

PARTICIPATIVE TO AUTHORITATIVE STYLES OF GROUP  
PROBLEM SOLVING BY MIDDLE MANAGERS  
IN A FORTUNE 50 TRANSPORTATION  
CORPORATION

By

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The last decade has seen mutual experimentation between labor and management. The outcome of this testing has been universal innovation with new forms of labor-management relations. The decade has also been noted for increasing polarization and rising tension and conflict in U. S. private sector industrial relations. The traditional New Deal industrial relations system appears to be ill suited to the contemporary work environment, to the interests of workers, employers and the broader society.

Innovation and experimentation with new forms of labor-management relations as well as conflict, confrontation, and strikes in the U. S. private sector have led to increased cooperation between labor and management in decision-making, contract negotiations, and other work related issues.

In the last few years there have been new trends in the industrial relations field. Experiments with increased cooperation between labor and management at the strategic level, at the bargaining table and, most importantly, in the workplace have had a profound impact on first-line supervisors and middle managers.

Many organizations have been challenged with a turbulent social environment, apparently related to the rapid change in both technology and internal and external politics. The jobs facing



organizations now are becoming more complex. Routine tasks have become automated, new information driven technologies have been developed, natural resources have become scarce, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Occupational Safety and Health Agency (OSHA), and powerful special interest groups are placing additional demands on today's organizations.

These influences are complicating decision making for the contemporary worker. Jobs have become too complex to manage without including the employees who are participating in the decision making process. Popular literature suggests that traditional authoritative form of management has become increasingly ineffective and that organizations and their members must change to a more participative management system.

#### Statement of the Problem

Some middle managers appear to endorse participative problem solving while practicing authoritative problem solving.

#### Need for the Study

The value of participative management has been proclaimed for a quarter of a century in management textbooks, in-service training programs and by corporate managers. However, it appears that while the economic environment and corporate cultures have changed, management practices have not made a complete transition from the traditional authoritative management system to a more participative one. It appears that many managers are currently aware of the

advantages of participation, are trained in the uses of participation techniques, are evaluated on the practice of these techniques, and work for executives that advocate participative management. However, some managers continue to use authoritative management practices.

Likert (1976) suggested that many managers believe that they are acting in a participative manner but are often inaccurate in their own perceptions of their own behavior and of others' perceptions of their behavior. Likert (1976) also stated that managers should develop the capacity for accurate perception in order to see correctly the values, expectations, and reactions of others and to understand the extent to which their own behavior is participative and contributes to effective group problem solving.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the discrepancies between the group problem solving styles middle managers perceive themselves to be using and the styles they are perceived to be using by their immediate supervisory subordinates.

#### Research Questions

1. How do middle managers perceive themselves to conduct group problem solving on a scale of participative to authoritative?
2. How do the immediate subordinates of middle managers perceive them to conduct group problem solving on a scale of participative to authoritative?

3. What are the discrepancies between the self perceptions of middle managers and the perceptions by their immediate supervisory subordinates of their styles of group problem solving on a scale of participative to authoritative?

#### Scope of the Study

The study included a total of 728 subjects made up of 288 middle managers and 440 of their immediate supervisory subordinates. These subjects were employees in the marketing and maintenance departments of a Fortune 50 transportation corporation. The employees were located in North and South America, Great Britain and Europe.

#### Assumptions of the Study

For the purpose of the study, the following assumptions were made:

1. Each participant did his/her best to answer the questions on the survey instruments.
2. The answers were true reflections of the middle managers' perceptions of how they conducted problem solving.
3. The answers were true reflections of the perceptions of the middle managers' immediate supervisory subordinates about how the middle managers conducted problem solving.

#### Limitations

The study was limited by the use of the purposive survey as a

research tool. Another limitation is that the survey instruments Forms LB and OB have not been tested for validity or reliability. Additional limitations are the voluntary nature of self reports and the nature of the study of intangibles.

#### Definition of Terms

In order to facilitate the interpretation of this study, the use of certain terms is restricted to specific definitions. These terms are limited as follows:

Authoritative Management - A form of management that is characterized by the demand for obedience by the manager.

Decision Making - The act of reaching a conclusion based on facts or perceptions related to the business affairs of the corporation.

Group - Two or more persons who are interacting with one another in such a manner that each person influences and is influenced by each other (Mullen & Goethals, 1987, p. 2).

Group Problem Solving - A group activity in a business domain directed toward resolving a question or situation that presents concern, confusion, or difficulty. The stimulus to engage in this activity is most often presented by a person of authority or conditions outside the group.

Leadership - A high status position achieved in a group by performing acts recognized by other group members as helping the group to perform its role.

Managers - Employees of an organization who have the formal responsibility to direct its affairs.

Middle Managers - Employees who are in the middle positions of corporate organizational charts, above direct supervisors of workers and below top managers.

Management System - The job related methods and actions that are interacting and interdependent elements of the process of directing the organization.

Management Style - The way in which a manager directs.

Participative Management - A form of management which is characterized by support for employee contributions to organizational decision making.

Rensis Likert's Four Management Systems - Uses leadership process as an organizational variable.

System - An entity that behaves as an entity because of the interdependence of its component elements.

System I, Exploitive Authoritative: The leader has no confidence or trust in subordinates.

System II, Benevolent Authoritative: The leader has condescending confidence and trust, such as a master has to a servant.

System III, Consultative: The leader has substantial but not complete confidence and trust and still wishes to keep control of decisions.

System IV, Participative Group: The leader has complete confidence and trust in all matters.

## Summary

The introductory chapter states the problem that some middle managers appear to endorse participative problem solving while they practice authoritative problem solving. The need for the study was stated. The purpose of the study was to identify the discrepancies between the group problem solving styles middle managers perceive themselves to be using and the styles they are perceived to be using by their immediate supervisory subordinates. The scope of the study included 728 subjects who were middle managers or their supervisory subordinates. These subjects were employees in two functional departments of a Fortune 50 transportation corporation. These employees were located in North and South America, Great Britain and Europe. The assumptions and limitations were stated.

Chapter II contains the review of literature pertaining to group problem solving and its relationship to participative management. Chapter III explains the methodology used in conducting the study, including the population, data collection, and analysis of the data. Chapter IV describes the findings of the study as well as the statistical analysis of the self report data. Chapter V contains the summary, conclusions, recommendations for further research and for practice, and the implications of the study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

This literature review examines the literature about the use of participative management as a strategy for improving worker satisfaction and increasing productivity. The focus is upon participative decision making and group problem solving.

#### Group Problem Solving

The small group has been a common phenomenon in every society from the beginning of civilization. This study concerns the task-oriented group.

The task-oriented group is a group whose existence depends upon its performing a task. An outside authority often assigns the task and focus to the group, although individuals may, of their own volition, form a group by themselves. They may decide to form a group in order to perform some task that either cannot be accomplished by a single person or cannot be accomplished as effectively by persons acting alone.

The nature of what constitutes tasks performed by groups varies widely, ranging from an assembly line group whose assigned task is to put bolts through holes, to a group of jury members which ponders the

evidence presented at a trial. Some tasks, such as that of the jury, obviously require verbal interaction. Others, such as that of the assembly line group, require no verbal interaction.

The task-oriented group coordinates the efforts of other groups. Among the most interesting of these groups are the management groups charged with the task of arranging various subgroups into an efficiently functioning organization.

Fisher and Ellis (1990) argued that effective decision making is regarded as a natural consequence of the members' abilities to analyze and understand the process of group decision making. Groups are capable of performing functions and achieving some goals more efficiently and accurately than individuals can. Although there is evidence that individuals sometimes perform better than groups, (Shaw 1981 cited in Fisher and Ellis, 1990), the quality of decision making is enhanced in groups working under certain conditions.

Gordon Lippitt (Wynn & Guditus, 1984) wrote that no one can deny the importance of effective work groups. He stated

Recent research has recognized the importance of the group as the key unit in the life of the organization. This recognition has been made particularly evident as a result of productivity and morale studies, research . . . . studies in psychology, sociology, and psychiatry . . . clearly indicate that if an organization is to make the maximum use of the human resources and meet the highest levels of man's needs it will come to function best in situations where the individual relates effectively to those organizational groups in which he is a member and a leader (p. 17).

The literature indicates that in some cases the term "problem solving" has become part of decision making. However, the relationship between decision making and problem solving is not



universally agreed upon. Some view the two terms as virtually synonymous while others draw clear distinctions between them. Fisher and Ellis (1990) stated that problem solving includes decision making, which requires a high level of acceptance of the solution by the group. Decision making also includes other elements. A decision is choice made from among alternative proposals, and the consideration of these proposals constitutes all or part of the group's performance. Consensus signifies the members' commitment to a decision reached by the group, and this commitment is measured by the member's degree of willingness to implement the decision. This degree of willingness to implement the decision appears to be directly related to the degree that the members of the group were allowed to participate in the decision making process.

#### The Concept of Participative Management

Participative management is a philosophy that advocates the usefulness and legitimacy of employee contributions to organizational decision making. Margulies and Black (1987) suggested that to understand management styles one should consider three rationales. These rationales include the human relation rationale, the human resource rationale, and the democratic rationale.

(1) The human relations rationale is that humans are instruments that are used in the achievement of organizational effectiveness. In terms of the relationship between participation and employees, this rationale views participation as a means of increasing employee satisfaction and reducing resistance to change. This rationale clearly accepts the right of those at the top of the organizational hierarchy to determine the best course of action for the organization and its members and to utilize

members and various participative techniques to achieve those ends. Participation is not a right of the members but a tool which is the right of the organization's management to use in achieving organizational effectiveness.

(2) The human resource rationale is founded on the belief that individuals have great untapped potential, including being active, independent, capable of self-control, and making positive contributions to the organization. In addition, this rationale asserts that humans have a need for growth and development.

This rationale points to the fact that in pursuit of organizational effectiveness division of labor, job specialization, and close supervision often thwart the development and expression of human potential. Under this rationale, both the growth and development of the organization are viewed as the desired ends. However, one is not to be sacrificed at the expense of the other.

Participation is a means of helping humans grow and develop their full potential and facilitating positive organizational outcomes such as better communication, improved decisions, and greater employee commitment.

(3) The democratic rationale is that humans have the capacity for wise and effective social decision making. There is an inherent collective wisdom in the society as a whole and individual members have the basic ability and inclination to be responsible, informed, and interested in their own welfare and that of the collective. While this rationale does not claim that the democratic process is perfect, it does assert that it will lead to more equitable and positive decisions and directions. While this rationale asserts that democratic participation will lead to organizational effectiveness, it also believes that participation is not simply a tool but an end in and of itself.

Participation is valued independently of its impact on organizational effectiveness. In part it is valued because it is the right of organizational members to exert an influence on their lives.

Although this rationale advocates a broad and direct participation of all organizational members, it also allows for the leadership of some subgroups to make certain decisions under the control of an electorate. Although the mechanisms vary, they generally take the

form of some indirect, representative form of participation that is controlled by periodic electoral feedback (Margulies & Black, 1987, pp. 394-395).

When the historical record is examined, there is evidence of participation in management in all types of human institutions. In the western culture some of the early examples of participation came from the collegial model of governance that was initiated in the early European universities. In more recent history, a form of participative management was used in the pre-mechanized long wall coal mining of Great Britain. The data from this study suggested that production was increased by 20 percent, self-directed job learning was improved, sickness, accidents and absences were reduced and job satisfaction was improved (Trist, Higgin, Murray & Pollock as cited in McGregor, 1967).

As a result of the data from this study, the group of Trist, Higgin, Murray and Pollock decided to conduct field research in a different industry and with a different culture. Their research in the weaving sheds of a textile mill in Ahmadabad, India produced empirical proof that when the participative management processes were used in work teams, improvement in quality control and production on the order of 30 percent were obtained (McGregor, 1967). Other studies on the benefits and effectiveness of participative management were conducted between World Wars I and II in Great Britain. In many industries, the Joint Consultative Committees were established to provide fora in which both management and employees could present ideas about how to increase production for the war effort (Knight, 1976).

To many Americans, worker participation was something that took place in Israel's Kibbutzes or in Western European self-managed, codetermination factories, not in the United States (Russell, 1988). Yet some writers (Tausky & Chelte, 1988) argued that for many years American social scientists have advocated giving employees a direct voice in the workplace, aside from union representation.

This is a position which has not always been attractive to management or to business analysts. "Beginning in the 1930s with the writings on human relations, and continuing into the present, the practice of participation in decision making has been proposed by Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939; Lewin et al. 1939; McGregor, 1957; Likert, 1967; and Tannenbaum & Rozgonyi, 1986. Yet a large gap remains between recommendation and implementation" (Tausky & Chelte, 1988, pp. 364-365).

#### Likert's Wholistic Approach

The work of Likert (1967) at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research was generating interest. Likert focused on developing a more wholistic approach to improving the quality of working life. He realized the need for all employees to understand their corporation's mission and their individual roles in achieving it. He also realized that corporations must understand and help employees reach personal objectives. Likert (1967) said that the best way to implement and sustain such two-way support was through the participation of all stakeholders in problem solving processes at all levels, from the lowest to the highest. Likert's

major contribution was his realization that a new organizational design was needed to facilitate such overall participation. He thought that organizational charts should show, rather than building blocks forming a pyramid, a series of overlapping circles. The circles represent work groups, each with a specific mission. The overlapping areas represented "link-pin" individuals who belonged to more than one group and, therefore, facilitated communication.

#### Managerial Attitudes

In the study of Managerial Attitudes Toward Participative Management Programs, Gilberg (1988) wrote that the change from traditional and hierarchical to participative managerial styles has not been ignored by organizational psychologists. In the past, social-psychological approaches were heavily influenced by Maslow's needs hierarchy. Most studies examined the fit of individual needs with organizational needs.

In the 1980s the motivation theory was dominated by structural theory which focused on deep seated needs within the individual. These approaches to motivation theory emphasize external references such as evaluation stress, expectations of others, communication and interpersonal activities. For scholars, this shift to structural motivators has resulted in a clearer alignment of organizational psychology to the field of organizational development. Theories of employee motivation are now coupled with job designing and organizational change. Additionally, participative management practices are now becoming common motivational techniques, along with

evaluation and pay plans, for improving performance.

McGregor (1967) argued that if a manager's style was deficient, it tended to be coercive. The reasons for his management style were usually based on his principal beliefs, his values, his self esteem, and his lifetime of experience. The manager may be willing to change specific and external "tactical" habits but will be reluctant to change in more fundamental ways. McGregor (1967) suggested that management training programs elucidate the manager's style but do not change his beliefs, values or behavior. He argued that these programs were attempts by upper management to get managers to use a style that could be more beneficial to the corporation.

McGregor (1967) stated that managers do not deliberately try to deceive but are unconsciously trying to protect their own interests. They often think that they have changed their style when in reality they have only justified what they have learned in such a way that they can assimilate it into their current style. This bias for self protection can be traced to the conflict between the manager's written organizational roles and what actually takes place in the work environment. Often this problem is agitated by the manager's own personal values and his belief that he must both fulfill his organizational role and attain corporate goals.

Meyer (1981) argued that today's trends in organization development favor the effectiveness of goal orientation over authority orientation and that few thoughtful managers would publicly defend the traditional application of authority. The literature suggests that many managers have helped prepare formal organizational

statements that advocate a democratically goal-oriented philosophy and they may have made a public commitment to this principle. However, in many ways, both subtle and blatant, as a result of habit, tradition, policy, mores and insensitivity, some managers continue to use authority as their principal source of power.

One of the most visible forms of authoritarian attitudes is the "superior-subordinate" association which implies "ownership" of subordinates by the supervisor. This attitude will often manifest itself in insensitive and inconsiderate behavior.

Meyer (1981) argued that authoritarian management is codified and reinforced by privileges and symbols. These privileges and symbols include private eating and parking facilities, office size and furnishings, unique identification badges and dress. Special beverage service, impunity from parking rules, disregard for time and other common schedules, and the denial of job posting procedures are examples of privileges of rank that are cultivated by managers long after they have declared themselves officially against authoritarian management. Symbols associated with these privileges tend to increase social distance and inhibit communication, so creating and exaggerating cleavages between groups at various levels of the organization.

Fisher (1986) wrote that managers often saw participative management as loss of status, loss of authority, and loss of responsibility. These writers felt that even though they really believed this was the right thing to do, it was hard to share management duties. They felt that they worked for those

responsibilities and that it was their traditional belief that one of the benefits of being successful is having people work for oneself.

Now employees work with and it is hard for managers to get used to subordinates openly questioning their decisions even when they are nice about it. Saporito (1986, pp. 58-59) wrote

Most companies that have tried participative management have failed. He argues that it (participative management) fails often, 'a victim of backsliding, backbiting, backhanded treatment, and back to business as usual'. Michael Maccoby, director of Harvard's Program on Technology, Public Policy and Human Development concludes that 'the consensus among academics, consultants and managers is that most efforts to introduce participation never make it'. William Cooke, a professor at the University of Michigan who is researching the subject concludes: 'About 75% of all programs in the early 1980s failed. The reason? Consensus here too: not the workers but management, upper, middle, and lower'.

The reasons for failure appear to be that the practice of participative management is most often directed at the rank and file employees and no commitment or support is given by management.

Saporito (1986) wrote that managers who think that their businesses are producing adequate results are not interested in changing their methods of operation. He argued that the participative process was not congruent with authoritarian management methods and measurement.

Saporito (1986) suggested that there are cultural problems that force managers not to support participative management. "Plant managers with this 'participative management' kind of experience are sometimes seen by 'higher-ups' as tainted, and may have a tougher time getting promoted because they don't manage the old-fashioned way" (Saporito, 1986, p. 60).



The evidence suggests that after the initial practice of participation, productivity improves with a giant Hawthorne effect. "Turn up the lights, productivity increases turn down the lights, productivity increases--anything that suggests management cares improves productivity". However, these improvements have done little to change managerial behavior at most companies. Maccoby (cited in Saporito, 1986, p. 60) wrote, "There's nothing wrong with a giant Hawthorne effect but it has to be distinguished from culture change."

It appears that the higher up the organizational chart, the greater the reluctance to practice participative management. Eastern Airline's sale to Texas Air revealed both a failure to agree on wages and a failure of union boss Charles Bryan and Eastern Chief Executive Frank Borman to communicate. "There's no question, neither Bryan nor Borman could make the shift to a fully participatory style" (Simons cited in Saporito, 1986, p. 60).

Attempts by many organizations to make the necessary cultural changes are blocked by the issues of authority, "Management still assumes its role as to tell, and not tell. Information is power, and access to it remains a clear badge of rank to managers" (Dotlich cited in Saporito, 1986, p. 60).

The evidence suggests (Zemke, 1989) that the reasons managers defy or reject participative management are complex, and include "management downsizing". Zemke, using data collected in a four year study, wrote that management downsizing in the 1980's could be classified as corporate America's favorite activity. "By one estimate, announced cutbacks among the Fortune 50 companies since

1980 come to more than 280,000 jobs in administrative management and white collar positions" (Zemke, 1989, p. 42).

The result of this activity is a group of managers that is overextended, demoralized and miserable. It appears that because of these large reductions, the remaining managers have been given more assignments, responsibilities and subordinates to supervise. The net effects of these increases are greater manager burnout and feelings of powerlessness. This feeling is exacerbated by the perception that if managers complain or fail to produce, they could be the next to go. Managers then pressure their direct reports to work harder. In his study, Zemke (1989) wrote that more than 32 percent of the respondents concluded that middle managers manage in a less participative way than they did five years ago.

Participative management often fails when authoritative supervisors try to help employees. This help is often ignored, rebuffed, misinterpreted, or resented. This conflict is exacerbated by the organization's cultures and policies and the authoritative supervisor's own sources of job satisfaction (Ronco, 1988).

Manager acts of self protection are not without merit. Bennett (1989) wrote that in the late 1980s the traditional agreements between middle managers and the corporation appear to have been abrogated. She argued that prior to this time middle managers felt they had a contract with their corporations, and the evidence suggested that they did. While this contract was informal,

it was strongly felt and quite specific. The contract stated,

Take care of business and we'll take care of you. You don't have to be a star, just be faithful, obedient, and only modestly competent, and this will be your home as long as you want to stay. We may have to lay off blue-collar workers now and then, or even cut off some heads at the very top, but unless we are in the deepest kind of trouble you will remain on the payroll. You are family (Bennett, 1989, p. R21).

However, in the 1980s global competition, hostile takeovers and restructuring caused American businesses to abandon these agreements and terminate more than a half million middle managers (Bennett, 1989). Now it appears that because of these external factors the continual practice of developing new departments and staffing them with new managers could no longer be justified or maintained. As a result, the agreement between top management and the middle managers was broken and replaced by a philosophy called "participative management."

Despite the interest in and promising advantages of participative management, the movement from traditional, hierarchial, and authoritative management practices was not without problems. In his overview of the subject, Anthony, cited in Gilberg (1988), found that there were four types of barriers which can hinder the promotion and effective use of participative management practices. These barriers were as follows:

. . . organizational, situational, subordinate, and managerial. Organizational barriers include: A higher value being placed on tradition and maintenance of the status quo than on innovations and an organizational philosophy which prefers uniformity, consistency, and control from the top rather than individual initiative and freedom at the field level. And, a formal bureaucratic authority structure which is rigidly adhered

to and the lack of an organizational climate that is supportive of employee involvement and participation without fear of reprisal.

Situational barriers are related to an organization's environment and effectively limit the possibilities of participative management. Certain tasks are accomplished best by a single person working alone while other tasks and decisions are too technical in nature to involve more than those with specialized expertise. There are also the physical constraints imposed by time. In particular, some practices which are consultative in nature require those involved either to work extra hours or spend less time at their regular jobs.

Subordinate barriers exist when non-managerial employees resist increased participation. Similar to their managers, many employees naturally accept hierarchical authority patterns in which decision making is the sole responsibility of management. They may lack the desire of knowledge and may not feel competent to participate in decision making. Others, especially union employees, fear that their effective involvement may lead to changes in the organization of work which are not to their benefit, such as increased work load or even loss of jobs (Gilberg, 1988, pp. 86-89).

#### Managerial Obstacle

While not diminishing the importance of organizational, situational, and subordinate barriers, this study concerns the barriers management presents to the implementation of an effective practice of participative management. Some of the common objections of managers to participation are that it reduces their flexibility, causes loss of authority over operations for which they are accountable, produces poor quality decisions, can cause polarization and conflict, and takes too much time (Gilberg, 1988).

Fisher (1986) added that fear often produces the managerial barrier. The managers fear losses of authority, discipline, and

personal status when their direct subordinates develop better methods of operation and decision making. Most managers have not had professional participative management training, and even those who are naturally inclined toward the process are faced with the time consuming task of retraining themselves or risking an ill suited implementation.

#### Roadblocks to Change

Roth (1986) wrote that research indicates that participative management is important to workers and can increase production as well as worker satisfaction. However, the lessons learned are usually ignored. The implications for management are too threatening. Roth (1986) also argued that although a growing body of evidence supports the belief that properly designed participative problem solving was more efficient, at least on production levels of the hierarchy, large scale change has not occurred.

Roth (1985) suggested that one specific roadblock is middle management. Middle management's major responsibility had traditionally been control of the daily routine, including short-term problem solving on the operational level. Early efforts to improve the problem solving process had focused on increasing worker participation. If labor were to prove itself capable of addressing short-term operational problems just as efficiently or even more efficiently than their bosses did, middle management would lose its most important role.

Middle managers were trapped in a pincer movement.

Participation minded labor and its supporters were pushing from below. Efficiency-minded executives were pushing from above. As might be expected, morale began to drop. In a 1973 survey of nearly 3,000 executives conducted by the American Management Association (AMA), almost one-half of the middle managers queried stated that their jobs were "at best unsatisfactory." An ongoing poll conducted by the Opinion Research Corporation (ORC) asked middle management, hourly workers, and clerical workers to rate their work situation in terms of 11 issues (Roth, 1985, p. 75).

Concerning all issues, the percentage of positive responses from middle management dropped off, sometimes precipitously, after 1977. At the same time the percentage of positive responses from hourly workers climbed after 1977 in all but four cases and the percentage of positive responses from clerical workers climbed in all but five.

While the gap between labor and middle management seemed to be narrowing, that between labor and management and upper level management was perceived as growing. It appeared that corporate executives were sacrificing middle management in order to maintain their own integrity as individual problem solvers, while middle management was not qualified to assist directly in the solution of strategic problems. The attitude of top level management proved to be a roadblock to necessary change, though often a more subtle one.

Roth (1985) also argued that alternative approaches to problem solving had not been generally accepted. He suggested that worker participation goes against tradition. Worker participation

contradicts lingering socio/economic/religious doctrine and the related conflict ethic. This type of participation disrupts hierarchically defined and bureaucratically enforced lines of responsibility and authority. Eventually most stakeholders realized that still more basic changes had to occur in key environmental variables if the required adjustments were to become acceptable (Roth, 1985, pp. 74-77).

#### Summary

Employee participation in its diverse forms now attracts dramatically more interest and has caused much more activity in the contemporary United States than it has in the past. In one form or another, employee participation is now sponsored by the U. S. Congress, the New York Stock Exchange, and large numbers of corporations, labor unions, management consultants, and academics.

Stogdill, cited in Wynn and Guditus (1984), remarked about the qualified research on participative management. He wrote that the papers on participative management are generally case studies written by fans. The findings were often positive and suggested improved productivity and morale. In contrast, the results of a survey of 50 studies on participative management led Schweiger and Leana, cited in Locke, Schweiger and Latham (1986), concluded that the practice of participative decision making results in higher productivity than does authoritative decision making.

Russell (1988) said that to expect lasting positive results even

from complex combinations of these strategies,

an organization must have a real and deeply rooted commitment to increasing employee involvement in both the governance and financial fortunes of their firms. And so far, that kind of commitment continues to be absent from all but small numbers of contemporary American firms (p. 391).

Lippitt, cited in Wynn and Guditus (1984), wrote that no one can deny the importance of effective work groups. He stated

Recent research has recognized the importance of the group as the key unit in the life of the organization. This recognition has been made particularly evident as result of productivity and morale studies research . . . studies in psychology, sociology, and psychiatry . . . clearly indicate that if an organization is to make the maximum use of the human resources and meet the highest levels of man's needs, it will come to function best in situations where the individual relates effectively to those organizational groups in which he is a member and a leader (p. 17).

Many think that the future of industrial democracy rests on the ability to develop workable sociotechnical programs and not be limited to wishful thinking and dreaming. Any earnest attempt to bring about industrial democracy has to be realistic, productive, and industry specific. Managers, white collar specialists, administrative staff, and various categories of blue collar workers must be involved with development, implementation and maintenance.

Other researchers, from Taylor to Lewin to McGregor to Emery and Trist have identified management's own behavior as the place to begin for improving the system: labor-management relations, production, work satisfaction, culture, or anything else (Weisbord, 1987).

St. Antoine (1984) stated that current research suggests that it is good business to listen to the employees and to give them a share



in the operation of the organization "even on so called managerial decisions" (p. 114).

Kimmerling (1989) suggested that in the 1990s, U. S. corporations will cultivate global social agendas while becoming principal providers for workers, their families, and their communities. In the coming decade corporations must rethink traditional business ethics and must accept the social. Then management must transform these "enlightened" policies into strategic corporate practice.

It appears that in western capitalistic systems there is an unmistakable conflict of vested interests that separates management from manual workers. However, in most organizations there are many common interests which can contribute to industrial democracy. The literature suggested that U. S. corporations have historically paid insufficient attention to social issues. In today's competitive climate, economic survival may depend in part on corporate care-giving.

Numerous criteria have been used as measurements of occupational success related to improvements in productivity and job satisfaction. These criteria can be both objective and subjective. Improvements in productivity and job satisfaction have been viewed from the worker's, the employer's, and society's perspectives. The criterion of job satisfaction was most often used in correlation with improvement in productivity. Environmental factors, situational variables, and the effects of pay rates were significant factors.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to identify the discrepancies between the group problem solving systems middle managers perceive themselves to be using and the systems they are perceived to be using by their immediate supervisory subordinates. The population consisted of mid-level managers and their immediate supervisory subordinates in two functional departments employed by a Fortune 50 transportation corporation. Two survey questionnaires with 24 and 26 items and eight forced responses were administered to all employees in the Fall of 1990. A return rate of 73 percent was achieved. The data analysis consisted of generating mean scale scores for the eight responses and performing a general linear model procedure followed by a t-test. In addition, data collected about the characteristics of the two functional departments were analyzed in an exploratory manner.

#### Research Questions

The following research questions were examined:

1. How do middle managers perceive themselves to conduct group problem solving on a scale of participative to authoritative?

2. How do the immediate supervisory subordinates of middle managers perceive them to conduct group problem solving on a scale of participative to authoritative?

3. What are the discrepancies between the self perception of middle managers and the perceptions by their immediate supervisory subordinates of their group problem solving on a scale of participative to authoritative?

#### Survey Population

The design of the study included a convenience survey of a population of managers and supervisors. The population was 288 managers and 440 supervisors. The survey included all managers and the supervisors who were their immediate supervisory subordinates. The participants were employed in two departments of a Fortune 50 transportation corporation.

Of 728 questionnaires mailed to the mid-level managers and their immediate supervisory subordinates, 531 or 73.7 percent were returned. Of the 288 questionnaires mailed to mid-level managers, 212 or 73.6 percent were returned. Of the 440 questionnaires mailed to their supervisory subordinates, 72.5 percent were returned. This return was representative of the population at the .03 level (Kerlinger, 1986). The analysis of the study is based on the 531 responses.

#### Description of the Instrument

The questionnaire instruments selected were developed from a

previous study conducted by Rensis Likert. Likert's Profile of Leadership Behavior Form LB and Profile of Own Behavior Form OB were used to identify the group problem solving systems carried out by the individuals within the participating departments. The Form LB was given to the manager's subordinates. The data from Form LB were used to determine what group problem solving system the manager's subordinates perceived them to be using. The managers were given Form OB. The data from Form OB were used to determine the group problem solving systems the managers perceived themselves to be using. These data were used to compare the differences between the two groups.

The Form LB and OB used eight items along an eight-point continuum (Likert scale). Form OB contained 24 items and Form LB contains 26 items eliciting responses as shown.

Very Little		Some		Considerable		Very Great	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

The neutral midpoint on the response scale was eliminated. The scale presented a forced-choice situation with a left or right influence that should reduce response bias. The subscales may be considered independently or totaled across scales to extract a total mean score. Since Form LB and Form OB were used in this study to determine the overall management style of the population, the total mean score was used. Item scores fell in one of four ranges and corresponded to one of Likert's four systems. The ranges and systems were Range 1 to 2 or System 1, exploitive authoritative; Range 3 to 4 or System 2,

benevolent authoritative; Range 5 to 6 or System 3, consultative; and Range 7 to 8 or System 4, participative.

Scores in the low ranges (between 1.00 and 3.99) are consistent with more authoritative management system (Likert's Systems 1 and 2). Scores in the higher ranges (between 4.00 and 8.00) suggest a more highly participative management system (Likert's Systems 3 and 4.) The value of this profile was to measure the nature of the management systems of particular organizations and was tested universally on middle and upper managers (Likert, 1967).

Likert (1967) pointed out that this type of instrument is suitable to measure the system of any work group within an organization as well as that of the total organization. The publisher of the original Profile of Organizational Characteristics (POC) instrument reported split-half reliability coefficients for the expanded version as +.90 to +.96. Likert (1967) also reported satisfactory use of the Form S with many different groups of managers, irrespective of their fields of experience or whether they were in line or staff positions.

The Forms LB and OB were developed from Likert's original POC instrument and were used to collect data for this study. However, Forms LB and OB have not been tested for validity or reliability.

The method used for sampling in this study was the purposive survey. Rather than attempting to describe the management system of the total population, the study was conducted with a specific population. This type of survey method permitted the study of a relatively large number of managers, while an organization wide

sample might yield too few numbers from the managerial ranks.

The disadvantage of the purposive survey was that one cannot generalize from the survey to make inferences about the distribution of responses in the total population. After considering the alternatives it was determined that the objectives could be better met by focusing exclusively on managerial personnel using a purposive survey than by gathering an organization wide sample.

#### Data Collection

The collection of data occurred from October 29, 1990 through November 26, 1990. All questionnaires contained a cover letter printed on corporate letterhead which explained the purpose of the study, asked for the participant's assistance, and gave instructions for completing and returning the questionnaires. The cover letter bore the signature of a corporate vice president. To further enhance survey returns, the questionnaire was designed to be completed anonymously. The questionnaire packets were mailed the first week in October, 1990.

#### Analysis of the Data

The data from survey questionnaires LB and OB were collected. The statistical procedures used to analyze the data were descriptive statistics, cross tabulations, and a t-test.

These data were used to identify the discrepancies between the group problem solving systems middle managers perceive themselves to

be using and the systems they are perceived to be using by their immediate supervisory subordinates.

Analyzing research data is a hierarchical, sequential process. The interpretation of the data is often influenced by random errors. Systematic and random variation must be addressed when interpreting these data (Williamson et al. 1977). The t-test was used to compensate for these variations. The test population was "nominal" and their item scores were interval in nature. The samples from the population were representative. However, the sample sizes were unequal and the mean test item scores for the groups varied. The t-test was chosen as the statistical technique to make the comparison between the two unequal groups and to determine if the difference between the two means was greater than that which could be expected from chance. The Statistical Analysis System (SAS) was used for data analysis. The test of significance was set at the .05 level. Tables and figures were used to display the data.

#### Summary

This chapter has included the procedures for the collection of the data in this study. The population was described. The research questions were stated. The survey instruments that were used for the data collection were discussed. The time and method used for collection of the data was stated. The method of statistical analysis was explained.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to identify the discrepancies between the group problem solving styles middle managers perceive themselves to be using and the styles they are perceived to be using by their immediate supervisory subordinates.

Descriptive statistics were used and a t-test was conducted using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) program for data analysis.

The population of this study included 728 participants, 288 of whom were middle managers and 440 of whom were their immediate supervisory subordinates. These participants were employees in the marketing and maintenance departments of a Fortune 50 transportation corporation. These employees were located in North and South America, Great Britain and Europe.

#### Report of the Data

A total of 531 instruments were returned. The Form OB was administered to 288 middle managers in the two departments. The Form LB was administered to 440 supervisory subordinates of the middle managers in the two departments. There were three fields in the demographic section of the instrument, one field for each of the two departments and one field for the "other" category. The



instruments were administered only to the marketing and maintenance departments. A few participants wrote the name of their sub-unit in the "other" category. The returns for Form LB included 43 or 13.4 percent from marketing, 255 or 70.9 percent from maintenance, and 21 or 6.5 percent from "other". The composite total return for Form LB was 319 or 72.5 percent. The Form OB was administered to 288 middle managers in the two departments. The returns for Form OB included 76 or 35.8 percent for marketing, 111 or 52.3 percent from maintenance and 25 or 9.4 percent from "other". The composite total return for Form OB was 212 or 73.6 percent. The combined total for all returns was 531 or 72.9 percent.

The rate and distribution of the returns suggested that the participants were motivated to return the questionnaires. Additionally, the percentage of returns suggested that the participants found the format and style of the instrument acceptable. This observation and the pattern of test item scores for the two groups suggested that face and construct validity of the instrument were also acceptable. The pattern of test item scores for the two groups suggested that systematic errors and situational errors were not significant. Figure 1 depicts that information.

A t-test was conducted to analyze and compare the data for the middle managers and their supervisory subordinates. The t-test for the middle managers produced a mean of 151.111 and a standard deviation of 15.653 and a standard error of 1.090. The t-test for the middle managers supervisory subordinates produced a mean of 125.049 and a standard deviation of 33.818 and a

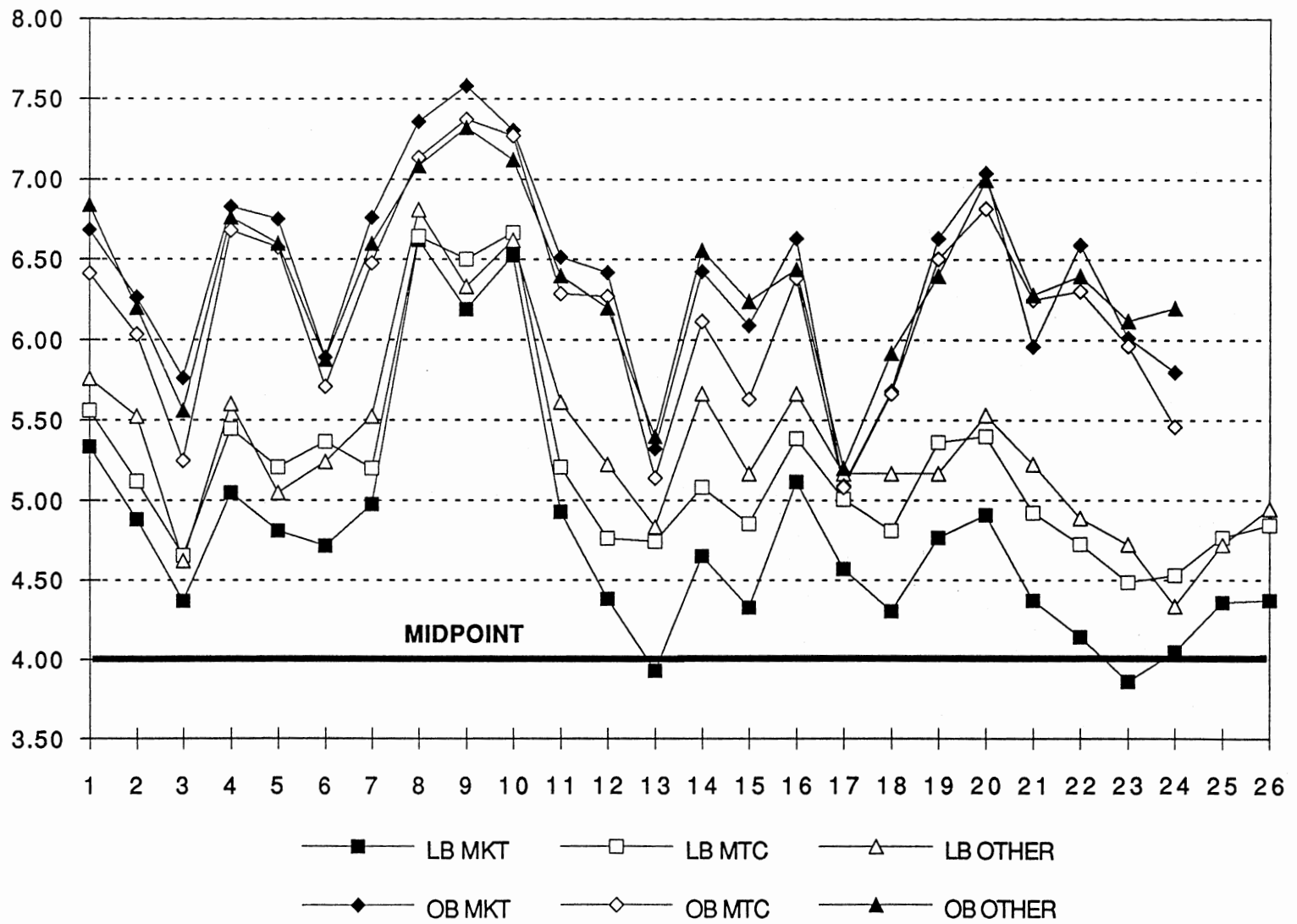


Figure 1. Group Averages

standard error of 2.00. The population variances were unequal so  $t = -11.4264$ ,  $DF = 425.5$  and  $\text{Prob } T = 0.0001$ . For  $H_0$ : variances are equal,  $F = 4.67$ ,  $DF = (284,205)$  and  $\text{Prob } F = 0.0000$ .  $F = 4.67$  is greater than the table value of 1.960 for  $DF = 284,205$  at the .05 level of significance. The difference in item scores between the two groups was statistically significant.

The item scores for the middle managers were distributed with seven items or 29.1 percent of their scores in the 5 to 6 Range, 14 items or 58.3 percent in the 6 to 7 Range and three items or 12.5 percent in the 7 to 8 Range. The item scores for the supervisory subordinates were distributed with 11 items or 45.8 percent in the 4 to 5 Range, 10 items or 41.6 percent in the 5 to 6 Range; three items or 12.5 percent in the 6 to 7 Range. The majority of scores for the middle managers were in the 5 to 7 Range with a grand mean of 6.31. The majority of scores for the supervisory subordinates were in the 4 to 6 Range with a grand mean of 5.11. There was a 1.2 or eight percent difference in item scores between the two groups. This difference represents the mean range differential or the difference in perception per item, of the two groups. The item scores placed both groups in Ranges 5 to 6 or Likert's Consultative System III. Table I and Figure 2 depict this information.

The literature revealed that middle managers resist and often become barriers to successful participative management programs. Likert (1976) suggested that many managers often believe that they are acting in a participative manner but are inaccurate in their

TABLE I  
SUMMARY OF AVERAGE DATA

Category	Sums	Average	Counts
<u>LB MKT (IND = 1)</u>			
AVERAGE	124.49	4.79	
STD	45.28	1.74	
VARIANCE	80.31	3.09	
<u>LB</u>			319
MKT			43
MTC			255
OTHER			21
<u>LB MTC (IND = 1)</u>			
AVERAGE	135.23	5.20	
STD	46.46	1.79	
VARIANCE	83.80	3.22	
<u>LB</u>			212
MKT			76
MTC			111
OTHER			25
<u>LB OTHER (IND = 1)</u>			
AVERAGE	139.11	5.35	
STD	54.07	2.08	
VARIANCE	114.68	4.41	
<u>OB MKT (IND = 2)</u>			
AVERAGE	153.40	6.39	
STD	24.23	1.01	
VARIANCE	25.15	1.05	
<u>OB MTC (IND = 2)</u>			
AVERAGE	148.80	6.20	
STD	28.33	1.18	
VARIANCE	34.22	1.43	
<u>OB OTHER (IND = 2)</u>			
AVERAGE	152.72	6.36	
STD	22.93	0.96	
VARIANCE	22.66	0.94	

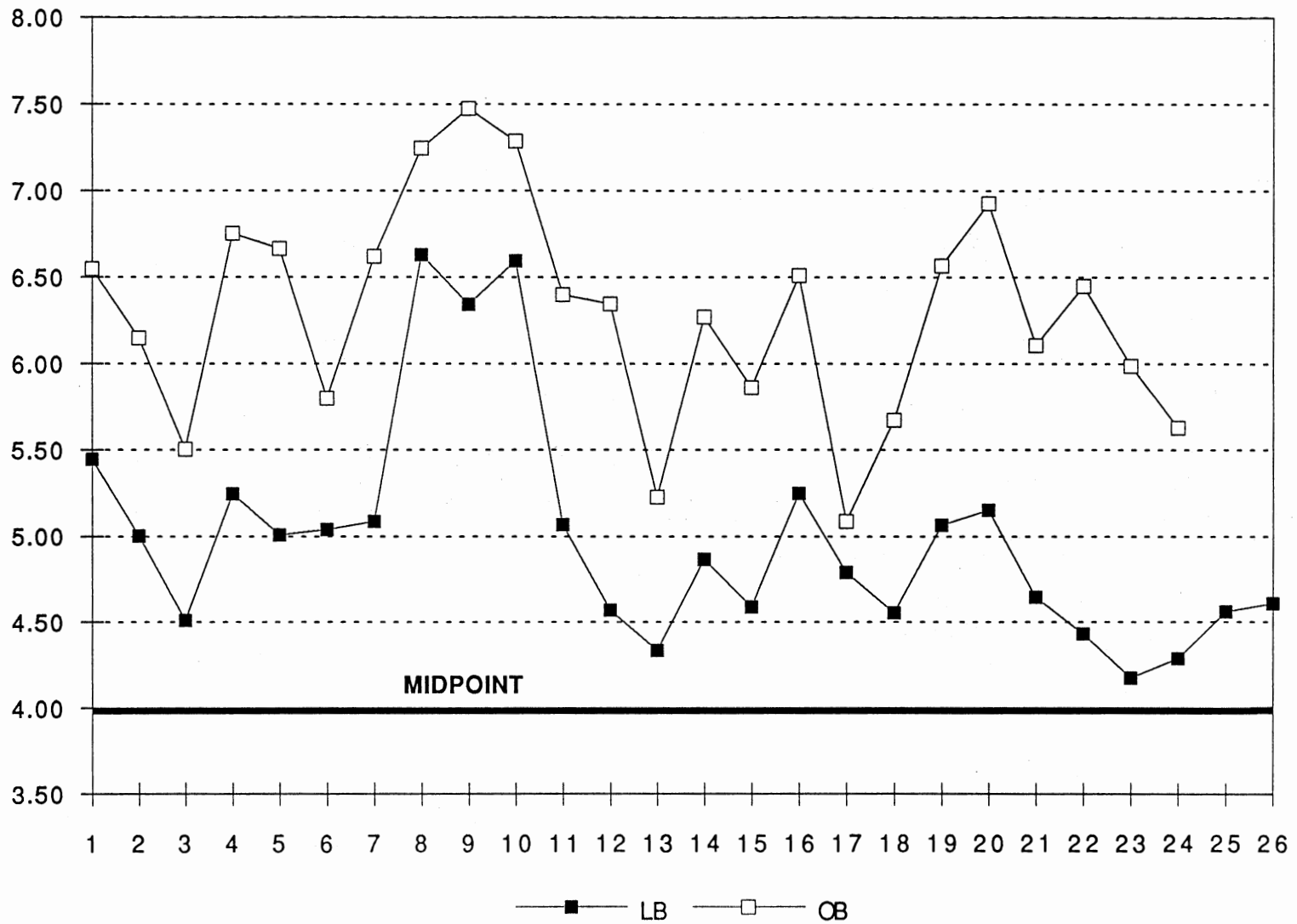


Figure 2. LB and OB Averages for MKT and MTC

perceptions of their own behavior. Additionally, middle managers are often inaccurate in their perceptions of how others view their behavior.

The difference in range scores between the two groups reflects a difference in perception and appears to support Likert's argument. However, the scores of the two groups in this study are in the participative range. The middle manager scores contained 14 items or 58.3 percent in the 6 to 7 Range and three items or 12.5 percent that fell in the 7 to 8 Range. The composite total would suggest a pattern that would move the managers into the 7 Range.

This 7 Range would place them in Likert's System IV (Participative Group). This placement implies that the leaders perceived themselves as having complete confidence and trust in their supervisory subordinates in all matters (Likert, 1967). Ten items or 41.6 percent of their supervisory subordinates scores fell in the 5 to 6 Range and three items or 12.5 percent fell in the 6 to 7 Range. The composite total would place the supervisory subordinate in the 5 to 6 Range. These scores lay within Likert's System III (Consultative). This placement implies that the supervisory subordinates perceived their managers as having substantial but not complete confidence and trust and still wishing to keep control of decisions (Likert, 1967).

Additionally, there was a small difference in item scores between the marketing and maintenance groups. Marketing middle managers scored themselves higher (6.39). Maintenance middle

managers scored themselves lower (6.20). Table I and Figure 3 summarize these data.

However, the supervisory subordinates for the maintenance middle managers scored their managers higher (5.20), while the supervisory subordinates for the marketing managers scored their managers lower (4.79). Table I and Figure 4 show this in graphic form. This variation could be the result of the functional difference between the two groups.

The middle managers awarded themselves their highest score on questions eight through ten "Expects each member to do his/her best"; "Expects a high-quality job from herself/himself," and "Thinks what she/he and the group are doing is important". These managers scored themselves highest of all on item nine with a mean score of 7.47. The supervisory subordinates partially agreed with their middle managers as they scored them highest on items seven, eight and nine. Item eight was the highest score with a mean of 6.63. These scores indicated that the strengths of these middle managers were their abilities to share information and their expectations for quality work.

The middle managers scored themselves lower on question three, "States your point of view as well as or better than you can even though he/she disagrees with it"; question 13, "Is not defensive when criticized," and question 17, "Avoids being impatient with the progress being made by the group". Item 17 was scored the lowest with a mean score of 5.08. The supervisory subordinates also agreed with their middle managers and scored items three, 13 and 17

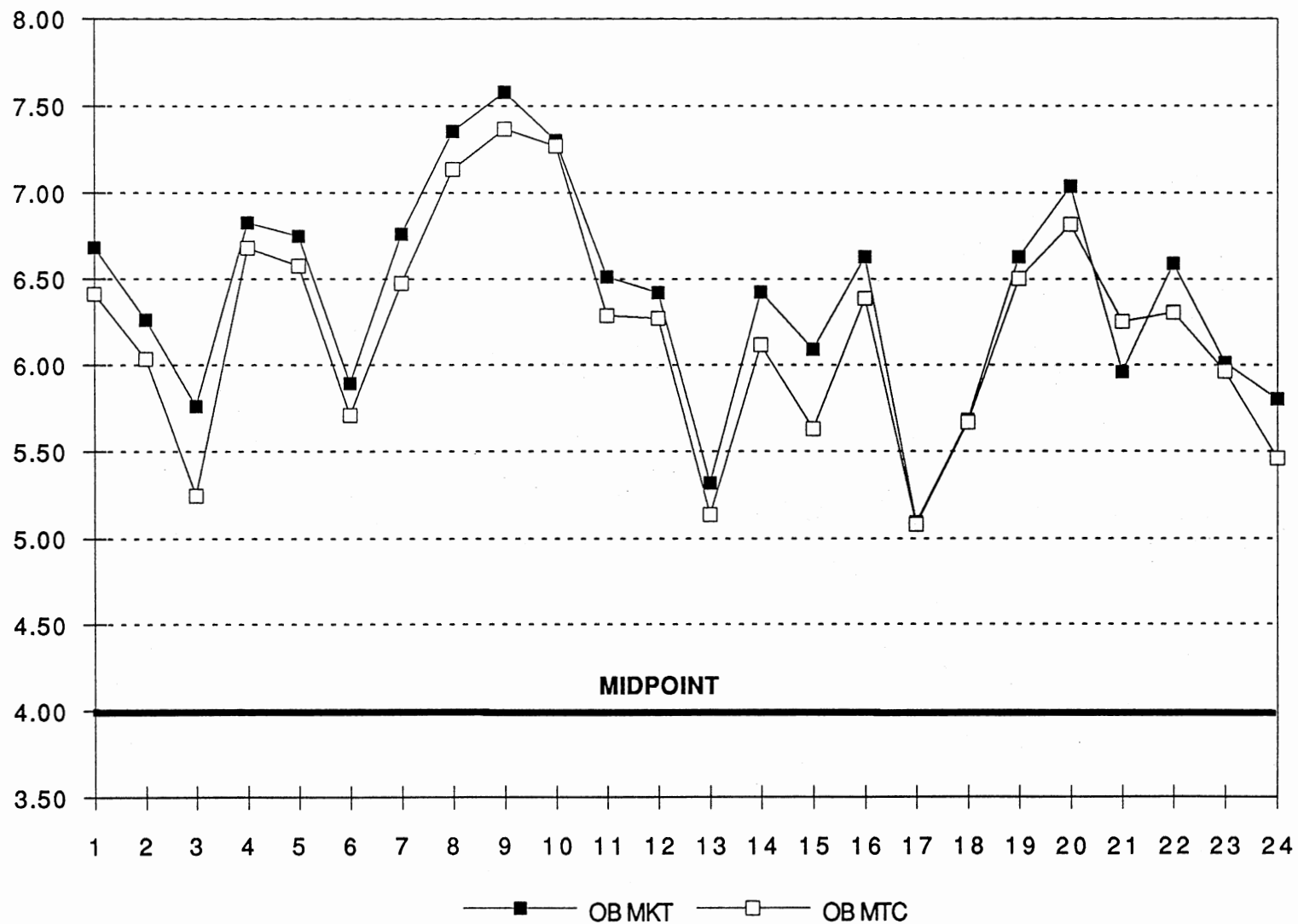


Figure 3. OB Averages for MKT and MTC



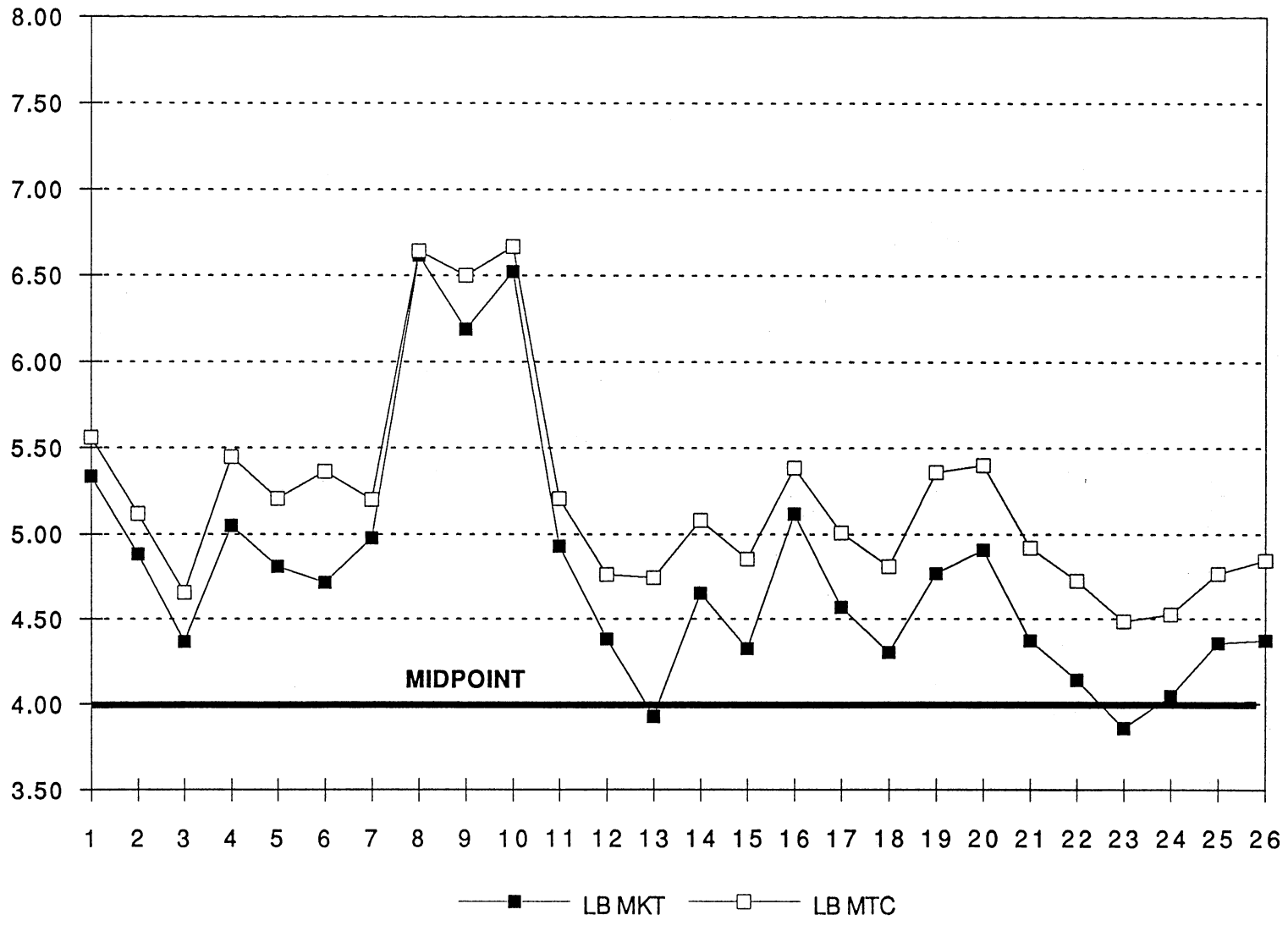


Figure 4. LB Averages for MKT and MTC

low. Item 13 was the lowest score of this group with a mean score of 4.33. Table II and Figure 4 display this information. These scores suggest that the managers could have some weakness in their listening and interpersonal skills.

The scores of the two groups appear to relatively consistent through item 20. After item 20, the scores of the two groups appear to disagree and diverge. The supervisory subordinates scored item 23 with a mean score of 4.17, the lowest of this group. Item 22, with a differential of 1.77, was the point of greatest divergence between the two groups. Table II and Figure 2 provide this information. The overall scoring patterns of both groups for these items appear to be drifting toward the lower ranges. These scores suggest some understandings between the two groups. Additionally, these scores could reflect a difference in values between the two groups and some weakness in the interpersonal skills of the middle managers.

#### Summary

The population of this study included 728 participants, 288 of whom were middle managers and 440 of whom were their supervisory subordinates. A total of 531 or 72.9 percent of the instruments were returned.

Descriptive statistics were used and a t-test was conducted using a Statistical Analysis System (SAS) program for data analysis. The difference in item scores between the two groups was statistically significant.

TABLE II  
AVERAGER OF GROUP TEST ITEM SCORES

Question	LB MKT MTC AVERAGE	OB MKT MTC AVERAGE
1	5.4473	6.54931
2	5	6.1496
3	4.51099	5.50431
4	5.24713	6.75392
5	5.00753	6.66329
6	5.03914	5.80121
7	5.08701	6.62032
8	6.63024	7.2452
9	6.34524	7.47416
10	6.59524	7.28645
11	5.06748	6.40072
12	4.57143	6.34566
13	4.33532	5.22818
14	4.86558	6.27189
15	4.58938	5.86137
16	5.2506	6.50948
17	4.78967	5.08659
18	4.5563	5.67544
19	5.06428	6.56804
20	5.15309	6.92965

TABLE II (Continued)

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Question	LB MKT MTC AVERAGE	OB MKT MTC AVERAGE
21	4.64668	6.10639
22	4.43197	6.44921
23	4.17332	5.98856
24	4.28714	5.63105
25	4.56151	
26	4.60836	

---

The majority of item scores for the middle managers were in the 5 to 7 Range with a grand mean of 6.31. The majority of item scores for the supervisory subordinates were in the 4 to 6 Range with a grand mean of 5.11. These scores placed both groups in Ranges 5 to 6, or Likert's Consultative System III.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify the discrepancies between the group problem solving styles middle managers perceive themselves to be using and the styles they are perceived to be using by their immediate supervisory subordinates.

A review of current literature was conducted. It was concluded that many writers like Taylor, Lewin, McGregor, Emery, Trist and Weisbord (1987) and Lippitt, cited in Wynn & Guditus (1984), argued that middle managers create roadblocks or become barriers to successful participative management programs. Also, some writers, like Stogdill, Wynn and Guditus (1984), and Schweiger and Leana, cited in Locke, Schweiger and Latham (1986), did not agree about why managers create or become barriers. Additionally, some other writers like Russell (1988) suggested that participative management programs are not congruent with western cultures and do not succeed for a variety of reasons. Literature regarding selection of appropriate research strategy and considerations for an effective survey instrument were reviewed.

The Likert survey instruments Forms OB and LB were used to survey a population of 728 subjects. The population included 288 middle managers and 440 of their supervisory subordinates. These subjects were employees in the marketing and maintenance departments of a Fortune 50 transportation corporation. There were a total of 531 or 73.7 percent of the instruments returned. This total included 212 or 73.6 percent of middle managers and 319 or 72.5 percent of their supervisory subordinates.

Descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of the difference between manager and supervisor perceptions of which management style was being used. The t-test was used to compare the manager data set with the supervisor data set and the data between the two departments.

The results of the t-test and the pattern of the test item of the two groups support the suggestion that the conceptualization of the research problem was accurate. Additionally, the results of the t-test and the pattern of test scores suggested that the designs of the questionnaires and the data they produced and the measurement of those data were reliable. The difference between the item scores of the two groups was statistically significant. Analysis of the data revealed discrepancies between the group problem solving systems middle managers perceived themselves to be using and the systems they were perceived to be using by their supervisory subordinates. The survey instruments identified a mathematical difference of 1.2 or an 8.0 percent difference in perception between middle managers and their supervisory subordinates. The data placed the middle managers

at 6.31 on the eight-point Likert scale and placed their supervisory subordinates at 5.11 on the scale. Scores in these higher ranges (between 4.01 and 8.00) indicated that the middle managers were using a more participative management system (Likert's Systems III and IV).

#### Limitations

There were several limitations in the study.

1. One limitation was the use of the purposive survey method. It was concluded that the nonprobability sampling method should produce a sample that would be typical of the middle managers and their supervisory subordinates in the corporation. The disadvantage of the purposive survey is that one cannot generalize from the survey to make inferences about the distribution of responses in the total population. After considering the alternatives, it was determined that the research objectives could be better met by focusing exclusively on managerial personnel using a purposive survey than by gathering an organization-wide sample.

2. The findings of the present study can be generalized only with caution due to the limitation of this cross sectional study and the use of subjects employed in only two departments.

3. The survey instrument used items which required individual value judgments. Data which are based upon research of intangible human values should not be used as diagnostic data.

4. The survey instruments, Forms OB and LB, have not been tested for reliability or validity. Likert (1967) wrote that this type of instrument is suitable to measure the system of any work



group within an organization as well as that of the total organization. The publisher of the original Profile of Organizational Characteristics (POC) instrument reports split-half reliability coefficients for the expanded version as +.90 to +.96. Likert (1967) also reported satisfactory use of the Form S with many varying groups of managers, irrespective of the field of experience of the managers or whether they were in line or staff position. The Forms LB and OB were developed from Likert's original POC instrument.

The purpose of this study was not to test the survey instrument for reliability or validity but to determine if there was a difference in perception between two groups of participants and to determine which management system they were using. Therefore, proof of validity and reliability required for standardized instruments was not pivotal to this study. However, the data analysis presented in the tables and figures suggests that there was a correlation coefficient for the different groups. It appears that face validity and content validity of the test items were accepted as the same by the different groups.

#### Conclusions

The evidence resulting from the analysis of data appears to support the general conclusion that the middle managers and their supervisory subordinates had a difference in perception regarding the problem solving style that mid-level managers were using.

The review of literature supports the hypothesis that some managers believed that they were acting in a participative manner but

were inaccurate in their perceptions of their behavior and of others' perceptions of their behavior. The literature also implied that managers are often barriers to the success of participative management programs.

Saporito (1986, pp. 58-59) wrote that

most companies that have tried participative management have failed. He argues that participative management fails often, 'a victim of backsliding, backbiting, backhanded treatment, and back to business as usual'. Michael Maccoby, director of Harvard's Program on Technology, Public Policy and Human Development, concludes that 'the consensus among academics, consultants and managers is that most efforts to introduce participation never make it.' William Cooke, a professor at the University of Michigan who is researching the subject, concludes: 'About 75% of all programs in the early 1980s failed. The reason? Consensus here too: not the workers but management, upper, middle, and lower'.

The reasons for failure appear to be that the practice of participative management is most often directed at the rank and file employees and no commitment or support is given by management.

The data from the study are inconsistent with the literature. The similarity of the pattern of the middle managers' item scores to the pattern provided by their supervisory subordinates implied that they were sensitive and aware of their traits. The evidence also suggested that the managers were somewhat accurate in their self-perceptions and were practicing "participation".

It can be argued that the low scores of items three, six, 13, and 17 suggest that the middle managers understood and agreed that they had some difficulty in stating the viewpoints of their supervisory subordinates. Additionally, the middle managers implied by their item scores that they were aware that they did not display

enough confidence and trust in their supervisory subordinates. They were defensive when they were criticized and impatient with the rate of progress of their work groups. The high scores on items eight, nine and ten implied that the middle managers agreed that they had had high expectations for themselves and their immediate supervisory subordinates and that their work was important. It appears that the middle managers felt that these areas were their strong points.

The argument that the middle managers were sensitive and aware of their characteristics was further supported by the agreement of the supervisory subordinates. The pattern of item scores of the supervisory subordinates generally followed the item scores of the middle managers.

Meyers (1981) pointed out that the application of managerial theory is accomplished when the technique of a given theory leads to changes in managerial behavior. The application of theory generally requires a four-step process: "(1) Awareness, (2) Understanding, (3) Commitment, and (4) New Habits" (p. 8).

The study suggests that the middle managers are practicing participation and have accomplished Meyers' awareness and understanding steps. However, it also appears that the middle managers had not completed Meyers' "commitment" and "new habit" steps and therefore had not completed the transition to total participation. There could be several reasons why middle managers may not have executed Meyers' "commitment" and "new habit" steps and made the transition to total participation. These reasons could be poor communication, ineffective interpersonal skills, constraints in

their work environment or their own individual attitudes toward participation. The managers could be modeling their manager's behavior or they could be receiving positive reinforcement for resisting the transition to participation. The study also revealed a small difference in perception between the two functional departments.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

It is recommended that this study be replicated using samples drawn from a representative selection from other corporate departments in addition to marketing and maintenance and that the selections include two additional levels of participants. These participants could be selected from one level above middle managers and from one level below the middle manager's immediate supervisory subordinates. If substantially different conclusions are reached from other studies, it may be possible to pinpoint sub-areas of components of the overall construct which contributes to different conclusions. If similar findings are revealed, then stronger conclusions can be drawn.

It is also recommended that a longitudinal study which follows employees over time and through different levels be conducted to determine if there is a level bias.

#### Recommendations for Practice

Preceding studies by Likert (1967), Halal and Brown (1981), and Gilbert (1988) furnished starting points from which lists of

participative practices were developed. In these studies, participation was represented by several practices which are grouped into three functional areas. It is recommended that the managers practice the following.

1. Participative practices geared to improving work process should include self-pacing of work, independent work teams, flexible work hours, quality circles, and management by objectives.

2. Practices aimed primarily at improving decision making are problem solving committees, consultation meetings, attitude surveys, and employee representation on policy making bodies.

3. Participative practices based on organizational performance standards should include incentive pay systems, merit pay systems, profit sharing plans, and employee stock ownership plans (Gilberg, 1988).

These items can be used as a check list or crafted into a survey instrument. For each of these items, respondents can be asked to indicate whether or not they use the practice and whether or not they would prefer to use the practice. If the item is not being practiced and there is an indication of a need for such, the practice could be formally included in corporate policy and introduced into the culture. It appears that many feel participation in decision making and problem solving begins with a change in the cognitive and affective domain. However, some suggest that for participation to be effective, attitudes must be evident in behavior.

### Implications for Management

There are two major implications of this study. The first relates to the difference in perception between the two groups. There was a difference in perception between the participating middle managers and their supervisory subordinates. This difference could be attributed to the middle managers and their supervisory subordinates. This difference could be attributed to the middle managers' use of an ambiguous communication style. The low range position of item three and the substantial difference between items four and five appear to support that argument. Items 13, 19, 20, and 21 were scored in the low ranges, that is, there were statistical differences between the scores of middle managers and their supervisory subordinates. These scores indicate that the middle managers should receive training in assertiveness, facilitation skills and small group communications.

Effective communication skills appear to be critical in the small group problem solving process. In a previous study, Sorenson and Savage (1989) conducted tests on how leaders' communications influenced group member contributions during decision making. They suggested that how messages are stated is as important as what is stated. Sorenson and Savage (1989, p. 336) argued

that this relational communication consists primarily of nonverbal signals and provides information about how the communicators perceive each other in a relationship. Of significance for participation in decision making, relational messages also control who can talk when about what.

Additionally, Sorenson and Savage (1989) suggested that within the setting of a task group, they saw relational communication as the method leaders use to indicate their desire for the amount and nature of communication with group members. The argument by Sorenson and Savage and the ranges and differences in item scores all suggest that the middle managers who participated in this study should reconsider their communication styles and techniques.

The second implication for the middle managers of this study is that middle managers can become barriers to participation. In the study, the participating middle managers and their supervisory subordinates' item scores were placed in Ranges 5 to 6, or Likert's Consultative System III. The grand mean for the mid-level managers was 6.31 and for their supervisory subordinates was 5.11 on the eight-point continuum. Scores in the low ranges (between 1.00 and 3.99) indicated a more authoritative management system (Likert's System I and II). Scores in the higher ranges (between 4.00 and 8.00) indicated more participative management systems (Likert's Systems III and IV).

The participating middle managers perceived themselves to be using and were perceived to be using a more participative than authoritative management style.

There is similarity between this study and the study of Halal and Brown (1981) and Gilberg (1988). They argued in their studies that "managerial obstacles may very well be a myth which cannot explain impediments to the introduction and use of participation" (Gilberg, 1988, p. 119).

According to the literature, participation improves employee morale and moderates challenges to policy and operation decisions in the workplace. Besides improving labor relations, increasing participation can be a successful approach for managing human resources. Improving participation can improve employee performance. In his study, Mia (1987) found that employee feelings and predispositions toward job and company were closely related to their productivity. Petty and Bruning, cited in Mia (p. 547), also reported a strong relationship between employee productivity and employee attitude toward job and company. "Moreover, positive employee attitude toward job and company consistently is associated with a decrease in absenteeism and turnover, leading to an increase in productivity" (Mia, 1987, p. 548). These positive consequences can improve managerial performance and promote the good standing of the manager in the organization.



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APPENDIX A

PROFILE OF OWN BEHAVIOR TEST FORM OB

**PROFILE OF OWN BEHAVIOR**  
form OB

9-2

This questionnaire is designed to enable a member of a group engaged in problem solving to describe his/her own behavior. In completing the questionnaire it is important that you answer each question as thoughtfully and frankly as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. Your individual responses cannot be used to identify you.

Please indicate your answer to each question by circling the number under the response choice that best describes your view on that question. For example, suppose that the question was:

To what extent does your group cooperate with other groups in the organization?	Very little	Some	Considerable	Very great	
	1	2	3	4	5
	6	7	8		

If you think that the group cooperates to a "considerable" extent, you would circle 5 or 6. If you think that the extent of cooperation is closer to "some", you would circle 5. If you think that it is closer to "very great", you would circle 6.

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU FEEL THAT YOU		Very little		Some		Considerable		Very great		
1.	Are friendly and easy to talk to	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	37
2.	Listen well to others whether you agree or disagree with them	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	38
3.	State the points of view of others as well as or better than they can even though you disagree with them	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	39
4.	Encourage others to express their ideas fully and frankly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	40
5.	Encourage others to express their feelings frankly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	41
		Very little		Some		Considerable		Very great		
6.	Display confidence and trust in others whether or not you agree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	42
7.	Share information frankly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	43
8.	Expect others to do their very best	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	44
9.	Expect a high-quality job from yourself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	45
10.	Think what you and the group are doing is important	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	46

*PLEASE TURN OVER ...*

## TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU FEEL THAT YOU

	Very little		Some		Considerable		Very great		
11. Encourage innovative and creative ideas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	47
12. Are willing to take risks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	48
13. Are not defensive when criticized	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	49
14. Avoid treating others in a condescending manner	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	50
15. Avoid insisting that your views be accepted	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	51
	Very little		Some		Considerable		Very great		
16. Avoid belittling the contributions of others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	52
17. Avoid being impatient with the progress being made by the group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	53
18. Avoid dominating the discussion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	54
19. Encourage group to discuss disagreements and resolve, not suppress, them	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	55
20. Use "we" and "our" rather than "I" or "my"	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	56
	Very little		Some		Considerable		Very great		
21. Show no favorites; treat all members equally	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	57
22. Give credit and recognition generously	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	58
23. Accept more blame than may be warranted for any failure or mistake	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	59
24. Avoid imposing a decision on the group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	60

FOR CLASSIFICATION PURPOSES PLEASE INDICATE YOUR:

DEPARTMENT: (Check One) MARKETING\_\_1 MAINTENANCE\_\_2 OTHER (Identify) \_\_\_\_\_3 61

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE.

APPENDIX B

PROFILE OF LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR

TEST FORM LB



**PROFILE OF LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR**  
form LB

9-1

This questionnaire is designed to describe the behavior of the leader in any group engaged in problem solving. In completing the questionnaire it is important that you answer each question as thoughtfully and frankly as possible. There are no right or wrong answers. Your individual responses cannot be used to identify you.

Please indicate your answer to each question by circling the number under the response choice that best describes your view on that question. For example, suppose that the question was:

To what extent does your group cooperate with other groups in the organization?	Very little	Some	Considerable	Very great
	1   2   3   4	5   6   7   8		

If you think that the group cooperates to a "considerable" extent, you would circle 5 or 6. If you think that the extent of cooperation is closer to "some", you would circle 5. If you think that it is closer to "very great", you would circle 6.

**TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU FEEL THAT YOUR LEADER:**

	Very little	Some	Considerable	Very great	
1. Is friendly and easy to talk to	1   2	3   4	5   6	7   8	10
2. Listens well to you and others whether she/he agrees or disagrees with what you are saying	1   2	3   4	5   6	7   8	11
3. States your point of view as well as or better than you can even though she/he disagrees with it	1   2	3   4	5   6	7   8	12
4. Encourages you and others to express your ideas fully and frankly	1   2	3   4	5   6	7   8	13
5. Encourages you and others to express your feelings frankly	1   2	3   4	5   6	7   8	14
6. Displays confidence and trust in you and others whether or not she/he agrees	Very little	Some	Considerable	Very great	
	1   2	3   4	5   6	7   8	15
7. Shares information frankly	1   2	3   4	5   6	7   8	16
8. Expects each member to do his/her best	1   2	3   4	5   6	7   8	17
9. Expects a high-quality job from herself/himself	1   2	3   4	5   6	7   8	18
10. Thinks what she/he and the group are doing is important	1   2	3   4	5   6	7   8	19

*PLEASE TURN OVER...*

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU FEEL THAT YOUR  
LEADER:

	Very little		Some		Considerable		Very great		
11. Encourages innovative and creative ideas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	20
12. Is willing to take risks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	21
13. Is not defensive when criticized	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	22
14. Avoids treating you and others in a condescending manner	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	23
15. Avoids insisting that his/her views be accepted	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	24
	Very little		Some		Considerable		Very great		
16. Avoids belittling the contribution of group members	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	25
17. Avoids being impatient with the progress being made by the group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	26
18. Avoids dominating the discussion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	27
19. Encourages the group to discuss disagreements and resolve, not suppress, them	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	28
	Very little		Some		Considerable		Very great		
20. Uses "we" and "our" rather than "I" or "my"	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	29
21. Shows no favorites; treats all group members equally	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	30
22. Gives credit and recognition generously	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	31
23. Accepts more blame than may be warranted for a failure or mistake	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	32
	Very little		Some		Considerable		Very great		
24. Avoids imposing a decision on the group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	33
25. Waits until members of the group have stated their positions before stating hers/his	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	34
26. Presents her/his own contribution tentatively or as questions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	35

FOR CLASSIFICATION PURPOSES PLEASE INDICATE YOUR:

DEPARTMENT: (Check One) MARKETING\_\_1 MAINTENANCE\_\_2 OTHER (Identify) \_\_\_\_\_3 36

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE.

VITA

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Master of Science

Thesis: PARTICIPATIVE TO AUTHORITATIVE STYLES OF GROUP  
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