concerned about how much money we make if only because you aren't viable. If you lose money fast enough, you don't get many chances to keep valuing people. But the focus here would look at the organization as a more complete entity to society than just a profit making venture. The organization strikes me as more of a social animal here as well as a financial instrument.

The theme of holism has two powerful components. First, it shifts the group from its instrumental posture into the secondary mentality of consensus and collaboration (Shepard, 1965). These managers committed to each other's goals, and their relationships were task-based and personal, not political. Trust, rather than obedience, bound the plant manager and section heads, and the plant manager changed the nature of his supervisory role from overseer to peer for the normally evaluative functions of his job. Secondly, this group reinstated emotions on a par with thoughts as part of life
at work. I address this topic in the following section. Their personal definitions of "team" reflect the holistic perspective.

- Team is a source of development.
- Team teaches me how to live at home too, makes me a better father, spouse.
- Team is a source of support for business problems and also for home problems.
- Team is a place that builds my self confidence.
- Team is a place where everyone should be who he or she is, not conform and be just like the leader or just like they think they are supposed to be (discussed later).

While all of these definitions are supportive of the team concept, other definitions were not. These dissonant definitions were much more apparent at the American site but also at the other Canadian site not included in the case study.

- Team threatens my income.
- Team threatens my ability to publicize my talents.

The first of these two communicates the sentiment found in the following quotation:

...I contribute to the team more than some others and I want to be compensated for my contribution, not the team contribution divided by the number of participants.

The second reflects the sentiments of one man who said, "I don’t thrive on just being one of the guys!" Individualism strongly flavors both definitions.
Affect

The Canadian Team. The more expressive use of emotions in the Canadian management group went hand in hand with the high level of self-disclosure and highly effective group process skills. The ultimate benefit of emotional expressiveness came in nudging the group from self-acknowledgement and self-reliance to awareness of the other and then reliance upon the other, a position of mutual dependence. Careful listening to another shifted attention away from individual members. Listeners came to understand other members better, and speakers felt genuinely heard. Frequent conversations like these moved members to a higher level of trust with each other. As a benefit, feelings not only increased members’ sensitivity to each other as more than managers but also assisted them in technical task completion. Their more functional group process allowed them to discuss content issues openly, devoid of hidden agendas, to advance inchoate ideas without having them sliced to bits. Based on past emotional sharing, frank talk in group appraisal sessions injected a healthy dose of self-regulation into this group. In these sessions, members reinforced group goals and reminded strays how to better work toward major plant objectives. Emotional expression became a resource in the work place instead of an unwanted artifact from life outside work. Personal meanings of team associated with this affective orientation were:

- Team is a place where I can safely share my feelings.
Team is a place where I can put out a half formed idea and have people build on it rather than cut it to pieces.

Team is a place to ask for friendship and to be a friend.

These definitions strongly reflect the collective notion of harmonious personal relations.

Emotional closeness in a group is not without its risks. Extraordinary cohesiveness can turn a team into an ingroup which alienates others and risks undermining itself. Remember that several Canadian team members spoke of being part of "the movement". While fervor maintains interest, it can induce a self-righteousness which blinds members to encroaching groupthink or to external threats. Tichy (1983) notes that work systems exist within three networks -- technical, cultural (social/affective) and political. Failure to attend to any one by overextending efforts in another puts the system at risk to eventual attack from the neglected direction. Although technically and culturally astute, this group may have exposed its political flank.

The American Team. The more cool and restrained display of affect at the American plant functioned adaptively to keep the lid on human passions so that technical and social systems both remained in control. Cool heads must prevail in a potentially dangerous plant environment. However, lost in this coolness was a better sense of what each manager thought and felt about personal, social, and technical issues. In the aggregate, management lost ideas, perspectives and knowledge of the
personal impact events had on each other. Listening is not easy for many of us, and Hsu (1981) boldly declares that Americans are poor listeners:

...as a result of the greater preoccupation with the self, far more people will want to communicate than to be communicated to. Naturally, the problem of communication becomes both acute and widespread, because the more we communicate the less we tend to understand (p. 127).

Some peoples "druthers" never get acknowledged in a system that discourages careful listening and frank talk. At the American plant, no participative activity offset the hierarchical command and control mindset to an extent that department heads and second lines started speaking their piece publicly and from the heart. In fact, wage earners did just this in quality classes, mouthing off loudly about decades of perceived injustices. However, those at the bottom have less to lose by talking out. The cool politeness at the American plant showed itself in one especially intriguing definition of "team".

0 Team is a place where the already slim recognition of my personal achievements will be diluted even more.

This came from a well regarded second line who said:

When's the last time (department head) said he appreciated me working for him in 2 years...it's very hard to get your emotional needs met..."You got a couple of 't's' not crossed." Well OK, I'll work on that. Could you pat me on the back for what I did well? (laughs)

He emphasized the desire for and lack of affect so apparent in the Canadian management group. For this man, money, promotion and titles were not enough. He wanted sincere, personal acknowledgement for his individual contributions and did not
get it. Instead, bosses nit picked about work competently done. His sentiments exemplify the attenuated relationships associated with the extreme self-reliance of utilitarian individualism. In frustration, he wanted to be recognized first as an individual before being asked to join as a member of a team.

**Control**

Participation can be thought of as a form of social control. At the American site, the plant manager ultimately exercised his legitimate hierarchical authority over the management team, interspersed with consensus management. And here we found the basically powerless quality teams lower in the hierarchy. By contrast, the Canadian managers used the participative form of the self-managing team to develop shared control through the bond of personal relations. Below is one of the definitions of team associated with shared control.

- Team is a place where everyone should be who he or she is, not conform and be just like the leader or just like they think they are supposed to be.

The Canadian plant manager thought that the group should capitalize on these differences rather than trying to punish or curtail certain behavioral styles. Yet this is just what an American second line talked about. He did not enjoy nor was he especially adept at safety walk throughs, weekly tours of operating units to talk up safety and point out good and bad practices. For him, a collaborative boss would have let him delegate this task or trade it with a peer. He experienced this as a lack of
autonomy, a forced conformity to a job description. It points up the difference between working in a self-managing group and in a bureaucracy.

The novice to groups often thinks that all the members must conform to the wishes of a leader. But the real process is different. Share feelings and thoughts about oneself even when they are very different from those of others helps the group develop cohesion. Just as importantly, it uncovers the greatest number of skills resident in its membership. In this way, the group is better positioned to respond to a wide range of complex tasks by selecting the appropriately skilled individuals for any given task.

In contrast, the intent of bureaucratic processes is to rationalize work by creating replicable roles for employees and "uncreating" the person's idiosyncrasies. Then, changes such as turnover are less apt to disturb the system's functioning. But the employee's individuality is lost, submerged in a role. Thus the American manager did not feel free to swap safety walk throughs with someone else. His idiosyncrasies would be encouraged by the mature group process but were treated by the bureaucracy as a source of variance to be eliminated.

As a way of summarizing, there seem to be some general trends across these personal definitions. For those raised on individualism, "team" is often experienced at first as having to give up something such as a chance to stand out. For those raised within a more collective tradition, "team" often represents an enhancing experience. Employees with collectivist inclinations who work in firms which highly value
individualism find themselves out of synchrony with the mainstream, and the converse also holds true.

**IMPLICATIONS**

**For Practice**

As practitioners and academicians supporting practitioners, we have a responsibility to give managers better maps for participative change than they currently have. The learning points spelled out in this chapter are a start. In essence, the learning points suggest that change agents, whether managers or consultants, must attune themselves to too many factors impinging on large scale change effort and try to adapt to them over the short run. For example, since most managers operate from Kegan's Institutional stage (Drath, 1990), we cannot expect those in traditional organizational structures to adopt participative strategies that question the status quo. Nor can we expect them to rapidly develop increased interpersonal competency without the kind of dramatic personal growth intervention Conger (1992) describes as important in developing good leaders. In the short run, we can support incremental efforts like those at the American plant as a base, hoping to ignite more expansive efforts as conditions change and as we work to change them.

In my opinion, a longer run solution depends on the willingness of practitioners and academicians to thoughtfully address this question:

> How can we bring the talent for human relationships found in the tradition of collectivism to economic
endeavor which is fueled by a high value on individualism?

Here, we must fight against our own cultural tendencies and blind spots. For all our training in group skills and organizational theory, we as external consultants are notorious loners, nay individualists, wanting to do things our own way, occasionally working in pairs or trios. Internal OD consultants, even when part of a corporate group, often find demands dictating that they work alone. So in either instance, internal or external, we often end up letting circumstance or our own tendencies drive us toward the individualistic route just like those we are trying to nudge out of it.

Our challenge is to divine ways to model with other consultants or manager the participation we want managers to understand and believe in. We must compel ourselves to debrief projects with each other for the learning relevant to participation in teams. We must design projects in ways that allow and encourage collaboration between consultants or between consultants and interested managers. We must challenge managers who say they want to work in teams. Are they willing to alter the structure of bonuses to get a desired kind of team? Have they listed the interdependencies in their work group and between it and other work groups? Have they considered what occasions are coming up within the next six months to one year in which teams could play a role? How would those one layer below their subordinates know that they were a team?
Finally, it is important to say a word about organizational "time-outs" for learning -- special assignments and sabbaticals. Each of three research subjects who had such an opportunity stimulated uncommonly high numbers of high involvement practices. Managers must create time-outs occasionally, regardless of how severe the work load. Those highly motivated to learn about participation self-select into these learning opportunities which then give them the tools to become change agents.

For Theory

As students and educators of organizations, we support the sheer productive capacity and innovation associated with high levels of personal achievement. At the same time, we need a way of pushing our theoretical understanding of participation outside the limits of our immersion in individualism. This amounts to developing an analogue for the breakthrough experience one has when first aware of thinking in a foreign tongue. We need to learn how to "think in team". Seventy percent of the world "thinks in collectivism" of one sort or another (Triandis, 1990). This suggests staying current with participative efforts in other cultures as well as conducting research in other cultures or in multi-national firms.

A natural next step for me would be to extend the study of personal meanings of the word "team" at Chemco. By employing a critical incident technique, one could learn from managers the circumstances in which they experience the clearest sense of being a team member. Since Chemco is a multi-national firm, this effort could reveal conditions supportive of highly participative teams by culture. This information could
be studied to learn which of these supportive conditions were transportable for use in other cultures in which Chemco has offices.

In closing, I hope this material will provide managers a more concrete understanding of what those faces around the table are thinking the next time the team meets. This research report can help managers think in advance about the kind of team they hope to create for a specific purpose. Managers may also be better able to foresee mismatches -- kinds of teams they wish they could construct but conditions which are unfavorable to that outcome. At the very least, I hope these ideas prompt managers' thinking so that they ask more questions of themselves, their bosses and peers, and of potential team members.
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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

PILOT RESEARCH PROJECT:

Site Location: __________________
Division: ________________
Level: ________________
Code: ________________

Demographics:

Age: ________________
Place Born: ________________
Next Position Aspired to: ________________
1. **Lead In**
   
o   telling about your background. Could you sketch for me how you
got to your present position? Ed. background; different jobs;
different companies?
   
o   How do think it's been going?
   
o   What are the things that you are most proud of so far?

2. **Career**
   
o   We've talked about your career up to date. Now, I'd like for you
to think about your career in a larger sense - the part that lies
ahead of you as well as your career to date. What will define a
successful and fulfilling career for you personally?
   
o   Put yourself ahead in time if you will. Think about yourself at
retirement age. You're having dinner with some of your peers and
reminiscing about work. What would you like said about you; how
would you like to be remembered?

3. **Life**
   
o   Now, let's move away from your work life. Think about your life
outside of the work place. Your family; religious affiliations;
community involvements; hobbies; children; volunteer work; small
business, etc. Sketch out for me how you spend your time outside
of work. **GET SPECIFICS.** Probe for interests outside of work:
family; 2nd job; religion; volunteer work.
   
o   From your perspective, what makes for a successful and fulfilling
life? Don't just get a philosophical treatise on the "good life".

4. **Decision Making**
   
o   Let's go back to thinking about your work life again. I'd like to get
your perspective on your staff and on decision making here. Tell
me a little bit about the meetings your staff group has. What are
they like? What goes on? Give me a flavor for the meetings.

Probe for relationships: are any of them your friends? Do you
spend time away from work with any of them?
Take a few moments to think about a recent decision of some importance that was made in your staff group or the one above you (or a decision you know a lot about). Think about the people involved, the people affected, what important issues were being talked about in the company at that time...Tell me what it was. Describe for me in some detail how the decision was made, how the staff came to this decision, the events culminating in this decision.

Probes: Talk about your role in the decision. Were you asked for input?

Note: For site mgr, division mgrs, selected DH, substitute question about the 1986 reorganization.

4a. Consensus vs. Autocratic

Some orgs are consensus oriented -- the staff group has a big voice in decisions. Some are more autocratic -- a manager makes the decisions affecting others. How would you describe your firm on that dimension?

How does that square with the way you would do it?

5. Group (team)

Think of a work group of which you have been a member which was very successful in accomplishing its goals. In your opinion, it accomplished what it set out to do. The result was of a high quality. Picture this work group: who was in it; what its goals were; where it met, how often...Describe for me this work group and what it went through to reach its goals.

After getting a lot of detail, being sure the person is immersed in the prior experience, ask interviewee to speculate about what made this particular work group was so effective. ANALYSIS

Probe for how well they worked together. Personnel? Procedures? Org'l environment? Work group norms?
6. **Exceptional Performer**

- Think of a person generally considered by senior management to be an exceptional performer, someone considered headed for senior management...Describe this person for me. What distinguishes him or her from others?

  Probes: What does he/she do? What does he/she talk about? How are these different from what others do, talk about? What do others say about him/her? Does he/she show behavior, norms which are especially valued here?

  Probe: Is this person someone you would emulate?

7. **The Dilemma of Individualism/Collaboration**

- We've been talking about effective work groups and, on the other hand, about individuals who perform exceptionally well. This draws attention to a dilemma all of us face in one way or another. As individuals, we have needs that must be met, and they require our attention. Meeting them is a source of our feelings of fulfillment, self-esteem. On the other hand, we are social beings. We enjoy and gain sustenance from our associations in groups. And groups are capable of actions and accomplishments that individuals acting alone cannot perform.

  Help me understand this place, keeping in mind this dilemma. In what ways does the org pay attention to the individual's needs and the individual's talents and, on the other hand, needs of groups of people and the talent that can be amassed in a work group?

- What's your opinion about where the org stands today on this?

  Probe about how the bulk of work gets done: by individual effort or by group efforts?

- Would you care to see more opportunities for you to stand out, to distinguish yourself -- or to be a member of a group, a highly performing task team?
8. **Life In General**

   - IN your broader life outside of work, how do you approach this dilemma? On the one hand are the individual needs you and your immediate family have. On the other, there are both needs and opportunities in the wider social community.

9. **Canada/U.S.**

   - Do you think being Canadian/US (living in Canada/US) influences how this dilemma is played out? At Work? In your life outside work?

   - Is this a very Canadian/U.S. organization? In what ways does it reflect Can/U.S. culture as a whole? Are there ways in which it does not?

   - How similar or different is the culture here to what I would find in the States, in Canada? Can you give me specific examples of the similarities/differences?