

PARTICIPATORY ORGANIZATION

AT WORK

by

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of participatory organization at work, an exploration of the experiences of five organizations whose members established them to provide a setting, and economic means for the pursuit of their work. The five organizations are a fishing co-op, public school, pottery studio, architecture firm and advocacy group. The study focuses on three aspects of the organizations' experience: the extent to which they enhance members' work; members' control of the organizations; and the organizations' effectiveness and learning.

Members of the organizations are deeply interested in their own work. The organizations enhance members' work experience by providing physical space, financial advantages and vehicles for expressing members' values and politics. Because the organizations enhance members' work, their interest in their work also implies an interest in the organizations. However, the way work is organized in the organizations surfaces some tensions between the two. Members' work experience is predominantly characterized by the individual pursuit of knowledge tasks; the creative, intellectually challenging aspects of the work. Standard operating procedures, dirty work and managerial tasks are pared off, sometimes delegated to secondary classes of members.

In the tension between members' interests in their work and in organizational control, effectiveness and learning; standard operating procedures and dirty work protect and enhance members' work experience. However, they do so at a cost to members' efforts at organizational control, effectiveness and learning because they remove potentially important information and realms of direct action from members' purview. In addition, the way dirty work is handled compromises the organizations' democratic values. Too, paring off dirty work creates a constituency of members who could conceivably come to actively threaten the original members' control of the organizations.

Paring off managerial work creates, in some of the organizations a constituency of special members--managers--who threaten original members' ability to exert control by dint of their access to key information and their ability to act on behalf of the organization. The organizations that

have managers keep them from completely gaining control by separating from the managerial position the roles and status of leadership that often accompany it in other organizations. In some cases, that separation goes so far as to regard managerial work itself as a kind of dirty work. Though they do not become oligarchies, these organizations' effectiveness and learning is sometimes limited by ritualized conflict between managers and members which inhibits the discussion and exchange of information that could inform members' action. Members of the organizations that don't have managers have problems in handling the managerial work themselves and still keeping as involved with their work as they would like. They also have leaders who, though not formal managers, threaten members' control of the organizations in similar ways.

The organizations' structures of participation (whether or not they have a manager) and members' characteristic oscillations in interest and involvement in the organizations frame their experiences with adopting new technologies and with more general issues of organizational learning. Managers perceive organizational issues, such as the accumulation of capital, but may disregard matters that threaten their own work experience. Members perceive organizational issues that enhance their work experience but not issues that threaten their work experience. Managers may perceive these issues but their organizationally defined self-interests don't reinforce their pursuing them. In fact, institutionalized conflict in manager-member relations would tend to help kill the issue if they did pursue it.

Organizations that don't have a manager, on the other hand, have vacuums of action at low points of members' involvements. They also have problems in bringing to fruition, without the help of a manager, the ideas and plans that members cook up. Such implementation depends on their abilities to clearly identify group goals and courses of action, and those abilities are most evident in group process skills, and norms and strategies for conversation and interpersonal interaction.

Organizational action arising from such skills, norms and strategies is based on both individual and organizational learning, where individuals learn about themselves, other members of the organization and the organization per se; and the organization learns to respond to members' needs, and to become more participatory. Individual and organizational learning both involve making new information available, evaluating, and acting on it. An appendix to the text chronicles the application of these ideas on organizational learning and participation to the author's intervention work in two of the organizations.

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FOREWORD

When I completed the book, Jobs: How People Create Their Own, for Beacon Press several years ago, I was left with a number of questions about the "alternative" work organizations I had visited and described. I wanted to know more about how they worked and about how they could be helped to work better. I wanted to know more about the nature of the work experience they provided their members.

These questions remained important to me, and provided one area of focus in my doctoral program in the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, and the Division of Study and Research at M.I.T. Courses in the Department and the Division, and a number of people in both places, also provided insights for an attempt to answer my questions. Barbara Nelson and Benson Snyder in DSRE and Gary Marx in DUSP were especially helpful in the beginnings of my inquiry.

Lisa Peattie provided a crucial impetus by working with me on a proposal to the NIMH Center for the Study of Metropolitan Problems for research to examine in a detailed way the nature and organization of work in participatory work groups. NIMH funded that proposal, providing a base of financial support and an organizational home in the Center for the Study of Public Policy. The Bemis Fund supported the study's beginnings. This text represents half of the commitment of

our research for NIMH. The other half, focusing on the nature of work, is in process.

Throughout, Dr. Peattie has provided unflagging emotional support and enthusiasm and has contributed numerous insights and ideas that have found their way into this text. She also served, along with Donald Schön and Merton Kahne, on the faculty committee guiding my interdisciplinary program of study. Dr. Schön was the chairman of that committee, also contributing emotional and intellectual support at a consistently high level throughout my inquiry. I've taken enjoyment in M.I.T. graduate education, primarily because of Drs. Peattie and Schön. I did not begin to work with Dr. Kahne until relatively recently; I had begun with another advisor, Fred Erickson, who left the area. In that brief time, Dr. Kahne also provided much appreciated support and insight.

Members of the organizations with which I worked to conduct this inquiry have served, at various times, as my confessors, confesseees, colleagues, employers, captains and friends. They helped make the writing of this document a continuously challenging and lively task.

My current work at Abt Associates Inc. has placed me in contact with a number of colleagues and issues that have contributed to my thinking for this study. In addition, the firm's typing and copying facilities have been essential to the text's timely completion.

Throughout my inquiry, my family provided the deepest kind of support. My parents, Donald and Norma Bang, offered interest and encouragement at all stages of my work. Wilma, my wife, provided frequent and abundant sympathy, encouragement, understanding and enthusiasm.

INTRODUCTION

Some of its founding members mortgaged their homes in order to raise the capital necessary to start the fishing co-op. Members of the pottery studio, none of them homeowners, took on second jobs and took out personal loans to get the studio off the ground. The fishermen and the potters, and the founding members of the school, advocacy group and architecture firm poured hundreds of hours into the organizations to get them started. Their support of the organizations continues, often at direct financial cost to them, and in time taken away from their individual work and their private and social lives.

The organizations elicit such support because they offer much. Marketing its members' catch, the fishing co-op guarantees that their catch will always be bought and that the returns will go to them - not to a profiteering middleman. Members of the pottery studio share in the upkeep and use of a kiln that no one of them could afford. The teachers and the advocates can't pursue their work without some type of organizational base, so the school and advocate's organization are necessary components of their work. The firm is not absolutely necessary for the architects, but it provides access to more interesting jobs and provides more economic stability than a lone practitioner could likely attain.

At a minimum, the organizations enhance members' work by providing a base, a place, a measure of economic stability, a vehicle for interaction with peers. In addition, the organizations have the potential to establish a special sort of work experience, one wherein members can pursue the most rewarding aspects of their work as they choose. Members of the five organizations are deeply committed to their work, so the organizations' potential to enhance their work experience concerns them very much.

Since the organizations are participatory, their members have an opportunity to maximize the benefits the organizations can provide. Members are formally and explicitly involved in the control and governance of all five organizations. They can influence the nature of the workplace and more general managerial concerns as well: finances, marketing, relationships between the organizations and the community, relationships within the organizations.

My study of the organizations takes up three issues that concern their members: the quality of members' work experience; members' control and governance of the organizations; and the organizations' effectiveness and learning. I describe each issue in Chapter 1, drawing on literature in the field to outline problems the organizations may encounter and to clarify the organizations' potentials. In Chapter 2, I profile each organization in a brief case study.

I analyze the organizations' experience with the three issues in Chapter 3, and note the difficulties the organizations encounter in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5 I describe instances of organizational inquiry and learning that enhanced members' work experience and their control of the organizations. In an appendix, I chronicle intervention work I undertook with two of the organizations: the Advocates and the architectural firm, based on the approach of organizational inquiry and learning.

I have a personal interest in participatory organizations such as those in the study because they represent an important alternative in the way in which much of the available work is organized in our society. Increasingly, people work in large organizations where work is hierarchically structured. Further, the position of small businesses and organizations seems increasingly tenuous. The chief consequence of these two trends is the limiting of possibilities for people in the work-force. People who want more, less, or something different than what the evolving workplace offers, do not have many options. Thus it seems important to understand some of the options that are available.

I am also concerned with participatory organizations as political entities. Some researchers have documented the role that participatory organizations play in a democratic society.¹ They argue that participatory organizations provide

¹See, for example, Sidney Verba and Norman Nie, Participation in America NY: Harper & Row, 1974.

an intermediary sort of involvement with political issues, increasing participation in more large-scale political concerns. Participatory organizations of some sort are also the form that much political action takes, and so it would seem that any insights into the workings of participatory organizations might be of interest to some of the political organizations that are structured in a participatory way.

I hope that the members of participatory organizations will find this study useful.

Editorial Issues

I've chosen to use present tense throughout the text in referring to the organizations' experience. Not all the events I describe are current, and the organizations are continually changing. However, use of the present tense makes, I think, for a clearer presentation of the issues.

I've used fictitious names throughout for individuals and organizations. In some cases I've also constructed fictitious individuals from several real persons in order to preserve subjects' anonymity.

CHAPTER 1

THREE ISSUES

The members of the fishing co-op, pottery studio, advocacy group, public school and architecture firm that I studied are interested in how these organizations can enhance the quality of their work experience. Members' interest in what the organizations might do to enhance their work implies concern for their ability to control the organizations. Through their control of the organizations, members can help ensure that the organizations serve them as well as possible. Members' control of the organization also enables them to influence organizational policy and action in financial and political matters that may be important to them. Members are also concerned with the effectiveness of the organizations per se--the organizations' ability to perform as well as possible.

The quality of members' work experience; their ability to control the organizations; the organizations' effectiveness and learning: these three issues frame this study. I describe each issue in this chapter, concluding with a set of questions that outline an assessment of the organizations' experience.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Members of the five organizations take their work seriously. For many of them, their work occupies the central part of their lives. They derive satisfaction, security and a sense of well-being from their work in a way that graphically illustrates the claims some theorists make about the psychological importance of work.¹ For most of them a forty-hour work week is too brief. Their hours and their commitment are more extensive.

Members' interest in their work suggests that one theme in an analysis of the organizations ought to be the extent to which the organizations enhance members' work experience. In the organizations, it is theoretically possible for members to organize their work in any way they choose within the more general bounds of organizational viability--which they can also define.

The literature on work outlines what a satisfying work experience might be by identifying aspects of the substance and organization of work that contribute to satisfaction. For the substance of work, the literature implies the existence within many kinds of work of a ladder of complexity of tasks. At the bottom are boring, repetitious tasks. More challenging, intellectually demanding tasks occur more towards the top. I label tasks at the top of the ladder "knowledge tasks:"² planning, decision making, setting priorities. Often such tasks set a context for the "execution tasks" at the bottom of the

ladder. For the fishermen, for example, execution tasks include baiting hooks, setting marker buoys, cleaning and gutting fish. Knowledge tasks include deciding when to leave short, locating a place to anchor, finding the channel in a fog. The knowledge tasks are the more artful and complex, and hence potentially more challenging and intellectually demanding, especially for workers who are experienced and committed to the work.

Braverman and others³ contend that the organization of work for most people segments the substance of work in a particular way, separating the "knowledge tasks" from the "execution tasks." Knowledge tasks are handled, for the most part, by a few managers. The majority of workers carry out execution tasks under managers' directions.

The hierarchical, segmented model of work organization traces its roots to the notions of "scientific management" popularized by Frederick Taylor⁴ at the turn of the century. In the past decade, the tenets of scientific management have been subject to much criticism.⁵ Separating knowledge tasks from tasks of execution often leaves workers with repetitious, boring jobs and only a minimal sense of involvement in the overall work process--qualities in a work experience that members of the five organizations want to avoid.

The reach of hierarchical, segmented work organization extends into all kinds of work, even that of professionals and some artisans. Peter Berger notes:

. . . (T)here exist today situations of assembly-line medicine, assembly-line law, and assembly-line research, with physicians, lawyers and scientists attached to a small fragment of the overall work process very much as the automobile worker is to 'his' place in the assembly line.⁶

Given the perspective of Berger and Braverman, the five organizations emerge more clearly as possibly offering alternatives to the hierarchical model.

The various attempts of some researchers to enhance job satisfaction in particular settings further delineate the nature of knowledge tasks and the ways in which work can be organized to maximize workers' involvement with knowledge tasks, and the connections between involvement in knowledge tasks and job satisfaction. Herzberg, for example, clarifies this last point. His research on work suggests that improving factors such as salary and work conditions may reduce dissatisfaction with jobs. However, he also indicates that it seems necessary to attend to the work process itself in order to enhance job satisfaction.⁷

Changing the organization of work to spread the knowledge tasks among more workers makes it more possible for more people to derive the satisfaction inherent to performing the knowledge tasks. The general nature of work organized in this way is often referred to in the literature as "participatory" or "participative" to convey that workers are somehow involved in the control of the workplace. For the most part, literature on such efforts is positive.

The 1974 HEW Special Report Work in America summarized the results of studies on participation in the workplace, noting:

Several dozen well-documented experiments show that productivity increases and social problems decrease when workers participate in the work decisions affecting their lives. . .

Looking more closely at these experiments, several dilemmas take shape. Most of the documented cases of participation in the workplace are experiments or contained interventions planned by managers or consultants. The experimental, contained nature of these efforts does not necessarily minimize their meaning, since they may actually attempt to involve workers in decision making and planning.

On the other hand, there is reason to view the experiments skeptically. Often they are reported on by the managers and consultants who have conducted them, so their objectivity may be questionable. Further, the usual location of the experiments within large, bureaucratic organizations might be regarded as involving problems of fit and coordination that could threaten the experiments. Finally, the bureaucratic organizational setting may impose numerous general constraints that severely limit the experiments' ability to innovate.

At least one researcher who has examined job redesign experiments has confirmed these hypotheses, and added more observations. Robert Schrank, a Ford Foundation officer, observed numerous experiments and concluded they were seldom

what he considered to be participatory.⁹ In some cases, managers whose jobs were threatened by the experiment and/or workers who were confused by it, helped it to fade away. In other cases, Schrank found that even when managers and workers were committed to making the workplace more participatory, they could not always do it.

Schrank attributes such movement away from participation in part to subjects' simple lack of knowledge and skills. He believes people can learn to participate and that often they need to do so. He notes:

Broad-based participation is a literal unknown in our society, and perhaps in other modern industrial societies as well (T)he problem is even more profound--managers, behavioral scientists, owners and workers all know very little about how to organize institutions in a way that makes them truly participative.¹⁰

Though neither Schrank nor most of the other contributors to the literature provide a concrete picture of a "truly participative" workplace, they and the accounts of the experiments offer insights into some of the elements of such a workplace. Work in America's authors note that workplace participation includes:

Workers participating in decisions on: their own production methods, the internal distribution of tasks, questions of recruitment, . . . leadership, what additional tasks to take on, when they will work.¹¹

Such decision making is a knowledge task which frames many tasks of execution. "Truly participative" would also seem to imply, beyond workers' access to and involvement in

such decisions as those noted above, a degree and extent of involvement that adequately represents their interests and broadbased involvement with all major issues.

The experience of the experiments suggests a dilemma in the notion of "truly participative" in its recognition of both autonomy and cooperation. On the one hand, workplace participation attempts to grant workers more autonomy and control in their work--many knowledge tasks are tasks of control. On the other hand, participation often occurs through groups that may, in the end, limit the autonomy of individual members. Many job redesign experiments use teams as vehicles for participation. Members have access to knowledge tasks through their influence on the teams.

This perspective clarifies the need, in considering participative work, to examine in detail how control of the organization is enacted. Before moving on to that topic, I should conclude by noting that, for the members of the five organizations, teamwork and cooperation are not within the established culture and norms of their respective work. They fit more in the image of craftsmen--autonomous, independent workers engaged in knowledge and execution tasks. There is, of course, some collegiality and interaction in their work, but the highest order of many knowledge tasks--finding fish, throwing a pot, addressing a crowd, teaching a lesson, designing a building--are almost always individuals' tasks.

The prevailing organization of work and the dilemmas inherent in experiments in job redesign provide perspective on the experience of the organizations in this study. Their members can organize work in a way that maximizes members' access to knowledge tasks, and without the constraints of experiments that respond to larger organizational politics and pressures. While their experience may offer some insights concerning the operational issues of maximizing access to knowledge tasks, the five organizations may also surface other dilemmas peculiar to their relatively unconstrained situation.

In analyzing the organizations, I will focus more specifically on the ways in which they organize work to maximize members' access to and involvement with knowledge tasks. This focus will include exploring factors that enhance or impede access to knowledge tasks, and issues that confront the organizations as a result of the strategies they develop to handle the tasks of execution. I will examine the organizations' use of cooperation and collaboration, and explore the extent to which members' work is autonomous.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONTROL

Along with the nature of their work experience, members of the five organizations are concerned with their ability to control the organizations. By controlling the organizations they might ensure that the organizations will

establish the sort of work experience they want. Also, they might influence organizational policy and action on financial and political matters that concern them as well.

Members' involvement with such issues is important in some cases because it provides them with the personal experience of management that they want. In other cases, their involvement with control is important because the policy and management work have financial implications. Members who hold shares in their organizations have an interest in their organizations' financial success which supplements their interest in the workplace.

Control is also an issue because it provides access to the expressive features of the organizations. For many members, part of the organizations' importance is in the real and symbolic statements they make about members' values, interest and goals. Involvement in the control of the organizations is a way to ensure that the statements the organizations make are accurate and appropriately extensive.

The literature on participation suggests that members' ability to control their own organizations is likely to be problematic. One theory flatly contends that it is not possible for members to control their own organization. This theory contends that the control of an organization by all its members, i.e., a democracy, always leads to control by a few powerful members, i.e., an oligarchy. This point of view, formulated by the sociologist Robert Michels in 1911,

is sometimes referred to as the "Iron Law of Oligarchy."¹² Another theory portrays an approach to control that seems severely limited. This point of view, formulated by the sociologists James Coleman, Seymour M. Lipset and Martin Trow, maintains that organizational democracy based on institutionalized conflict achieves members' control and avoids oligarchy.¹³

Oligarchy

Originally a socialist himself, Robert Michels studied the German Socialist Party in 1911 hoping to learn how an organization with democratic ideals managed itself--presumably in a democratic way. What he found extremely disillusioned him, leading him to formulate the "Iron Law of Oligarchy" in his book Political Parties.

"Who says organization says oligarchy,"¹⁴ he concluded, concerning the inevitability that all organizations would, of necessity, become oligarchical. Deeply disappointed that the socialist party, in spite of its ideals, was not run democratically, Michels eventually abandoned his own socialist sympathies. He became increasingly conservative and finally accepted a professorship in fascist Italy offered by Mussolini.

Michels' argument was that all organizations, whatever they may intend, tend to concentrate knowledge, power, influence and resources among a limited number of people--an oligarchy. Of course, this tendency poses no problem for

hierarchical organizations that intend to concentrate knowledge, power and influence in their leaders. Participatory organization, however, implies that knowledge, power, resources and influence are decentralized. Members' control of the organization would be inhibited if knowledge, power, resources and influence were not accessible to them.

Michels contended that a dynamic establishes itself in all organizations to inhibit members' ability to exert control by centralizing knowledge, power, resources and influence. The dynamic begins with the importance of the organization to its members. This importance legitimizes and encourages growth and expansion. The members of the political party Michels studied believed the party to be very important, and worked vigorously to help it grow.

In Michels' view, the organization's growth and importance together create needs for uniformity and stability.¹⁵ There are too many members to deal with on an individual basis; too many issues and tasks to start from scratch on each. Uniformity and stability help the organization interact with its external world and mediate its relationships with increasing numbers of members. Michels thought the Party's effectiveness hinged in part on its ability to interact with other political organizations and in part on its ability to respond to members' interests and needs.

It was in the nature of an organization's response to the demands of its external world and its membership that

oligarchy took its first firm hold. The Party hired full-time leaders to handle the tasks involved in maintaining regular contact with the external world and coordinating members' activities. Michels regarded that hiring as the unavoidable consequence of the Party's growth, but he also believed that it implied the membership's inevitable loss of control.¹⁶

The hired leaders who managed the organization also exerted the most influence, and had the most power and status. Their position was a product of a task-role bond which unified the tasks of management with the role and status of leadership. The whole arrangement also implied a division of labor. The membership's day-to-day work was not that of the leaders.

Michels tried to show that the leaders had interests different in some important ways from those of the organizations' rank-and-file members. Whatever their political beliefs, they had the special interest of the survival of their own position--an interest not immediately shared by the membership. Michels believed that this immediate interest occasionally shaped leaders' politics, influencing them to maintain points of view that did not jeopardize their own position. Characteristically, these points of view were conservative since changes in the party's mission might lead to leaders' job displacement.

Besides their special interests, Michels also contended that the leaders had special resources not generally available

to the membership.¹⁷ Leaders had privileged information, a product of their being immersed in the affairs of the party. Further, among their managerial tasks they had control over the channels of information and communication within the party. Finally, they had, as a result of their daily work, a skill in the arts of politics.

The three special resources made it possible for the leaders to centralize among themselves the knowledge, resources and skills necessary to continually strengthen their leadership. Their special interests, which were a product of the organization's division of labor, made it functional for them to do so. To complete the scenario, the rank-and-file membership of the organization sat back and allowed it all to happen, suffering from what Michels refers to as "an incurable incompetence." "Though it grumbles occasionally," Michels notes, "the majority is really delighted to find persons who will take the trouble to look after its affairs."¹⁸ Further, the masses worked together with the leaders to produce cycles of increasing differences and increasing oligarchy as time went on.

A special irony is in the position of the party leaders, whom Michels viewed as prisoners of the organization's structure: "it is by very necessity that a simple employer becomes a 'leader,' acquiring a freedom of action which he ought not to possess."¹⁹ Manager/leaders concerned for the interests of members might have to work against interests of their own.

Furthermore, once this has occurred there may be no external indication of what has transpired. The organization functions smoothly and efficiently, perhaps even more so than it would do if it incorporated responses to its membership's needs. It has abandoned its initial goals of political action. ". . . (F)rom a means," Michels concludes, "organization becomes an end."²⁰

Organizational Democracy

The strategies of organizational democracy that some theorists prescribe as a response to oligarchy may well break Michels' Iron Law, but they raise other problems for members' control of their organizations. The perspective of organizational democracy applies democratic principles and methods to the operations and governance of organizations. Often this perspective is concerned with the equitable distribution of power and influence among the members of an organization, as the perspective of political democracy is concerned with the equitable distribution of power and influence among its citizens.

For example, Paul Blumberg in his text Industrial Democracy considers participation to be an "increase in workers' decision-making power."²¹ Similarly, a review of the literature on participation in organizations in "Administrative Science Quarterly" notes "access to decision" as a key property of participation.²² The review summarizes numerous other approaches to participation that concern

themselves with the equitable distribution of power and influence among all the members of an organization.

The book Union Democracy illustrates one way that such concern might affect an organization.²³ James Coleman, Seymour Lipset and Martin Trow wrote the book, which builds on a case study of the International Typographers' Union, an organization they believe to be democratically run.

The authors made much of the union's democratic, two-party system. The system institutionalized conflict within the ITU, providing a forum and vehicle for members' participation. In a way, the two-party system created the workings of a democracy, instituting a mechanism to balance power and ensure that competing points of view of the membership would find their way into policy making circles. Many people are represented, different points of view surface, and conflict is encouraged.

On the other hand, institutionalized conflict may become ritualized and may thus fail to surface and meaningfully confront issues of consequence. Conflict that is institutionalized may channel the involvements of an organization's members more towards taking a stand than towards inquiring into the substance of the issues at hand. Conflict of any kind may involve members and absorb the time and resources they have available for work with the organization, making it difficult for them to attend to other issues for which they need the organization's assistance.

Here the issue of members' control of the organizations begin to blur with the issue of organizational effectiveness and learning. Theorists in the literature on organizational control concern themselves with mechanisms for exerting control but seldom consider the long-term implications for organizational effectiveness and learning of the mechanisms they propose.

Equitable distribution of decision making authority among all the members of an organization may avert their oppression by the organization somewhat, but it may not be enough. Without adequate information to inform their control, members may use their decision making powers to formulate organizational policy that is ultimately harmful to them. Or, given equitable distribution of decision making authority among them, members may concern themselves with the mechanics of decisions to an extent that allows the substance of decisions to be relatively unnoticed. In both cases--the emphasis on mechanisms of control and control based on institutional conflict--democracy is not enough. The mechanisms of organizational control that simply redistribute organizational authority among the membership need to be supplemented in some ways with information that can help the control realize its potential to serve members as well as possible. I describe both the nature of that information and the outlines of serving members as well as possible in the next section, Organizational Effectiveness and Learning.

The threat of oligarchy and the potential problems attendant to organizational democracy offer a perspective on analysis of the five organizations. Examining how members control their organizations, I will focus on how the forces of oligarchy impact them. If the organizations avoid oligarchy, I'll describe why and how they do so. I will also examine if and how the organizations use the strategies and methods of organizational democracy, and explore consequences of such strategies and methods. I will be interested in examples of ritualized conflict and uninformed control of the organization.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND LEARNING

Though members of all the five organizations would be quick to note that one of their chief concerns is the effectiveness of their respective organization, more specific views of what constitutes effectiveness would conflict between and within the organizations. The literature of research on organizational effectiveness displays similar conflicts of interest and priorities.

Theorists who view organizations as agents acting in a particular environment are concerned with organizations' ability to implement new policies on behalf of their constituencies. Theorists who are more concerned with organizations' ability to adapt and change in the face of a changing environment focus more on organizations' experience with

the use of new technologies. Theorists who view organizations as systems are more concerned with information flow and feedback.

Each point of view offers a different perspective on what organizational effectiveness might be. However, each also implies some notion of organizational learning--a way of framing organizational effectiveness that is particularly relevant for this study.

New Technologies; Implementing Policy; Systems

Organizations of all sorts are in an environment that is changing, and that may place demands on the organization to develop new capabilities. Organizations also often face the opportunity to implement new programs, practices or technologies designed to improve the organization's performance. One way to think about the effectiveness of an organization, then, is in terms of the way it responds to such new programs, practices and technologies.

The literature on this subject leads to a concern for participation. For example, Seymour Sarason argues that the participation of teachers in the problem-setting and planning of new curricular programs is essential to the programs' being put to use. Sarason describes these benefits of the involvement of teachers in decisions and plans that will affect them:

First, involvement makes it more likely that responsibility will be assumed and not be attributed to others. Second, it makes it more likely that problems of attitude and goals will surface and be dealt with. Third, and of crucial importance, it increases the chances that the alternative ways in which problems can be formulated and resolved will be scrutinized and act as a control against premature closure and the tendency to think that there is only one way by which problems may be viewed and handled.²⁴

Making generally the same point but with a different set of interests, political scientists Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky study the implementation of a federal economic development program in Oakland in their book Implementation. They conclude that "the separation of policy design from implementation is fatal."²⁵ That is, workers responsible for the implementation of a program are more likely to "kill" the program if they have not participated to some extent in designing it.

Theorists who think of organizations as systems, such as Deutsch,²⁶ and Simon and March²⁷ are concerned with organizations' error detection and correction, and handling of information to appropriately influence organizational behavior. For them, participation provides the structure by which information is handled in ways to process it most efficiently and effectively.

Galbraith,²⁸ for example, in his concept of matrix organization, places decision making authority close to the points in the organization where information regarding the decision is readily available. This enables workers who

previously may have had to communicate information up the organizational hierarchy and await its decisions, to come to participate in those decisions themselves.

For the theorists concerned with implementing policies, organizational learning consists of the organization's acquiring the ability to implement. For those concerned with new technologies, organizational learning consists of the organization's perception of the environment, and skill in putting the new technology to use. Systems theorists are interested in the organization's monitoring and processing of, and response to, information in the environment.

Members of the five organizations should be concerned with their organizations' learning within all three perspectives. Beyond these, their concern for the effectiveness of the whole organization implies some further dimensions of organizational learning, and some connections between organizational learning and participation.

Organizational Learning

The literature concerning both individual and organizational behavior provides the basic concepts for my use of the term "organizational learning" as it particularly applies to the five organizations.

Barbel Inhelder and Annette Karmilof-Smith, colleagues of Piaget, have formulated some basic ideas about processes of individuals' learning that are relevant for this study.

(Numerous other learning theorists²⁹ touch on the same conflicts

that Inhelder and Karmilof-Smith delineate; I use their work as a vehicle here primarily because it articulates the issues in a particularly clear way.) They developed their concepts in an article titled, "If You Want To Get Ahead, Get a Theory."²⁹

In the research that article describes, they had children balance blocks that were asymmetrically weighted, i.e., that did not balance in ways that the children were used to. They observed among the children two kinds of responses to the problem: "action responses" and "theory responses."

Most children stacked the blocks until they fell. Surprised and perhaps a bit shaken, they would restack, and restack, etc. These children, who were in the majority, had made action responses to the problem. Some other children approached the problem in a fundamentally different way. Characteristically, the children who gave theory responses stopped action and, the researchers inferred, altered their theory of how the blocks worked.

Generalizing further, the researchers described a theory response as involving the following: (1) stepping back from the problem; (2) holding in abeyance an immediate concern for output; and (3) exploring the processes underlying the problem. Action responses occurred within larger assumptions of theories that were held constant. In theory responses, major assumptions of theories were tested and altered to

accommodate new information. In the article, the theories that were tested concerned "how the blocks balance."

Still further, the researchers contended that theory responses were "better" than action responses--note the title of their article. The claim was based both on the amount of time it took theory responders to solve the problem and on the logical (though not empirically tested) assumption that theory responders would do better in generalizing solutions for later problems.

Both kinds of learning are important realizations of the espoused aims of participatory organization--for the organizations' individual members and for the organizations overall. Like any organization, participatory organizations must perform well within the context of major assumptions. Once policies and plans are set, participatory organizations such as those in the study must compete in a marketplace, establish economic viability, and respond to changes in the external environment. There, organizational action responses are important to the organization's attainment of a basic, viable level of operation.

I also argue that it is essential for participatory organizations to produce theory responses to problems, and especially a particular kind of theory response. Participatory organizations must be responsive to members' inputs and interests. There is no voice from the top of a hierarchy imposing priorities, goals, or values--members can set the course they choose.

However, members may not always have a clear sense of what their interests are. Theory responses that test major assumptions or theories can help members articulate and formulate what those assumptions are, and thus lay a foundation for better organizational responses to them. Important organizational theory responses for participatory organizations entail individual members' learning about the organization's goals, and about the processes by which those goals were set.

Members' learning is linked with their ability to control their organizations on their own behalf. Learning involves making new information available, perhaps enabling members to make better decisions. Learning may also involve members' clarifying information they already have. Members' learning about their organization, or their involvement in learning on behalf of the organization, or the diffusion of their learning throughout the organization, could enhance their ability to control the organizations on their own behalf.

Considering the characteristics of theory responses, it is easy to see why action responses prevail. Theory responses entail risk. Stepping out of a problem may produce insights, but it may also contribute to an individual's loss of control over a situation. Removal from the problem at hand may make an individual feel, and/or lead others to think he feels, abstracted.

Organizational theory responses are similarly

difficult. Organizational theorists are emphatic in noting that theory response learning seldom occurs in organizations and are insightful in explaining why. Cybernetic organization theorists believe that organizations develop programs, repertoires, and standard operating procedures to deal, thermostat-like, with predictable errors.³¹ The thermostat-like responses are generally adept and effective to the extent that organizations use them beyond their appropriate limits.

Put another way, organizations stick to using action responses because they are easier to apply and less risky than theory responses. Stepping back, stopping action and inquiring into how the problem might work are difficult strategies for an organization under pressure to try to carry out.

The practice of dividing an organization into many, often conflicting departments or pieces also inhibits theory responses. For individual pieces of the organization to consider their role in the organization overall when they are faced with immediate difficulties of their own entails a risk that they may understandably be unwilling to undertake. In addition to the possible hazard of looking outside their immediate programmed view of and response to difficulties, it may also be that there is some inherent reward in refining, improving and perhaps simply in continuing to perform the tasks and responses they know best.

Individuals within an organization may not consider the organization's larger goals because they are otherwise engaged by more pressing and immediate problems. An individual's difficulty in considering larger goals and new concepts is entangled with emotional, as well as cognitive inhibitions. Peter Marris³² details the severe difficulties individuals experience when they attempt a change of any serious sort, arguing that such change entails an often painful sense of loss to an individual.

Some theorists believe that the prevailing norms shaping interpersonal interaction further reinforce individuals' concern for parochial goals and interests. Thus members of an organization are reinforced in that narrowness by what takes place in their meetings with other members. Chris Argyris and Donald Schön's description of what they maintain to be the prevailing way in which people interact emphasizes the tendency of individuals to behave in self-sealing ways that preclude learning. In this "Model I" sort of behavior, individuals act to protect themselves and others, effectively sealing themselves off from new information.³³

Research Issues

Participatory organization, which members control and for which they are responsible, provides mechanism and motivation for members to have a perspective on the whole organization. Privy to information on all aspects of the organization and interested in acquiring more information on

the organizations' behalf, members' learning in both cases connects with the learning of the organization. With a sense of the whole organization, members might also be especially adept at personal change, and they might feel support in interaction with others which would enable them to effectively collaborate on solving problems.

These, at any rate, are the possibilities. It will take a closer look at the organizations to see if they are borne out, and to determine if and how organizational learning occurs. More specifically, I will be interested in the organizations' experiences with implementing new technologies, and with the kinds of action and theory responses they generate. I will be concerned with individuals' and organizations' learning, connections between the two, and factors that impede learning or enhance it. I will use examples from the organizations' experience to clarify the meaning of learning that is organizational.

AN ANALYTIC FRAME

The themes of work, control, and effectiveness and learning help frame an analysis of the five organizations. Each theme suggests some more specific questions regarding the organizations' experience:

- ORGANIZATION OF WORK. How is work organized in the five organizations? By what strategies do members organize work to realize their intentions to have the organizations provide an enhanced work experience? What are the elements of such a work experience? To what extent does it make use of autonomous or cooperative ways of organizing work?

- ORGANIZATIONAL CONTROL. How do members control their organizations? To what extent do members succeed in achieving broad involvement in organizational control? By what strategies do they do so?
- ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND LEARNING. In what ways are the organizations effective or ineffective? In what respects do they learn or fail to learn? To what extent does members' participation in the organization enhance or impede the organizations' effectiveness and learning?

Responses to these questions may raise additional questions within each theme. For example, it may be that "the organization of work" has several parts or segments, and that each needs explanation. Or, it may be that the issue of control is different for different kinds of members of the organizations.

Responses to questions within the themes may also raise further questions concerning interaction among the themes. In their everyday functioning, the organizations will, after all, not encounter each theme in isolation but will find it embedded in a number of other, perhaps conflicting, issues. For example, members' interest in their work may compete with their interest in the organizations.

Tensions may exist between members' interest in their work and the organizations' contribution to that interest, and members interest in controlling the organization. Members' interest in their work may also be in tension with their concerns for organizational effectiveness and learning. Members' ways of controlling the organization,

which may result in part from their interest in their work, may also inhibit and be in tension with organizational effectiveness and learning.

I describe all three relationships as tensions because in each it is necessary for members to respond to both issues to an extent--opting entirely for one issue would quickly close the organization down. I also use the word "tension" because, even without considering the organizations' experience, it seems that there is a strong potential for the issues to be in competition with one another.

CHAPTER 2
FIVE PARTICIPATORY ORGANIZATIONS

THIS STUDY

In the fieldwork for this study I worked with five participatory organizations: a public school, a fishing cooperative, a pottery studio, an advocacy group and an architecture firm. I was a participant-observer in all of them for a minimum of one year, attending meetings, interviewing individuals and observing members at work. I maintained some contact with the organizations after a year, but the more extended contact was not as intensive as during the first year.

The nature of my contact, and my role in working with the organizations, varied. I visited the school about twice a month for this study, but began less frequent contact years earlier when I wrote the book Jobs, on alternative work settings. Subsequent to a year of twice-monthly contact, I continue to keep in touch with issues in the school through friends and colleagues. Throughout, my stance in working with the school has been that of a passive observer. My contact with the pottery studio has followed a similar path from initial stages with the Jobs book through current, informal continuing connections.

I visited the fishing co-op about once a month during the study, and supplemented my participant-observation with several days' work at sea on different kinds of co-op boats. In addition, I worked on a national study of fishing co-ops and economic development funded by the Center for Community Economic Development in which I used the co-op in this study as the subject for a case. I departed from a passive role with the fishing co-op to work on a study they requested of the fishing industry's impact on the town.¹

I visited the advocacy group each week, acting as both an organizational intervenor and an observer. In the architecture firm my primary role was that of intervenor, but I also collected participant-observer notes. Because of the firm's distance from me, my work with the architecture firm took place in two one-week stretches, spread over eight months and supplemented with telephone calls and correspondence.

In all cases, the validity of my analysis depends upon the accuracy of my observations and interviews. However extensive these have been, there is always a chance that I have erred due to my own preconceptions and/or to tacit or intentional misrepresentations made by the subjects. I have attempted to minimize these possibilities by testing the sense of my observations with other researchers, and by trying to inquire into potential sources of error. This document developed through successive drafts an increasing faithfulness to the data: fewer universal statements, more descriptions of

detail that compromise generalizations, and greater complexity in its understanding and appreciation of issues and analytic themes.

The Five Organizations

The five organizations represent a considerable diversity of kinds of work, types of participatory structure, size, finances, and kinds of members. This diversity may obscure the underlying similarity of the organizations: their members' attempts, formally and explicitly, to control the organizations; the far-reaching extent to which members are involved with the organizations; and the concerns of members with the quality of their work experience.

The following chart outlines key aspects of the five organizations to set a general context for the profiles of each organization that follow. The chart considers first the organizations' formal structure of participation--their explicit mechanisms for governance and control. For each organization, the chart also outlines the major functions of those mechanisms of control.

In all the organizations, implicit or informal means also exist for members to exercise influence and control. The chart briefly describes these. The column labeled "Management" notes the specific title each organization has given to the person(s) who handle its management tasks. The "Ownership" column outlines the ways in which members participate in owning their organizations.

MODES OF PARTICIPATION

	Formal Structure for Participation	Functions of Formal Structure	Informal Structure for Participation	Functions of Informal Structure	Management	Ownership	Nature of the Workplace	How the Organization Alters the Work
Fishing Co-op	Board of Directors (7 of the 100 members) Intentional effort to rotate board membership	-Policymaking and planning -Agenda-setting -Advise and restrain manager	Contact between all members and board members	Represents points of view of individuals or small groups to policy-making, planning and agenda-setting groups	Full-time paid manager	Each member owns 1 share in the co-op	Each co-op member is a boat owner who organizes work on his boat as he chooses	Co-op gives fishermen influence over the marketing, as well as the catching of fish
School	Committees for various tasks	-Particular tasks, e.g., curriculum, philosophy, etc. -Policymaking, planning -Agenda-setting -Daily management	Contact between all members and committee members and principal		Principal	Town "owns" schools	Teachers have autonomy in own classes, but express desire to learn from one another	Teachers have say in planning curriculum, hiring, firing, etc.
Pottery Studio	All-member meetings	-Agenda-setting -Policymaking -Planning -Daily management			Guru/founder	Each member owns a share	Members pot alone, operate kiln together, criticize each others' work	Studio provides common space, with "creative atmosphere", improved facilities, colleagues, marketing vehicle
Architecture Firm	Management Team (9 of the 30 members, including representatives of designers and draftsmen)	-Policymaking, planning -Input and advice on management, client contact	Contact between all members and management team members		Founder/owner	Principals' group has ownership option	Designers interact frequently, criticize each others' work, learn from one another	Firm provides opportunities to learn. Participation charts course of firm: nature of work solicited and how firm is managed
Advocates	Open meeting	-Issue selection -Agenda-setting	Contact between members and director		Executive Director	No ownership structure	Advocates work alone, provide resources to organizers.	Need organization to represent issues.



The final two columns, "Nature of the Workplace" and "How the Organization Alters Work" are concerned with the role of the organizations in enhancing their members' job satisfaction. The columns outline, respectively, basic characteristics of members' work and general functions of the organizations' influence in the work experience.

The chart is intended to headline major differences and similarities among the five organizations, and to provide a point of reference for the five organizational portraits that follow. In those portraits I hope to provide a description of each organization that is substantive and detailed enough to capture its priorities, its ways of handling the various issues that it confronts, its members' ways of thinking, and the extent to which its members are emotionally involved with it. The portraits are, for the most part, descriptive rather than analytical. I draw on the information in the portraits in the third chapter, to relate it more specifically to the analytic themes outlined in Chapter 1.

THE MARSHAM SEAFOOD CO-OP

The Bars

Tourists who put a dime in the metered binoculars at the Marsham lighthouse overlook are sometimes confused by what they see. When the seas and tides are high, there is a large area in what appears to be mid-ocean where the waves break, crest and dissipate as though there were a beach stopping them. There is a beach about a mile to the north, a long,

narrow spit of sand paralleling Marsham's shoreline and connecting with the mainland some eight miles up the coast. The waves break on a submerged extension of that beach, an extension that snakes and doubles back on itself for miles.

Perhaps in other parts of the country such a striking and dangerous bit of geology would be named "Dead Man's Reef" or "Schooners Wreck" to reflect the havoc it wreaks on shipping in the harbor. In Marsham, the Yankee influence is obdurate and the reef's name characteristically understated: Marsham Bars, or simply "The Bars."

The Bar shift about dramatically. An aerial photographer based in Marsham never fails to draw a small crowd in town arts shows, where he displays hundreds of eight-by-ten glossies of the Bars in the drastically different configurations they have taken during the last decade. The town's Harbormaster sees the movement from a different perspective. He is out in a boat every few weeks, moving the channel buoys around to mark the new wrinkles and holes left by the moving Bars.

Occasionally, the Harbormaster is too late. Boaters entering Marsham harbor sometimes have the disconcerting experience of seeing a buoy that has run aground, marking what is supposed to be a clear channel. The fishermen who use the channel regularly keep a daily update on the Bars and pass the news on to one another about which buoys are "good" on any particular day.

Local history has it that the Bars were always a problem for navigation and not unexpectedly, since the Marsham harbor is subject to strong currents. The harbor is located at the elbow of Cape Cod, reflecting currents at a perpendicular angle from Nantucket Sound and the Atlantic Ocean. Too, normal tides all along the Cape can reach ten feet, and that much movement of water must have serious effects on a sandy shoreline. General consensus among the fishermen and other regular users of the channel is that the Bars, however bad, are getting still worse.

Some fishermen say the Bars didn't become so treacherous until about twelve years ago, and for reasons that they say were not due entirely to the elements. What upset the equilibrium, they claim, was an enterprising sports fisherman who kept his boat on the Nantucket Sound side of town. Taking the time to motor around the Bars to get to the Atlantic frustrated the man so that he decided to take a simple and direct measure. The rumor--by now legend--is that one moonlit night at low tide, he took a rented bulldozer and made an express lane through an inner part of the Bars. The Nantucket tide made somewhat more use of the lane than the man's boat, however, and the resulting turbulence continues to plague the harbor.

The Bars threat to navigation, and the danger of running aground are omnipresent, but the Bars' effects reach still further. Because of the Bars, hundreds of people

schedule their lives according to the tides, since the boats can only clear the Bars safely when the tide is in. The tides come twice a day, an hour later than on the previous day, so high tide is at a different time each day.

The results of this for fishermen's home life are striking. Fishermen come and go to sea only as the tide permits, sometimes when friends and kin can see them and sometimes not. The results for fishermen's work are also striking: they may have to leave a highly productive spot in order to make it back in on the tide.

The Bars also affect the size and design of boats that fishermen can use. Shallow draft boats, though more susceptible to rolling and tossing about at sea, give a fisherman some hours' advantage in extra clearance over the Bars. Even shallow draft designs have limits, though, and there are few boats over fifty feet that can safely clear the Bars even in high tide.

The impact of the limited boat length gives form to the essence of fishing in Marsham. Since the boats are smaller in comparison to those of other ports, they can't stay out long and consequently the fish they land are fresher. With fish more than with most other food products, a matter of a few days significantly alters quality. Because they are usually noticeably fresher than fish from other ports, Marsham fish command a higher price. In fact, a Boston Globe article alluded in its headline "Six to One It's Marsham's" to the ratio of value of other fish to its Marsham counterpart.

Trading in a premium product, the Marsham fishing economy deals in lower volumes and is set up to work with boats whose small catch would be laughed out of other ports. In Marsham, a number of fishermen--about 100--make their living on small boats. This "mosquito fleet" and the generally smaller size of all Marsham boats gives the fleet overall a lean look: boats that cover the distance to the fishing grounds and back on a daily basis must be relatively quick.

Also, whether due to their ease of maintenance, the current, fairly prosperous times for fishing, or the aura of Cape Cod, the cleanliness and trim of Marsham boats is outstanding. The whole aura of the industry in Marsham is remarkably aesthetic. The only irony in the location of the commercial fish pier in the middle of the town's poshest resort complex is in the multiple meaning of the resorts name: Marsham Bars.

The New England climate also influences the nature of fishing work in the town. The climate limits the number of days that a fisherman can leave the port. In storms and through the winter the boats don't go out. Even days that are good, for New England, can be awful. Fog is frequent and treacherous. Storms are especially dangerous because they can develop quickly and elude prediction. Cold days in the spring and fall freeze fingers and leave a beautiful but perilous glaze on decks.

Aside from the climate, navigation in any weather can be tricky. Even with sophisticated electronic help, experienced fishermen lose their way occasionally, and sometimes forever. Several people lose their lives fishing out of Marsham each year.

Fishing work is also physically demanding, with long hours of rope hauling and boat work spent in difficult circumstances. For variety, an occasional crisis of boat repair or health emergency makes extreme demands. Even in good weather the work is exhausting. Fishermen say they are "old men at forty."

Fishing Work

Despite the difficult physical conditions that impinge on fishing work, there is seldom a shortage of fishermen in Marsham. Working on the small boats, Marsham folk say, is better than working on larger boats. Crews are seldom larger than three on the Marsham boats, making it possible for everyone on board to fish. On larger boats, fishing is more of a "factory operation." Crew on the larger boats work more on gear, rigging and boat maintenance than with fish.

Some Marsham fishermen use "longlining," a method that has characteristics of both factory work and fishing. They set out a number (from three to ten) of long lines, with 100 or so baited hooks, that sink to the ocean floor. Fishing work on those boats consists mostly of the careful paying out of

the line and its market buoys, and the subsequent retrieval of the line (hopefully) loaded with fish.

Longlining makes for repetitious work involving baiting hundreds of hooks by hand, paying out and retrieving the line and coiling it carefully to avoid snags on the subsequent run. Since many boats have hydraulic assistance in bringing the line back in, longlining work often takes place with a constant background noise of engine roar. Fishermen on longlining boats can often talk only by shouting.

Smaller boats pursue "jigging," which is quieter and closer to the fish. Jigging is fishing as it has been for centuries: men dangling lines with hooks, pulling the fish in hand-over-hand. There is no machinery, only a metal lure and the boat's engine, which is turned off while the fishermen jig. Jigging can be done by a lone fisherman, but the cost of operating a boat and the boredom and danger of loneliness at sea convince many boat owners to bring along at least one crew member.

Jiggers and longliners both make extensive use of sophisticated electronics. CB radios are omnipresent; LORAN-C location finders, radar, and fishfinders are on many boats, even some small ones. Though the kind of work may differ, crewing arrangements on both kinds of boats are similar in their arrangements for salary. Both use essentially the same share or "lay" system that Herman Melville outlined in Moby Dick.

Crew arrangements in Marsham are often stable over many years. Even with small crews and the element of friendship that often arises out of continued contact, the nature of work on a fishing boat is characterized predominantly by the unflinching control exercised by the captain. Work on a fishing boat is an extreme case of hierarchical organization.

Fishing Economics

Reefs, dirty weather, navigation troubles and hard work are longstanding elements of a fishermen's work. Equally longstanding and somehow more distasteful are the economics that many fishermen face. The classic picture of fishing economics held in Marsham in earlier decades, when profiteering buyers were the only connection between the fishermen and their markets.

The buyers, "middlemen" with an eye for profit and a reputation for greed, made fishing into an ugly kind of business. They would readily lend fishermen money for repairs or even buy them new boats, but stretch the payments over many years and keep the price they paid for fish at a minimum. The situation in Marsham was especially bad for a number of years. One buyer prevailed and was able to enhance his control because there was little competition to get in his way.

It is somewhat difficult to envision the independent fishermen in this situation of deference. Apparently their stance at sea did not readily translate into a similar kind of courage ashore. Dealing with markets in faraway, cosmopolitan

cities mystified them. Their ability to solve the mystery was inhibited by a lack of interest as well as a fear of the unknown. "We were fishermen, not salesmen," an old-timer explained.

Several enterprising fishermen occasionally experimented with their own sales activity, but the risks were high. It took time off the boats to make market contacts, and energy after bringing the fish in to crate and ship them. And then, if the arrangement soured, there was the near certainty that the regular buyer would welcome them back with lower prices and perhaps even a rejected boatful of fish.

Co-op Beginnings

It took a measure of courage, then, when the fishermen formed a marketing co-op some twelve years ago, even though circumstances at the time were helpful. The prices being paid for fish were high, there were a few successful co-ops nearby, and one of the town's large buyers was going out of business. The buyer called a meeting of the fishermen and offered to sell to them--at a characteristically high price.

While the fishermen debated the issue, a smaller buyer surfaced and offered his business at a better price and with the interesting option that he would remain on as the manager--as the fishermen's employee. In their desperation due to existing circumstances and their desire to start the co-op, several of the fishermen took out mortgages on their homes in order to help raise the small buyer's asking price.

The consensus these days among old-timers seems unanimous that the fishermen got little in hard goods for their \$10,000 investment. There was a run-down shack for processing and a beaten-up truck for transporting the fish. However, the old-timers also generally agree that the price was worth it because it bought them the market contacts and expertise that had seemed so elusive.

Becoming the employer of the fish buyer who had previously exploited them, and for a high price at that, may seem a bit like splitting hairs, but the difference between working for the buyer and having the buyer work for them was not at all trivial to the fishermen. At issue was the fishermen's acquisition of the ability to exercise more control over the prices they were paid. Their co-op would always buy their fish, and always at the best possible price. There were some costs in maintaining the organization, but they didn't approach the sizable cut that had gone to the buyer.

The fishermen quickly discovered that wholesale markets could be as capricious as the buyer they had eliminated. But they did eliminate one level of caprice, and a presence that had kept them under its thumb for many years. Moreover, the prices the co-op could pay usually were better than those of the competition. More indirectly, nearly all the fishermen in the port-members and non-members alike agree that the co-op's presence keeps the competition honest.

From the outset, the co-op provided much that its members wanted. The initial investors felt satisfied in their decision, and proceeded to operationalize the co-op's structure and process. In this they were assisted by other co-ops in the area, state agencies, and the fact that the laws of Massachusetts fairly clearly lay out the parameters of the organization of a cooperative. These parameters, an extension of the guidelines established by the weavers of Rochdale in an earlier century, specify a structure that provides for distributing ownership and control of the organization equitably among members. The structure provides for voting, an elected Board of Governors, and shared ownership.

Control and Money

The structure of a cooperative is mostly concerned with mechanisms for distributing control of the organization to individuals, and not with ways of helping the individuals work together.

In fact, part of the appeal of the idea of the cooperative was its promise not to force the fishermen to work together. From the outset, it was clear that the cooperative structure could be handled, once it was established, to demand minimal amounts of their time. The notion of distributing control was read by the fishermen as ensuring that "no one can take my share away," and that "I can look at the account books anytime I want."

From its beginnings, the co-op's two major *raison d'être* were control and money. The fishermen didn't much get in the way of their buyer-turned-manager once he began his work for them. Nor did they attempt to learn what he knew about wholesale markets. Money interested them more: the wholesale prices offered in New York and Boston; the highest prices they could be paid; the lowest level of operating expenses needed to sustain the co-op. The fishermen had not started the co-op because they wanted to manage their own organization or influence the organization of their work. They wanted more money for their work--more returns on the work they did. The co-op was not an end for them but a means for increasing their financial strength.

This starting point influences the co-op's early experiences, which were marked predominantly by members' extreme concern for the price paid for their fish. This beginning generally established the co-op as a bare bones operation that conveyed money in the most direct possible way from markets to fishermen.

Whether in reaction to their experience with the buyer, or their shortsightedness regarding the co-op's needs, the membership created a financial policy that neglected the needs of the organization to sustain itself. It was under-staffed, undersupplied and undercapitalized. To exacerbate matters, members also attempted to use the organization as a vehicle to deliver additional services to themselves. They spun off

a gasoline sales operation and a gear and supplies shop, loading the responsibilities for these on to an organization they were supporting in only a minimal way.

The co-op's focus on money also implies what the co-op is not. Viewed primarily as a marketing operation, the co-op was never intended to alter the nature of fishing work by enabling its members to concentrate on fishing itself. The co-op takes care of the finances and sales aspects of fishing work that many fishermen found distasteful or at least did not enjoy. The co-op helps preserve and enhance the essence of fishing work: fishermen toiling alone or in small groups at sea. The co-op takes care of the tasks on land. Fishermen summarize the relationship of the co-op to fishing work succinctly: "All cooperation ends at the dock."

Despite members' predominant interests in making more money and in controlling the organization, the co-op has taken on meaning for some members' work beyond its use as a marketing device. A jigger who was not a co-op member told me he would join the co-op when he felt he was ready to "really think of myself as a fisherman." For him, and for co-op members, the organization formalizes work often done in an informal way.

Sven, one of the co-op's members with Scandinavian roots, sees the co-op as a "right" way to do business. For him, belonging to the co-op enhances the work of fishing by

channeling his finances through an organization he feels benefit his peers. Mack, who has served several times on the co-op's Board of Directors feels similarly that it is a "community organization" in spite of its hands-off approach to the boats.

Sven, Mack, and a number of the other long-term members of the co-op also use it as a vehicle for informal meetings. Groups of old-timers often gather in the co-op's second-story "social" room at the dock for coffee in the wee hours before departing, though the sun has not yet risen, for the day. Younger members more often meet in each others' boats for a few beers at the end of their work day.

As members never intended that the co-op alter the nature of fishing work, they also never intended that they actually run the co-op. Formal organization structure of the cooperative was appealing to the fishermen because it provided them with access to and control over the organization, but with no need to run it themselves. The fishermen's lack of interest in running the organization helped the co-op in that it kept members out of the manager's hair in much of his work.

Furthermore, their reluctance to run the co-op led the fishermen to be fairly strict in ensuring that membership on the Board of Directors was rotated throughout the general membership of the co-op. Rotation, a fair way of distributing the distasteful organizational tasks, also ensured that

large proportion of the members acquired experience in taking responsibility and understanding organizational issues. As a result of members' reluctance to run the organization, many members were forced (though most of them participated willingly enough) to be on the Board. Consequently, the co-op's membership over the years was fairly conversant with the chief issues confronting the organization.

At the same time, members' desire to control but not directly manage the organization led to some serious difficulties. Often, members' way of exercising control was to criticize the work of the manager. The current manager of the co-op calls this "negative participation," arguing that too often, members who have no intention of actually doing management work are quite facile in objecting to nearly anything he proposes. They control him well enough, but the overall result of negative participation discourages the managers from proposing new ideas, and channels much of the contact between the manager and the members into a kind of "peeking over the shoulder" mode. Most typically, members' participation boils down to their asking the manager, "Isn't there some way to do this that will cost less?"

Growth and Change

Since its inception the co-op's evolution has been marked mostly by growth. Membership has increased to about 100--some two-thirds of Marsham's longliners. (Co-op membership is concentrated among longliners. Jiggers are usually

less experienced and use smaller boats. They usually move on to longlining as soon as they can afford the equipment. Concurrently, they often move into the co-op to formalize their permanence and stability.) Annual sales volume has climbed to over a million dollars.

The retail market has grown and acquired a solid base of buyers among the town's permanent residents. The growth of membership and dollar volume have both not been steady. Minor palace revolutions have spurred the departure of handfuls of dissidents, and membership in general has reached a plateau. Growth in sales was also marked by a number of backtrackings due to economic recessions, bad fishing years, and changes in laws limiting the catch.

While the co-op grew financially members eased up, though reluctantly, on the demands they placed upon it. Underattended and ill managed, the gear shop lost money to the point where the convenience it afforded members did not outweigh its costs to the co-op. The members voted to turn it over to one of their number who was retiring from work at sea but looking for something to do ashore. The membership also cast off a branch retail market in another town.

The membership also increased the co-op's capitalization. "Those guys were trying to run a million dollar business on ten thousand dollars worth of capital," the manager recalled. For years he had tried to convince the membership that the co-op could benefit substantially by increasing its capital. More cash on hand would make it

possible to buy materials in bulk, invest in some processing equipment and avoid the occasional need to borrow caused by seasonal fluctuations in volume.

The membership would have none of it, though, until forced. The co-op faced a severe cash flow problem at one point, and the Bank of Cooperatives (an arm of the Department of Agriculture) made as a condition of its loan the increase of the co-op's capital base. Members complained about the situation and about the whole idea of the co-op "keeping our money," but eventually gave in and ultimately came to regret that they had not done so much sooner.

While the co-op shed some of the tasks and responsibilities members had originally placed upon it, it did not wholly become a strictly economic entity. Most notably, the co-op emerged as a political force in response to increased government interest in monitoring a limit on cod. Fishermen worked through the co-op; they used it as a vehicle to communicate with legislators and economic planners who were designing the cod limit policy.

Summary

The fishing co-op is an organization in spite of itself. Members would prefer to not have anything to do with one another, to pursue their work at sea and mind their own business. Since the economics of the fishing industry reward cooperation, the fishermen tolerate it, but are careful to keep it from getting out of hand. They've approached the co-op

as a minimal organization, one that serves them with a minimum of their involvement.

In this context, some of the practices that enhance members' control are essentially accidents. For example, the policy that rotates positions on the Board of Directors among the membership provides many members with a useful leadership perspective on the co-op. This policy stems mostly from avoidance. Fishermen mostly want to minimize the time they spend with the co-op, and thus work to make sure that everyone takes a turn.

The spirit of minimal organization also causes problems. Lack of constructive involvement in the organization contributes to the "negative participation" that so troubles the manager. Lack of involvement probably also contributes to members' inability to get from the organization all it might provide them. In addition, members' distance from the co-op often puts them beyond the reach of information that might be useful to them.

On the other hand, the spirit of minimal organization makes even more formidable the degree of success the co-op has attained. It is an organization that moves on distrust rather than trust, on solitude rather than collegiality, on shoe-strings rather than capital. Yet it also has served its members exceptionally well on their own terms.

THE COMPTON SCHOOLBarnham

The national character of suburbia has a special quality in New England, where the town meeting form of municipal government seems to strike up more participants in local affairs than in other parts of the country. In many ways it is a typical bedroom community, its current residents migrants from other towns and regions. However, Barnham maintains a New England character in the extent to which its residents participate in town governance.

Citizen involvement in schooling has a long history, many participants, and a fairly clear point of view. Residents' point of view on schooling has increasingly come to be concerned with cutting back. Like homeowners everywhere, the residents of Barnham are concerned with their rapidly escalating tax rate. Although their tactics may seem regrettable, the radical tax-cutting reformers of other towns and states have left their mark in Barnham among a number of people who watchdog town spending. Since a large proportion of the town's budget is its school budget, watching town spending means watching school spending.

It wasn't always like this in Barnham, or in most other suburbs. A decade ago, parental involvement in schooling in many suburbs was extensive, but was more concerned with improving education than with cutting expenses. New programs and services abounded, often as a result of support from parents.

Parents' beliefs about what constitutes effective education have also shifted. "Back to basics" has replaced "child-centered learning" in parents' hearts and minds. Scholastic achievement and proficiency in basic skills interest parents now. Increasingly, parents look to the schools for results. New programs and practices that fail to produce some kind of measurable outputs are quickly abandoned.

Declining enrollments have reinforced the shift in attitudes as a reason behind parental interest in cutting school budgets. When town residents look into the budget and management of the schools, they see declining enrollments and perceive a need for reduced spending. Faced with inflation, rising operating costs and some state-mandated demands for new services (Massachusetts schools in recent years have been required to develop and provide an array of services for students with special needs), school administrators did not respond quickly to declining enrollments with cuts in spending. Some even made the error of anticipating that they would be able to keep their resources at the same level, distributing more intensely among needs and perhaps, for example, improving student-teacher ratios.

In Barnham enrollments have declined, and some services have been cut back. A few teachers have been laid off-- "RIF"ed, in the jargon of educators concerned with reductions-in-force. Mostly, however, teacher workforce reduction has been operationalized by not replacing teachers who retire, resign or transfer, and by transferring teachers extensively

within the system to fill service gaps. Like other towns nearby, Barnham has closed a few schools.

Changes for Teachers

Barnham's teachers have kept a wary watch on the town's shift in attitudes and on declining enrollments. They have seen tenure, their cornerstone of job security, lose its meaning. They have listened while parents substantially altered their kinds of demands and requests.

Barnham has been an especially sensitive barometer of parent demands because parents are allowed to send their children to the school of their choice. This choice has been further articulated by the development, within each school, of a unique character. The existence of alternatives and the possibility of making a choice has made it standard practice for parents to "shop" for their schools.

When enrollments were stable or increasing, parents' shopping was not much of an issue because in the end, all the schools were filled. With fewer children coming in, though, the schools have found it necessary to market their services and their character. Administrators and teachers alike worry about their schools' "image" and devote considerable energy to activities designed to strengthen school-community relations. Teachers are ambivalent about this marketing, seeing it partly as necessary but acceptable, and partly as highly distasteful a detriment to their professional priorities.

With the possibility that they may be transferred to another grade or another school, teachers find it increasingly

difficult to develop strong attachments. Even those who stay in a school are faced with the transiency of others and a changing community of colleagues. Such transiency has an impact, beyond teachers' feelings of security, on their ability to work together on joint projects and ideas.

Many teachers probably face these dilemmas unruffled, content with the fact that they have a job themselves and not particularly interested in work outside their own classroom. In fact, there is somewhat of a theme in education that affirms teachers' freedom within their own classroom. In many schools there is a tradition of little interest on the part of teachers in things beyond their classroom door.

Such individuality, solitude and to a certain extent, apathy, may be the norm for many of Barnham's schools. In one school, however, things are different. The teachers in the Compton School are involved with matters outside their classrooms. They have responsibility for running the school: developing curriculum, hiring and firing the principal and each other, formulating the school's philosophy. At Compton the teachers are in charge. They have the possibility of dealing with declining enrollments in a way that minimizes the negative aspects of the situation.

The Compton School

It must have been exciting to be around for the beginnings of the Compton School in the late 1960s. The intellectual climate in education was cresting with interest in innovation and reform. New kinds of curriculum abounded.

Evolving pedagogical philosophy was refining the basically different ideas that had surfaced in the early 1960s. There was financial support from federal, state and local funding programs, and from a sympathetic majority of taxpayers.

Barnham exaggerated this progressivism. Residents, many with extensive exposure to the evolving ideas, joined with teachers and administrators in formulating new directions in the schools. Barnham's residents were also willing and able to pay the tax bills. These years of child-centered education were also years of child-centered spending.

By the late 1960s, school reform was in an "older but wiser" phase. There were still high levels of interest and activity, but also some disillusionment with the earliest attempts at change. Many people labeled these attempts as "open education" and criticized them for their lack of organization and direction.

At the time Barnham was planning to expand its schools to meet the needs of its growing population, a group of teachers and parents undertook some initial planning. They formulated the direction for a school that would offer an alternative to the others in the system. The practice of building one innovative school in a system had been taken in nearby towns, and seemed to work well. The one school absorbed the inputs of those interested without disrupting the whole system. Concentrating innovation in one school also eliminated many barriers to change and sometimes even

built a learning community, reinforcing innovation and creativity.

The planning group for the new school reviewed and debated pedagogical approaches that the school might take, focusing on academic excellence. Several members of the group were familiar with the ideas of Caleb Gattegno, and the group moved rather quickly to adopt his philosophy and methods. Gattegno was an educational advisor to the United Nations with extensive and broad experience, and a clear cut approach to reading, and more generally, to a philosophy of the child.

Gattegno's approach to reading, called "Words-In-Color," was backed up by impressive documentation and research, and was appealing to the planning group. Perhaps the most appealing thing about "Words-In-Color" was that it paralleled Gattegno's overall approach of "openness with structure." Gattegno's point of view made integral use of many of the key tenets of open education, but tempered them with some structure and authority. The result appealed to the planners as having some built-in responses to the early criticisms of open education.

The planning group coordinated the school's opening monitoring everything from the physical plant to the hiring of teachers. The former was a combination of two buildings, one representative of the basic, two-story, brick New England approach to school construction in the 1920s, the other of the ranch-style New England approach to school construction in the 1950s. Both were relatively impersonal, but the planning board worked hard to give them character and personality.

The planners were most exacting in their choice of teachers. They were not, after all, merely recruiting for teaching jobs. They were locating the people who would be the keepers of the flame. The planners who were teachers were also selecting peers and colleagues. The new school's vision of a collegial learning community placed a high value on finding people who were not only good teachers but also resources to that community of teachers.

In the end, the school opened with an exceptional group of teachers, a group notable for its commitment to and experience in the profession and more specifically, in alternative education. The teachers were an extension of the original planning group.

Teaching Work

Teaching in any school is an emotional profession. In the Compton School the emotion of the classroom was compounded by the high spirits of the evolving organization. People had the sense of being involved in something special, and that sense was compounded by the way the school was viewed in the town and among local teachers' colleges. Though some were more wary, most parents who sent their children to Compton contributed to the sense of excitement, too. They supported the teachers and showed interest in the school in a way that was unprecedented in the town. The school was a functioning alternative in an era when alternatives of many sorts were viewed with favor and optimism.

Teaching work in all this, though exhilarating, was also grueling. The planners' commitment to have teachers involved in management discision making and in the refinement of the school's pedagogic philosophy translated most often into one event: meetings. Some weeks there would be meetings every day, and on weekends. And all this was heaped onto teachers' work in organizing their classrooms.

The school wasn't far enough along yet for teachers to be able to bureaucratize and distinguish those actions and decisions that could be handled with less than 100 percent participation. More than that, they wanted to be involved with as much decision making as possible. It was their school.

Eventually the teachers established committees for each of a half-dozen or so issues that warranted their continuing involvement, e.g., curriculum planning, hiring, philosophy. Committee members were those teachers interested in the particular topic, but the committees posted notices of upcoming issues so any teacher could join in when he or she was interested.

Teaching work at Compton differed from other schools in the extent to which teachers had influence in decisions that created a context for what happened in their classrooms. For example, there were regular monthly meetings where the only topic of discussion was the school's pedagogic philosophy. The contrast between this sort of orientation and that of most other schools' teacher meetings--where schedules and discipline problems are discussed, and directives handed down by the

administration--is almost total. Compton's teachers embraced the possibilities of ways to exert control over aspects of their work that had previously been taken care of--often to their dissatisfaction--by a school's administration.

The crux of teacher involvement seemed to be in curriculum planning, which had direct impacts on teachers' day-to-day work experience. Curriculum is in many ways the raw material of teaching. To be able to shape, mold and design that raw material was a distinct asset to the teachers and a major factor in the school's appeal to them. Even recently, one teacher remarked that the prospect of ever losing control over the curriculum was "simply unthinkable."

Besides involvement with the school's philosophy and curriculum, teachers' work at the Compton school differed from the norm in that it attempted to establish a good deal of collegial interaction among teachers. Teachers worked together on committees extensively, and in that context saw much of one another.

Teachers' more grandiose scheme for mutual visitation, observation and criticism did not, however, ever fully pan out. The visiting part worked well enough initially, but then teachers found they had difficulty in offering and accepting useful criticism. Even in the collegial learning community, criticism was not accepted well and defensive reactions often prevailed. Visits continue, but only for social reasons, and even those are limited.

Reduced Participation: A Capsule History

The school's early years were marked by enthusiasm and excitement. Teachers knew they were in a special place and gave unflinchingly of their time to make the school what they wanted it to be. Many of them were in the school working, planning and meeting each weekday night and often on Saturdays and Sundays, too. Some worked through the summers in order to plan for the coming year.

Teachers' involvement in the early years encompassed much. From discipline in the cafeteria through management of parent volunteers, there were few aspects of the school's operations that they didn't discuss, debate and attempt to act on. It was indicative of the thrust and tone of their involvement that they sometimes found themselves at odds with the teachers' union. The union objected, on occasion, to Compton's teachers' wishes to take on tasks that the union had tried to have the Barnham system relegate to aids.

During these years the school was a wellspring of activity, innovation and creativity. The halls were filled with vibrantly colored art, and the exhibits changed frequently. The maple trees outside the school were tapped in the Spring. The children themselves created an atmosphere of camaraderie and friendliness in the cafeteria and halls. In the classrooms, the prevailing tone was one of hard work.

A look in any room at nearly any hour would reveal children working intensely, often alone or in small groups, while the teacher worked with other groups and circled around

the room. Teachers seldom addressed the class en masse, except at the daily morning meeting when the day's schedule was reviewed and announcements made. Following this style of teaching, most of the classrooms were arranged with the desks in clustered groupings. Virtually no room had the orderly, straight rows of desks familiar to most schools.

Parental involvement also continued and expanded beyond the original planning group. Many parents were interested in working in the classrooms a day or two a week. Parent involvement became so widespread that the school hired a coordinator to match parents' skills and interests with teachers' needs. In the end, it was often the case that teachers were always with a volunteer of some sort. The teachers enjoyed this arrangement because it strengthened their "small group" organization of classes, providing secondary foci of attention and control for whatever groups the teacher was not directly working with at any particular moment.

In the first four or five years of the school, there was a fairly constant building of the school along the path envisioned by the planners. Philosophy, teaching methods, management, and atmosphere grew much as they had hoped. After the initial years though, difficulties emerged from sources both internal and external.

After the initial outpouring of energy, teachers became concerned with how to design their involvement. They didn't all want to be personally involved with every decision, and the committee system wasn't enabling them to connect with

specific issues at key times. The information coming out of the committees was insufficient to enable non-members to understand when their presence was needed. Too often, people would miss important meetings and attend meetings of little consequence.

There was an overall decrease in the amount of time and energy people wanted to invest in the school. Whatever had brought together a group with such singular energy when the school was started, had changed with the times. People were tired and perhaps even a little bored with the finer points of the school's management. They continued to want control and autonomy in their own classes, but increasingly they were willing to leave matters of management to someone else.

The decline of teachers' interest in management became particularly evident when the principal, who had been with the school since its beginning, took a sabbatical. Throughout his years in the position, he had evolved an untraditional role to complement the teachers involvement in management. He was a "facilitator" who helped the teachers to do things rather than doing them himself.

The teacher who stood in as acting principal had a different approach. As a teacher in the school, he was becoming increasingly frustrated with being "helped." He just wanted things to be taken care of. He approached the job from that perspective, and took on the sort of decision making and action that the permanent principal had struggled to deflect back to the teachers. The teachers, though wary of the

possibility that he might accumulate a degree of influence that could cause them trouble later, were for the most part appreciative of his efforts. When the original principal returned he found that he had to take on some more management tasks, and that it took more effort to get teachers involved with management.

Teachers' waning interest in the finer details of management has been amplified by the departure of a number of the original planning group for other jobs or childrearing. The remaining teachers face the most pressing threat of the school's history--declining enrollments. Within the town, the school is now forced to compete even more strenuously with other schools in the system for the dwindling incoming classes. Where there was once a waiting list for children to get into the school, there is now an abundance of space in all the grades. Without its share of "the market" the school is in a difficult bargaining position for continued town support.

The whole town has been affected by the shrinking student population. One school has been closed. Others may follow suit. In the midst of all this it is difficult to justify an "alternative" school. Too, town-wide cutbacks have meant that openings have been filled by teachers moved by the town from schools that have closed. Compton's remaining "oldtimers" have little influence, except for the subtleties of peer pressure, over experienced teachers from other parts of the system who now are located in the school. So far, the oldtimers say, the transferred teachers are cooperating and

trying, but they are also refraining from the kind of involvement with the school that marked its history.

The Compton School battles for its continued existence in a community of dwindling school enrollments, reduced school spending and increased parental watchfulness. At the same time, it confronts internal problems as key teachers continue to leave, and are replaced by "outside" teachers who have a minimal commitment to what the school stands for.

So far the school's identity remains intact, though damaged, as the remaining teachers dig in their heels to protect the rights they gained. The basic governing committees are as active as they were several years ago before "the troubles" set in.

On the other hand, it is difficult to hear the school's story without wondering, as one teacher did recently, if, "maybe there was something we could have done about all this. We were in control after all, and we would have only been helping ourselves."

THE POTTERY STUDIO

Arts and Crafts

Arts and crafts holds considerable appeal as an "alternative" career. It offers autonomy and independence and an absence of bosses and oppression. It makes work in one's home feasible. It holds out the possibility of creativity and personal expression. With a growing market, it also offers the possibility of reasonable earnings.

People who turn to a career in arts and crafts develop these potentials in strikingly different ways. A substantial number of them quickly fail financially, unable to connect their respective craft with a market, or unable to produce the large quantity of goods required to turn a profit. Those who clear the initial hurdles encounter still more serious difficulties: the fickle whims of the marketplace; the inevitable mismatch of demand with the artisan's choice of product; the loneliness of solitary work; the dedication required to sustain a business.

In response to these pressures, some artisans become purists, taking up their chosen art/craft with a vengeance and pursuing new frontiers in artistic form regardless of product demand. Others are more pragmatic, balancing their need for personal growth with their desire to survive economically. People who take this position might develop a line of stock or production items that provide a reliable base of minimal financial support. They can then pursue their own interests during whatever time is left after the production work is finished.

Some artisans react to the realities of the marketplace with neither purism nor pragmatism, but with a hearty embrace of the more commercial elements that financial success demands. These mellow entrepreneurs find a home in marketing arts and crafts. They become the storekeepers, the promoters, the agents.

Rationale

On the face of it, the twelve founders of the Pottery Studio seemed to be pragmatic, dedicated artisans. Deeply interested in the possibility of having pottery production as their career, they needed assistance to strike the right balance among their needs to survive financially, learn the craft, and work in a pleasant environment.

The idea of a collective studio addressed each of these needs, making the logistics of a career in pottery more manageable. On the production end, the collective could provide access to a salt kiln. This was the Studio's chief driving force, since no individual member could afford a professional kiln. Access to a good kiln also brought the possibility of increased production and experimentation with new potting ideas. The collective also could provide group work space where it would be possible to store materials bought in bulk.

The idea of a collective work space also implied the appealing possibility of interaction among the potters. In this, the Studio's founding members saw several useful potentials: the opportunity to learn from one another; the reduction of the loneliness of solitary work; and the creation of the sort of gentle peer pressure that could help reinforce the self-discipline necessary to sustain a viable level of production.

The financial advantages of a collective studio were also apparent in marketing. A group of people could contribute to the upkeep and staffing of a gallery or sales space that no

one individual could afford. The group could also rotate the onerous task of selling at fairs and exhibitions, making it possible for the work of more individuals to be shown on more occasions.

On the three fronts of marketing, production and inter-personal relationships, the Studio represented the possibility for all the founders to move from potting as a hobby to potting as a career. All the founders had other sources of income and employment, but mostly out of necessity. Having pursued potting "on the side" for several years, they wanted it to take a more central role in their lives.

Beginnings

The Studio's original members met in a pottery class. After class sessions, they met informally. The topic of their conversations was often potting work. As the people got to know each other better, they began to discuss how they might organize to support their interests in pottery. The class ended, but the group kept meeting. The original discussions concentrated on economics and logistics: how many members? how much capital? how big should the kiln be? what would upkeep cost?

While these kinds of discussions continued, new members joined the group. Some were brought in by the original members; others were referred by outsiders who had heard that a group was forming. As the group continued, members came to enjoy each other's company and to protect the group by carefully screening new prospects. At the same time, even before there was a studio, some people left the group to strike out on their own.

It took about a year of this sort of informal meeting before the group was ready to actually locate in physical quarters. They had settled on a size (12 members) and a cost structure linked to the rent of the industrial loft space they had found. Each member would advance a share of the total estimate for the initial renovation of the space, construction of the kiln, and finishing of the display, kitchen and bathroom areas. Subsequently, members would each contribute on a monthly basis towards the rent and upkeep. The figures were within reach of all the members, and offered them a bargain in access to kiln, work and gallery space.

The quarters the group settled on provided space for the kiln, gallery, more than a dozen workspaces, kitchen, bathroom and storage. Accommodating all this affordably and legally locating the kiln led the group to one of the vacant, old factories in the town's more disreputable neighborhoods.

On balance, the physical location is actually quite good, convenient to public transportation and easily located by out-of-towners. The factory building's numerous windows afford an abundance of natural lighting, and its construction makes it possible to cluster the heavy equipment and still have a reasonably unobstructed view through the studio. Also, unlike some industrial neighborhoods, this one has a fairly high and constant volume of traffic from shoppers and workers.

Once located and agreed upon, the Studio demanded much attention. It needed painting throughout, and bathroom and kitchen facilities. Racks had to be built for storage,

and tables constructed for working. The kiln had to be built. The twelve members of the group spent about six months working on preparing the Studio for beginning use.

The early months were fraught with difficulties and frustration. Members wanted to get down to business and start potting, but the amount of preparation work was staggering. Because they wanted to save money they did most of the work themselves, but this kept them away from potting. Also, because they were not very accomplished at the repair and renovation work they attempted, they spent more time at it than they expected, made mistakes and encountered numerous snafus. By the time the Studio had its formal opening, members were ecstatic to be out of the carpentry business and exceedingly ready to get on with the potting.

Because the transformation of the space was so complete and the work so extensive, the time members put into the building process later came to take on a mythical quality. This was the time of getting started, of proving they would make a stand. The physical space visibly reflected their energies--transforming from a dark, dingy, dirty factory area to a clean, esthetic, artful artists' place.

The building period affected how some individuals were perceived, and how the group as a whole was thought of. Individuals who worked at tasks that were important for the building process became important for the group. Members who had acquired carpentry skills taught as much as they could to others, but tended to take on a central role themselves.

Group Process

Throughout the months of building and even before that, during the months of planning, the group developed some skills that they believe sustained them. Early on, while the small group was taking on new members, rules for the group's decision making and interaction became formalized. The original, small group, cherishing the ground it had covered and the relationships it established, attended to its own processes of interaction with notable clarity.

Perhaps because they couldn't make any real decisions about operating until they had a physical site and full membership, the original members developed a good deal of sensitivity to their own processes of interaction. They spent less time making decisions than deciding how to decide. In one sense, they regarded these efforts as good business practice, laying the foundations for smoother operations to come.

In another way, though, they also quickly recognized that they enjoyed their sensitivity to the group's interaction. That the group existed for over a year without actually producing any pots was indicative not only of the constraints they faced but also of the way they worked--putting the concerns of "the group" on a par with those of production. From the outset, the group has often encountered the allegation, made by the members and observers alike, that it was less than clear if potting or the group came first.

The group's process awareness helps make its meetings more productive. Meetings look informal. Members cluster on

the old, overstuffed sofas and chairs next to the kitchen, sipping tea and eating brownies. There are no Robert's Rules. Yet the group's meetings are also businesslike in some important ways. There are agendas and lists of topics to discuss. The group makes decisions that are clear, and that most members understand and commit themselves to support. After a meeting, members seldom ask "What did we decide?"

Members use meetings to solve problems and generate ideas as well as to make group policy decisions. The group's process awareness contributes to its problem-solving abilities by creating norms encouraging the involvement of all members and their ideas. Members attempt both to listen to others' ideas and build on them, and to add their own thinking. In its search for a solution to a problem, the group often evolves completely new understandings of the problem's nature, and generates solutions that no individual could have formulated before the meeting.

In the different sense of sharing control of the organization, the potters' awareness of group process also assists. When some members are silent, others sound them out and bring them back into the group. Usually all twelve members speak in the course of the resolution of most issues. When some don't, they are explicitly given an opportunity to express themselves. These sorts of actions help keep in check the naturally occurring forces of groupthink and pressure to conform, helping individuals more fully exert control on behalf of their interests.

Besides its positive effects for productivity and shared control, the group's sensitivity to process issues also has made it a place where emotional attachments seem especially rich. Fully aware of group process and frequently discussing their relationship to the group in very personal terms, the potters spend a considerable amount of time talking and thinking about their feelings. They seem honest and open in this and in a place, as a result of it, to experience strong attachments to one another and to the group.

But awareness of process also has some difficulties. Meetings are often inordinately long, and can get sidetracked on the resolution of process issues while production is neglected. The potters do not, as a group, have a strong record in consistency of maintaining production levels, though they have always been very clear and articulate on why production was at a given level at any time. Some members also feel that their privacy is invaded by the group's attention to process issues. They don't want to discuss all the details of all the issues that the group considers, and they don't know how to limit discussion and keep within the group's normal practices. Some experience a tension between the need to put their time into group discussions and their desire to pot.

Then, too, some individuals at some times turn process clarity into precisely the sort of ritual it is intended to minimize. At several meetings the group labored doggedly to cover all the issues relevant to a particular

decision. Everyone spoke, everyone discussed and the group agreed on a course of action. Shortly after the meeting adjourned, while everyone was still in the studio and without benefit of discussion, they simply and quickly reversed their position. Later, a member explained that they had been "protecting" one member, that the "formal" process had been purely for her benefit.

Finally, some individuals have trouble staying on top of the flow of emotionality running through the organization, and end up behaving somewhat mercurially. One member told me, in a moving way, how the Studio was the center of her life and work. The next week, having "worked out" her feelings, she left the group for the unemployment lines. The consensus of the group was that she had never really been clear in her feelings. The clarity of the group's process apparently hadn't helped.

The Personal Development Workshop

Many of the strengths, weaknesses and paradoxes of the group's process sensitivity stem from the involvement of most of the members with a Personal Development Workshop that holds out certain values for individuals and forcefully advocates particular ways to conduct interaction among individuals. The workshop places a high value on personal clarity of feelings, on personal responsibility, and on seeing things as they really are.

In the setting of a group meeting these values lead people to behave in ways that seem to enhance the extent to

which the organization is participatory. Members take responsibility for group process issues, each assuming the same sorts of executive functions one might expect to be carried out by a leader.

Personal clarity on issues also seems to enhance participation, leading members to ask much of the organization and to inquire into how they might act to advance the issues that concern them. Seeing things as they really are translates, in the Studio's experience at least, into an ability to frankly discuss many of the kinds of elusive or hard to articulate issues (often "personality" issues) that can get in the way of communication.

The Workshop's advocacy of "seeing things as they are" claims to leave its adherents more objective and less argumentative, often reorienting the tone of discussion away from emotional towards intellectual arguments. The stress of open communications also claims to minimize the accumulation of tension and unresolved issues. One member notes, "There aren't any sort of hidden issues around here."

The Workshop has also influenced the potters' approach to potting. In discussing their work, they draw on the language of the Workshop to describe dilemmas and solutions. They talk, for example, about confronting the clay, and about the need to do the dirty work that is a part of potting, and about taking responsibility for tedious aspects of the work that they had previously ignored. "Ever since I took the

Workshop," one of them observed, "I take extra care so the lids fit tightly on all my pots."

The Workshop has also caused some problems. Its rhetoric is clearly identifiable and has a ring of doubletalk combined with profoundness that often enrages people who have not experienced it. For a while, the Studio was troubled by conflict between members who had taken the Workshop and members who hadn't. This dwindled as more members took it, and as the novelty of the rhetoric wore off, but a subtle version of the conflict persists.

It's difficult to empirically note the extent to which the group has been influenced by the involvement of its members in the Workshop. It is possible, however, to observe that the particular beliefs and strategies that the Workshop advocates are in evidence in numerous aspects of the group, including those "holdout" members who claim to intend never to go to the Workshop. The contagion of the Workshop seems to result in part from the creation of new group norms for what is discussed and how. In any case, the Workshop is a major factor in the confusion over the purpose of the Studio: potting or personal growth.

Potting Work

Potting seems to lend itself readily to intellectualising and emoting. Members of the studio and numerous other potters I've interviewed have little difficulty in mounting lengthy discussions of the mysteries of clay, the wonders of the creative act, and the overall angst of making pots. Such

discussions make it clear that the work of potting is an artistic process, and hence involves a kind of thinking and level of emotion alien to many work experiences.

One effect of doing art as work seems, for some of the potters, to be an integration of their self-identity with their work. They see the work not merely as production but as self-expression; they invest much of themselves in the work. In an extreme instance, one member of the Studio observes, "Everything that I am, I get from my work. I get all my strokes from my work." Conversely, when the work isn't going well (and the potting muse can be fickle, so this may happen frequently), the personal psychological effects can be devastating.

Self-employment of any kind demands the discipline to persist, to keep regular hours, to work consistently, and these issues of pure endurance can be difficult in any kind of work. Members of the fishing co-op, for example, are quite vocal on the pains of disciplining oneself to take the boat out each morning. The potters have all these endurance issues of persistence in addition to having the slippery creative process to put in harness.

Intellectualizing aside, the production work of potting is fairly straightforward. Like the work of the fishermen, its basic components haven't changed much in the past several centuries. The pots start with clay: damp, tactile, malleable. When most potters say the word "clay" one gets the feeling that they're capitalizing it. The Studio buys clay in bulk,

purchasing a variety of textures, and colors--clays with different properties conducive to different kinds of shaping and useful for different end products.

Once the clay is chosen and mixed it may be shaped and sculpted while stationary or while on a wheel. Most sculpted products are not utilitarian but more for decoration--abstract art pieces or straight sculpture. The wheel is the essence of most potting, for it makes it possible to produce circular objects of all kinds. The wheel also holds much of the fascination of potting production, making the clay a dynamic, moving entity that responds deftly to pushes and shoves.

After the clay has been shaped it is left to age for a bit, perhaps covered with a glaze and then put into a kiln. This aspect of potting is the most technologically difficult, because kiln temperatures must be extremely high in order to properly bake the clay. At the level of temperatures required, it is difficult to regulate the degree of heat accurately, and slight differences may burn, melt or underbake the pots. After all their work on the wheel and in sculpture, the potters then submit their half-finished products to a kiln that may roast them to ashes. Expensive, factory-produced kilns are more predictable, but not at all within the financial reach of even a dozen people who've pooled their resources.

While the Studio's kiln was not a complete beast, it was regarded with awe and fear for quite some time. After

several months of tenuous firings, that fear began to turn to mastery as members of the group came to learn the kiln's many eccentricities. Eventually the group became adept at firing the kiln, and charred pots became the exception rather than the rule. Still, however, the kiln has retained some aura of mystery and eccentricity.

Once the pot has been fired there is some controversy about where the work of the potter ends. Some say that potting begins and ends in the studio but others feel that potters need to take an active role in selling their wares. Most potters can't afford to take the former stance; those that can tend to be fairly accomplished artists who contract to marketers or agents to sell their work for them. Even accomplished potters may choose to market their own work, though, because selling through wholesalers cuts in on a substantial proportion, often 40 percent, of the price. That 40 percent has to be made up somewhere--in reductions in the potter's returns, and/or in the potter's need to increase production. Also, a number of potters enjoy the interpersonal contact of marketing because it provides "strokes," a break from the work of the Studio and some feedback with respect to the kinds of potting work people are interested in buying.

Most members of the Studio enjoy some direct contact and sales work, but are also interested in finding ways to market their pots that will enable them to spend more time in design and production. They've looked to the gallery on the premises of the Studio as a vehicle for selling their work,

and have slowly increased the gallery's sales volume over the years. However, the Studio's location is not yet well enough known to have the gallery account for significant sales, and the group has not yet put enough work into marketing the gallery to have it overcome its lack of visibility in the local arts scene.

The most notable thing about the whole work process, from clay mixing through wheel work through firing and sales, is the extent to which it is artful and emotional. Shaping a pot on the wheel conjures up strong feelings: respect for the clay, surprise at a new curve, enjoyment of a particular kind of shape.

The joy of firing the kiln is more a group experience, something that members of the Studio share. Often a firing includes the works of several people, and involve all of them in the firing up and monitoring process over a number of hours. Some of the Studio's most legendary firings took place late on summer nights, ending with wee hour unbrickings of the kiln and in impromptu celebration of success.

Even sales has its artful dimensions, stories of some Studio members who, when it was their turn to man the gallery-space, somehow always seemed to sell more than any four other members.

Differences and Individuals

Potting work offers a number of different choices: how much to produce, when, and what. It also offers the possibility, in a number of ways, for choice in artful and

creative practices; how often to fire the kiln, how seriously and intensely to market the product. However skilled they may be at clarifying and discussing their differences, members of the Studio differ widely in the choices they make about potting and the kinds of art they pursue. The differences place a continuing strain on the group.

For Dick, for example, the Studio is first and foremost a convenient workspace. With years of experience and success on his own, Dick's main reason for joining the Studio was that it is more convenient to his home than his previous workspace. He keeps conspicuously regular hours, and his area is noticeably more full of work than those around him. He's tolerant of the Studio's numerous meetings but doesn't really enjoy them. For him there is minimal art in the work; mostly he's concerned with making a daily production quota. He doesn't wax eloquent about confronting the clay, but he does make it clear that he's very happy doing potting work, and happy to be in the Studio.

Irene, on the other hand, is in it mostly for the Studio and the group. Irene is not a very accomplished potter. She's in the Studio to learn, to be sure to take the time to invest in potting so she can find out how good she might become. She's saved enough money from her previous job to "buy" almost a year of "discovery time," full-time participation in the Studio.

Previously a legal secretary, Irene savors the opportunity she has each morning to decide whether and when she will

come in. Most often, her decision is to come, and to come early and stay late. She sees her role in the Studio as a combination of Mother Hen, Chef, Confessor and Custodian. She's fully aware that the others many not need or even particularly want her to take such a position. She's grateful that the group can accommodate her desire to invest so much of herself. "It's something that I want to do at this point in my life," she observed. "Two years from now I may be back in the law office, but for now this is what I want to do."

Joan operates at a slower pace than Irene or Dick. Intense and reflective, Joan's contributions to group discussions are few but well respected by the other members of the group. It's as if she continuously weighs the tenor of the discussion, then sums it up for the group, adding her own observations and suggestions. Often her contributions to group discussions are "stoppers" that have the quality of pronouncements. In many cases Joan is the decider, and she knows it.

Joan's potting, too, is careful and intense. Her designs are innovative, but always with a sense of flow and grace. She shies away from tricks and gimmicky products, concentrating mostly on traditional pots--but always with an air of elegance that sets them apart.

Despite her talents and skill in the craft, Joan maintains a continuing debate with herself regarding her continuation in the Studio. She hasn't really convinced herself that she is a potter. She sees the meetings as a

drudge and an obligation, but she seems to use them to elicit support from other members of the Studio in the definition of her career.

The other members of the group vary similarly in their views on meetings, obligations to the group, ability in the craft, self-discipline, production output, sales volume, and expectations of the Studio. Too, all of members' feelings change and shift. Sometimes there seems to be a unity of feelings, and when the unity is around enthusiasm, the contagion of it is noticeable and positive.

On the other hand, there have also been downward swings of group emotion that have practically levelled the Studio. After the Christmas holidays one year, the predictable emotional drop was compounded by troubles with the kiln and the departure of several of the Studio's members. Everyone's production dropped. For some it stopped completely. The physical trappings of the Studio went to seed. The gallery accumulated dust, the plants died. The stove broke, and water for coffee had to be heated in the broiler or the oven.

On balance, though, the snowballing of members' sentiment is less frequently a problem than the need of the Studio to respond to the diverse demands and expectations that members have. However it may affect production, the Studio's skills with group process help it respond to these demands.

Continuing Issues

Now in its sixth year, the Studio has attained some important milestones and fallen short of a few others. The physical location is taken care of, comfortable, and in the light of recently released city plans for urban renewal, fortuitously sited. The Studio's name is becoming well known; traffic in the gallery is on the rise and the Studio is running group exhibits in some of the city's posher downtown commercial galleries. Members themselves are becoming more accomplished artisans. There is interest from outside wholesalers in marketing the group's work. The group has a fairly clear understanding of its finances and a coherent, logical plan for attaining and sustaining solvency and stability.

Stability, however, has been elusive. While a core of the original twelve members remains, a minority of the group has always been in transit, and that has always absorbed time and resources. Since the Studio's costs are shared by members, there is an incentive to keep the membership levels constant so the Studio's incoming cash flow doesn't drop. The reason for these comings and goings is not entirely clear. Some are a result of burn-out or specific conflicts. Others are side effects of more basic shifts people have made in their lives.

Besides the difficulties caused by member turnover, the Studio has also had to deal with two kinds of operating difficulties that have caused considerable upset. First, the kiln, which the group themselves built to exacting standards

and learned at great cost to operate, proved to be too much of a burden for the supporting beams of the building. Ominous cracks appeared after one especially productive firing, and a structural consultant was called in. The kiln had to be relocated, and that meant taking down the old one--literally brick by brick--and building anew.

The cost of this to the group was enormous in terms of lost production time and direct expenses to use the kiln of another, nearby group. There were also considerable psychological costs. Members of the group were consistently and thoroughly depressed by loss of the kiln to an extent that it severely hindered their ability to get on with building anew. It took several months to redesign, approve and move ahead with the new kiln and a few more months to fully finish it.

More subtle than the difficulty with the kiln, but perhaps as influential in the long run, was an accident that took place on a holiday. The building, though not "officially" open, was unlocked. A woman entered and, misunderstanding the operation of the freight elevator, fell down the shaft and suffered a broken leg. She has been attempting to bring suit for damages but has had some difficulties in determining whom to sue. Prime candidates for the suit, aside from the building's owners, include both the building's tenants (i.e., the Studio) and people who were in the building on the day of the accident (i.e., several of the Studio's members).

The suit is unresolved and may be dropped, but its surfacing caused much difficulty with the Studio. The vagueness

of the legality of the suit and the on-again-off-again nature of the case made it difficult to discuss the issues. Short of actually being in court, it was never really clear what the issues were. Even with the vagueness of the issues, it was clear from the outset that the Studio was financially exposed in an extreme way. The Studio's legal status as a corporation was not finalized at the time of the accident, so whatever troubles the Studio faced as an organization were compounded by the grim realization that individual members might become involved in the suit.

The law and the overweight kiln, both unexpected events, were weathered reasonably well by the potters, though both also took a toll in psychological energy and production time. In both cases it would be possible to blame the potters for what happened. If they had incorporated earlier instead of delaying, the suit would have posed little threat. If they had invested in better structural consultation at the outset, they might have avoided the unlucky placement of the kiln. On the other hand, there are always compromises to be made in the exploration of any issue, and there may always be surprise threats of one kind or another to an organization.

In Perspective

Members of the Studio feel strongly about its benefits. Irene, for example, remarked of her experience in the law firm, "I was never really a part of things there. This (the

Studio) is mine; I belong here." Another member, who grudgingly enjoys his "other" job as a waiter in an expensive restaurant nearby, observes similarly that the restaurant "is still their place. This (the Studio) is my place."

The experiences of the Studio call into question the inevitability of oligarchy that Michels predicts. There are, of course, varying levels of expertise and varying degrees of interest among members in managing the organization, but these have not served to increasingly concentrate power and influence in the Studio among a limited number of members. The Studio parts company with Michels by not dividing the labor and management: all the potters take part in management decisions, and the tasks of management (e.g., bookkeeping, maintaining the gallery, buying the clay, etc.) are spread out and rotated among the membership.

The Studio's process awareness plays an especially important role in blocking the onset of oligarchy, reinforcing the minimal division of labor. For example, when the person holding the bookkeeper position presents her review of financial issues to the group, all the members seem to attend to, and all comment on, her observations and recommendations. When some members don't speak up, others elicit their comments. The net results of this for the group are that more information is gotten from the bookkeeper and shared among the membership; and that members may contribute constructively to the issues the bookkeeper has framed. In the end, the bookkeeper's

potential to accumulate more power and influence is thus minimized, balanced by the involvement of the rest of the membership.

The Studio is formally controlled by a sort of committee of the whole, with all members participating in meetings that make key management decisions. That equality of control is tempered by a long-running issue of differential rates of involvement. At any one time different members of the Studio are involved in widely differing ways, investing different amounts of time. This issue surfaced as a concern in my initial interviews with the group in 1975, and has remained an issue throughout. The dilemma for the group has been to take advantage of the additional knowledge and energy of the members who are participating extensively while also enabling the other members to exert control.

Here again, awareness of group process has not solved the problem, but has helped the group address the issue. The potential resentment of people who have not participated "enough" and the tendency of members who have participated extensively to be viewed as "experts," are minimized by the sensitivity of all members to the occurrence of both possibilities. Typically, members who have not been around the Studio much couch their suggestions in terms of "I may not be right, but it seems" Complementarily, other members of the group say, "It's important that we hear these suggestions on their own merit, and ask ourselves if we're reacting against them out of our resentment with Frank's absence from the group."

Of course these strategies don't make the problem go away, and they are not always successful, but they do seem to help minimize the difficulties.

On the issue of job satisfaction and the organization of work, the Studio has not actually done much for the potters but provide an environment in which they can pot. This provision is important in a craft that uses expensive equipment, and for people who enjoy interacting with one another. Still, it is important to note that the notion of collective does not extend to processes of work.

In some ways the potters have used the Studio to minimize those aspects of the work they like least--rotating the work involved in sales or in clay buying--so that they can spend more time in design and production. The Studio hasn't much addressed the way the potters organize their work, but then, they were never really displeased with that.

It would also be possible to view the organization somewhat critically because it hasn't done much for the potters' learning process. Nearly all of the potters have expressed a serious interest, since the founding of the group, in having the group facilitate their learning and growth in the craft. "I know I could learn a lot from other people here," one member remarked. Yet members have not done much about this, and the potential of the group to help members learn about potting has not much been realized. A member observed: "There is a certain amount of criticism of one another's work

that goes on, but it's mostly of the 'I like it' or 'I don't like it' variety. I was hoping to get more substantive criticism than that."

It is possible to view the group's neglect of the learning process in their own work, an issue they all say is very important, to be an instance of one shortcoming in the organization's effectiveness. It is, in effect, a fairly straightforward failure to attain a goal that members of the Studio have advanced. It is also possible to speculate that, even with all the group's process skills, their ability to criticize one another's work--perhaps the ultimate process skill--might be incomplete and difficult. In any case, their failure as a group to take on the issue of mutual criticism suggests some of the limits of process awareness. Even a process-sensitive group may steer clear of some important--perhaps the most important--issues.

ADVOCATES

Public Address

The college auditorium was full. Except for a few required classes held in it, and an occasional Friday night movie, it hadn't seen much action since the late 1960s and early 1970s. Then, political and social action groups would often fill the auditorium several times a week.

The late 1970s were generally a time of more complacency and less activity. Many groups that had attracted hundreds of members a few years earlier were gone.

The few that remained often seemed marginal. They had a few members and a diffuse, disorganized topical focus. Certainly, they had no need for an auditorium.

The Advocates' organization somehow made a strong debut during those inactive years. It championed a set of broadly based interests in ecology, government reform and energy that were close to the hearts of many students. It had few of the political overtones of the organizations of earlier years. In fact, it may have been that its nearly apolitical stance enhanced its appeal to students who were both confused by the complex rhetoric of more overtly political campus organizations and severely disillusioned by the hypocrisy unfolding before them in the conventional politics that were the context for Watergate.

Lacking a coherent ideology, the Advocates needed some kind of unifying force to anchor and lend coherence to their diverse interests in social reform. Charles Sage provided that coherence. A national figure in consumer activism and political and social reform, he was articulate, forthright and well-informed. He had acquired a reputation for high morals and unimpeachable ethics. He had charisma. In the low ebb of political action on college campuses in the mid-1970s, he could always be counted on to fill an auditorium.

The local chapter of the Advocates needed Sage's visits. His annual tour of campuses in the area heightened interest in their organization, usually attracting new working members and some financial support as well. With his reputation and the

publicity he attracted, he could often accomplish in a one-hour speech what it might take the Advocates' regional staff several months to do.

Several members of the staff sat in the front row, or stood at the back of the auditorium, attempting to gauge the payoffs for the organization of this particular assembly. The crowd was large--a plus--and composed mostly of younger students who were more likely to join an organization like the Advocates than Juniors and Seniors who already had commitments. In addition, the question-answer period surfaced an overwhelmingly favorable response to Sage's handling of the few but inevitable hecklers.

Staff listened to Sage with one eye on the crowd, assessing their response and its implications for the organization's continued viability. They also listened hard to what Sage was saying, for it was in such public forums that he announced and formulated the conceptual issues they would probably be representing and advocating in the coming months.

Of course, they had some autonomy in choosing issues for action, but Sage often had a better feel for student's interest and a better argument for his set of priorities. Too, he had the ability, through the publicity that seemed naturally attracted to him, to turn his visions into self-creating issues. After the city's major newspapers, TV and radio station covered his speech, Sage's view of things was so widely dispersed and accepted that it would have been simply

a waste of time for the staff to attempt to define a different issue.

Besides their interests in the implications of Sage's speech for their organization's viability, and their curiosity regarding his choice of subject matter, the Advocates' staff also maintained a more immediate concern for this particular meeting. In a way, they were concerned for the quality of his performance. Did the students still like Sage as a person? Could he still carry an audience? How was his charisma? The staff sought each other out across the auditorium, making eye contact and smiling when the students would applaud spontaneously; grimacing when they feared Sage was going off on a tangent.

The question/answer period progressed; Sage continued throughout to listen intently to the diverse questions and respond articulately. The period seemed a fitting conclusion to the right, well-organized and stirring speech that Sage had delivered. When Sage's attention wavered slightly in the middle of one question, one of the Advocates' staff quickly stepped forward to thank the audience for its interest and conclude the program.

Everyday Advocacy: The Work of Organizing

In the wake of Sage's departure, there was much controversy among the dozen members of the Advocates' full-time staff. A few of the more senior staff, who had been with the organization since its founding four years earlier were sorely disappointed. They contended that Sage had betrayed them,

failing to say enough about the Advocates' organization in his speeches. They felt he had turned his attention instead to items of personal interest to him that had dubious relevance for the student audience.

The more recently added members of the staff, perhaps still sufficiently in awe of the man to be shortsighted in their critical capacities, viewed Sage more as a resource. "It almost doesn't matter what he talks about," one of them asserted, "as long as they know that he's with us." They also pointed to the increased support they were seeing at the campuses on which they worked since Sage's lectures had taken place.

Whether they appreciated Sage's recent trip or not, they all had to come to terms with it. They had to take the next steps on their campuses to bring to fruition an organization based on the interest that Sage had stimulated. They had to play out his ideas, sustain his interests and convert into an ongoing entity the disparate groups of individuals he had so effectively touched in his speeches. They had to organize in his shadow.

Sage is a mixed blessing for the Advocates' staff. He draws a crowd in a way that they would never be able to, and he catches the public eye. But once he has attracted the attention, the Advocates' staff is sometimes at a loss as to how to use it. He often has advice for them that they do not want to hear--fervent suggestions and recommendations for how they might pursue an issue and for what issues they might

use. Frequently, they view Sage's strategic advice as wrong for their region, and then have to face up to dealing with his continued inquiries into what they are doing.

Most often, the staff deal with Sage by ignoring him. Only when he delivers his annual speeches on their turf are they forced to come to terms with Sage's most current schemes and predilections. During the rest of the year it is almost as if there is no Sage; they persist in their own work without his help.

The daily work of organizing provides plenty of distractions to keep the minds of staff members from dwelling on Sage's latest pronouncements. The twelve staff members all have several schools for which they are responsible--schools where they are the Advocates' liaison to the student body. In addition to their responsibilities at the schools, they all also have a responsibility to develop the organization's understanding of a particular advocacy topic, e.g., small claims court suits, the compiling of a doctors directory, solar energy, etc. All staff lead a dual life, with some responsibilities in the field and some in the office.

In general, staff view their work in the field on college campuses, as troublesome. Even without Sage's unpredictable shadow, organizing students is a dilemma and a struggle. There are never enough students or enough money. When there are a lot of students, there is the problem of how to keep them busy with a task that feels "meaningful" to them.

There is the basic, underlying problem of simply finding students. Several staff members have a college-granted, college-sponsored office where they sit, waiting anxiously for students to come. Many staff cultivate an effective way to make contact by making themselves available as free guest lecturers in social science classes. Faculty who want to add social reform to their curriculum will bring in an Advocates' staff member several times a year, knowing the lectures will usually be quite good.

The vitality of any campus operation usually turns on the projects it pursues. Unlike some other kinds of campus organizations, the Advocates attract students not because of its meetings but because of what it does. The challenge to staff is to provide stimulus for the start and evolution of projects with which the students will want to become involved.

The dynamics of the situation make for an odd kind of organizing that differs from most political organizing by putting action projects ahead of ideology. In fact, some of the Advocates' critics argue that the group has no ideology except for the de facto end product of the negotiation between the interests of students and the whims of Charles Sage. Often that end product is a collection of activities that takes pokes at various institutions: government agencies, large businesses, universities. This leaves the Advocates in the difficult position of having as its only

unifying philosophy a push for deinstitutionalization, but maintaining such a philosophy is especially difficult when the group is attempting to build an institution.

Staff members complain about the loneliness of being on campus. They often characterize their "clients"--the students--as less than worthy of the time they demand. They bemoan the apathy of the general student populace and complain about the ineptitude and lack of focus of the students who join their organization. Among one another, staff members trade notes on how bad it feels to be a "perpetual cheerleader."

"Sometimes I feel like 'Death of a Salesman,'" one of them remarked at a meeting, "struggling to sell I don't know what, but still wanting to do a great job at it." The staff's dilemma is that, in spite of difficulties on the campuses, they all believe strongly in the organization and the principles of social reform, however unfocussed, it stands for.

In fact, staff members uniformly take an inordinate amount of joy in their work, despite their troubles. For them, the Advocates organization makes it possible to have a career pursuing ideas they believe in. All of them are college graduates under 30, with experience as students in organizations similar to the Advocates. The Advocates' staff were the students of the campus organizations several years earlier when activism was more widespread and intense.

Now that it is their profession, their work never suffers from a lack of dedication even though it has its problems. Staff members are usually paid at least one-third less than they could receive elsewhere. They feel lucky to have the jobs, and confirm their feeling whenever they review the piles of applications that inevitably come in response to new job postings in the organization.

Organizing work is a gift for them, a dream opportunity to turn avocation and activism into career. But professionalization brings problems, too, such as the need to work for an organization. Working for an organization occasionally means a compromise between one member's sense of a worthy organizing issue and the sense of others in the organization. Professional organizers don't always get to choose the issues for which they organize and without the choice, their belief in the work may understandably drop off.

Working for an organization such as the Advocates also means occasionally placing issues second to the organization. One staff member explains the dilemma, "I work with a group of students to put out a press release. I can see they're having trouble with it and I know I could do it quickly, but I know it's best for them to take the time. They did a fine job in the end, and I really felt they learned enough to acquire confidence and be a resource to us next time. The only problem was, the press release only made the

late editions." The staff member is ambivalent and troubled by the difficult choice between getting the organizing work done and helping others to learn to do it.

Staff members are also troubled by the need to decide how much responsibility to take. Being a professional means not only getting the work done on particular issues, but providing students who join the organization with a "worthwhile experience." If students have a bad experience, they may leave the organization and spread the word to stop others from coming.

Though there is a real incentive to provide students with a good experience, it produces a kind of responsibility that staff cannot always assume. Staff has difficulties designing "worthwhile" tasks for students. "So much of what we ask them to do," one remarks, "is plain busy work." When tasks can be worked out, staff are still often left with the unpleasant sensation of loneliness. "I never know what they really want," one staff member explains, "I'm always guessing, always trying to please. It leaves me feeling like I'm fighting them, and then that seems tragic because they badly want whatever I give them."

Different staff members sort out the dilemmas of organizing in markedly different ways. Catherine, with a Master's in Business Administration, struggles continuously to have the Advocates' organization take on issues that expose questionable business and banking practices. She thrives on the tension of bank reform panels, where she

represents the Advocates on a task force composed mostly of older and "unbelievably conservative" bankers. Catherine also enjoys her work with students at the colleges for which she has responsibility. She views both parts of her work as "different ways to do good work."

In both arenas, however, Catherine suffers emotionally. She feels the bankers often don't take her seriously, that they "fatherize" and patronize, but don't listen to her. Her enthusiasm over working on the task force is tempered by her frustration with the bankers' resistance to her ideas. On the campuses, the problem is more that the students take her too seriously; they depend on her too much and seldom take the kinds of initiative she thinks they should take.

While Catherine views her work as consisting of organizing on two fronts, the banking community and the college campuses, Dan is primarily interested in "reaching the people" with his subject--environmental issues. Dan is a member of the Advocates because it offers him a vehicle with which to reach a large number of people, students he thinks are potentially receptive to what he has to say.

Other staff members think Dan is most competent in his knowledge of this subject, and adept as well at tasks of organizing. They are a little concerned, however, that he is unwilling to discuss, consider or work on any issue other than the environment. "It's all right for now," one of them

commented, "but I worry that Dan might not come through for the organization in a crunch. If we have problems around here, he may just pack his bags and go elsewhere."

Catherine defines her work in terms of whatever the organization does, though she also tries to have it do work she knows and thinks is important. Dan defines his work only in terms of his topic. Like both of them, Sarah also describes her job as "doing social change," but her perspective on the Advocates' organization is more manipulative. Though interested in the topic of nutrition, and involved with several college groups on the Advocates' behalf, Sarah also gives much attention to the Advocates' internal politics and management. After a meeting, she often has an interpretation of the meaning of various staff members' positions that surprises those with whom she chooses to share her perceptions. She often sees, and struggles to understand, undercurrents and hypocrisies in what people say. More than the others, she believes that the Advocates' success with the issues it takes up depends overwhelmingly on the organization's integrity. Her view of the organization, however, confuses, baffles and troubles her. In spite of all she sees, Sarah often feels frustrated and powerless to help the organization clear up its problems.

Sage's Legacy

The most serious dilemma the Advocates' staff faces in its professionalized organizing is not the responsibility it takes for the quality of students' experience, or the

tension between doing organizing and teaching it to other people. More pressing and difficult than both of these is the legacy that Charles Sage has left the organization.

In addition to having to contend with the ideological issues in Sage's agenda, and the paradox between advocating for deinstitutionalization and building an institution, the staff must contend with the legacy of the funding mechanism. Sage's invention of the funding mechanism, the gimmick that keeps him in business and makes professional organizing a possibility, is the ultimate dilemma.

Sage's invention for the funding mechanism is called the "check-off." There are two varieties, both of which appear on students' term bills. The inferior, from Sage's perspective, is the "positive check": students (or parents) who check off in the appropriate box increase their term bill by a few dollars. The principle for fundraising is akin to that used by political parties on income tax forms. Many people involved in the process of paying a bill may opt to kick in a few dollars to a worthy cause, as long as the check-book is out anyway,

Superior, from Sage's point of view, to the positive check is the negative check system. In this, money is automatically added to the term bill unless students check a box noting that they want a refund. Here the principle is more one of inertia. In practice, negative check is occasionally supplemented by refund times on campus when students do come to the Advocates' office and get their money back.

Sage prefers the negative check system because it almost always generates significantly higher revenues. Critics of the Advocates say the negative system takes advantage of people. They say the negative check system compromises the values and principles the Advocates purportedly advance.

Colleges considering allowing the Advocates on their campuses, usually debate the funding mechanism intensely attempting to define what is fair, and often having a hard time assembling an articulate criticism of the negative check and a unified acceptance of the positive check. Staff members run hot and cold on the matter. Usually at their coldest when a spark of campus nihilism or a need for beer money inspires long refund lines, staff members acknowledge the paradox of the funding mechanism for the organization. They also point out, however, the paradox of the funding mechanism for themselves: without it they would likely be unemployed.

Organizing Organizers

The funding mechanism is an extremely specific aspect of the general tension between organizing and building an organization. Organizing has to do with action, change, and usually a limited scope of issues. Organization, on the other hand, needs stability, implies some conservatism, and its search for both may lead to concern over an enlarging scope of issues.

In addition, a stable political organization of any consequence may require a full-time staff, and that staff in itself may become a proponent of conservative tendencies and stability in order to secure its own position. This, in fact, is the argument of Robert Michels outlined in an earlier chapter.

The Advocates' staff bears out some of Michels' more dire pronouncements in that its interests are occasionally at odds with those of its volunteer student membership, and in that the staff seems usually to prevail. These staff-membership conflicts are quite subtle, though, and are marked less by confrontation than by the membership's acceptance or rejection of what the staff proposes.

Staff and members come to the organization from very different perspectives. For member-students, the organization is something to which they make a contribution--something in whose principles they believe but something in which they may not have any personal expectation of participation. The vast majority of members has only a vague idea of what the organization actually does, and is not much involved in the organization in a personal way.

When students do get involved with the campus organizations, it is usually around campus-level issues, concerns that begin and end within the confines of the campus or, occasionally, the community. A few members at each campus, however, transcend campus issues and find themselves on the

all-state board of students to which the Advocates' staff is supposed to report.

It is at the level of board-staff interaction that Michels would identify most. There, students make halting efforts to formulate their own interests and convince the staff that those interests are best for the organization. There, the staff advances its own interests and attempts to secure the necessary formal board approval for new ventures. In most cases the staff gets what it wants. Students, no matter how sure they may feel of their priorities, are usually shaken by the seasoned, full-time staff. In this organization of political activism and social change, the conservative voice of experience holds inordinate influence.

It is not that students and staff often differ on key decisions. Once an issue is chosen, they almost always agree quickly on the position the organization should take. Differences arise more with respect to their choice of the issues they think the organization ought to pursue. Usually the students want the organization to concern itself with issues that are pretty closely connected with what happens on campus: legislation on the minimum drinking age, campus book stores, food services, etc. Usually the staff wants to work on more general issues: the environment, energy, public utilities, etc.

The staff usually justifies its choice of issues on two grounds: the overall clout of the organization and the politics of the choice. They argue that an effective organization in the state's political culture should concern itself

with issues outside the college campus, and they argue that their choices are more meaningful politically. Since they spend their working days politicking, they begin the conflict with an upper hand over the students, but the students often take the staff's point of view.

Students believe in the basic premise of a continuing organization and are savvy enough about state politics to know that such an organization can't be based on campus issues. More than that, students on the board occasionally aspire to further political work and see the staff as role models. Thus, they are fairly willing to accept the staff's definition of what "political" is.

Participation

Staff members' interest in advocating for issues they believe in led them to express an interest in being able to influence the organization's choice of which issues it would develop at any particular time. Staff wanted to participate more in the organization, and a change in the Advocates' leadership made it possible.

The Advocates' longstanding Executive Director, who has managed the organization through a period of several years of impressive growth, was stepping down. Originally admired for his authoritarian, take-charge style and ability to make things happen, the Executive Director had increasingly come to be viewed as an unreasonable dictator.

Largely in reaction to their disillusionment with the departing director, the staff search committee turned up a

candidate who professed an interest in a cooperative kind of organization. Quickly hired, he and the staff worked out problems of participation at torturous length. The Advocates' experiment with participatory organization was attempted, adopted, embraced, advanced, refined, slowed down, reduced and, ultimately, abandoned. Jack, the new director, was given a hard time and eventually fired by the staff.

At the outset, the staff was much interested in Jack's proposal for their increased participation. Most of them had been in the organization for at least a year, and they wanted more responsibility. It had become clear to them that the paths of upward mobility and job advancement were obscure in the Advocates' organization and probably in the organizing profession overall. In addition to seeing it as a way to enlarge their influence over issue selection, they also saw participatory organization as a way to acquire managerial experience. Such experience would be interesting in itself and a useful credential if they ever had the opportunity to take the reins of some other group.

First the eastern, and then the western offices of the Advocates' state organization accepted the participatory mode, with all staff members taking on a range of decisions about the group's management that had previously been worked out by the former director. At this very initial stage, there were some rumblings that foretold later, more serious difficulties.

Staff, though appreciative of the opportunity to participate more in controlling their work, saw Jack's attempts to give them more responsibility as symptomatic of some weaknesses on his part. The norms of their profession hold forceful argument, political power and pure charisma in high regard, and the previous director, however controversial, made extensive and effective use of these. There was little precedent for a style of leadership that was more introspective, that would honestly consider opposing points of view, that might even admit to being in error. In the new mode of participation, leadership of the organization was defused, leaving members somewhat at a loss for a role model and with a sense of emptiness that they themselves did not know how to fill.

In the course of further meetings the staff encountered several more problems. For one thing, the meetings seemed too long. They took hours, and often at inopportune times and at the expense of other kinds of work. Despite the time they took, the meetings seemed unproductive. After a meeting there would often be disagreement on what was decided. Sometimes the only point of agreement was that the meetings weren't accomplishing enough. It became clear that the Advocates' normal strategies for interpersonal communication--exhorting, convincing, arguing, taking a stand--were sources of difficulty in their discussion with one another.

As the meetings progressed and continued, the group accumulated some information and insight on the organization's crisis orientation--its tendency to move from one emergency to another, neglecting long-term solutions and thinking. "We never have a chance to reflect," one of them observed. This awareness did not much help them, however. The discussions, though effective in distributing information among the staff, did little to advance action.

In fact, it sometimes seemed that the more information the staff had, the less able they were to take action. They didn't know what to do with the information, were unclear about what responsibilities were theirs, and felt uncertain about what they thought the director ought to be doing. They consistently tripped in their initial attempts to take responsibility.

For example, after a problem was laid out in a group meeting, they would have difficulty discussing possible ways to resolve it because they couldn't dissociate making suggestions from taking personal responsibility for handling the problem. If any of them offered a suggestion he or she felt obligated to defend it to the hilt.

When they did make suggestions, the reactions of others (perhaps stemming from the culture of the organizing profession) were usually devoted more to proving that it was a good or bad idea than to exploring the underlying concepts and possible new connections. The group was comfortable in

making decisions but halting in its ability to explore issues in a way that would provide information to root the decisions.

Discussions of the funding mechanism especially suffered, and with serious implications. However much the staff supported the organization's activities, many were alienated by its fund raising methods. Yet open discussion of alternatives, and even of the concrete implications of the system itself, seldom occurred. Instead, people persevered to work within the system.

Staff's troubles with Jack, on the other hand, led to their more direct action, with Jack ultimately losing their confidence and departing, and the organization returning to less participatory ways. Jack's troubles stemmed in part from staff's familiarity with and respect for the more authoritarian type of leadership practiced by his charismatic predecessor. Jack compounded whatever uncertainties the staff may have had with his own actions, though. Others occasionally accused him of lying or insincerity. This so upset Jack that he was able to respond only with clumsiness, which was seen as a further proof of his guilt.

Numerous incidents accumulated in Jack's career, misreadings of his concern and regard for confusion and manipulation. Staff members reacted against Jack, and against the whole idea of participatory organization that Jack supported. They increasingly saw his attempts to enlist support from them as signs of his weakness and incompetence. In the

end, Jack left and the Advocates was taken over by a staff member who quickly moved to return it to its original style of organization.

Epilog

Some of the participatory exercises that the group worked through seemed to have some long-term impacts. The organization did not return to the same kind of form and methods it had previously maintained. In fact, when the staff took on another full-time director, they made such demands of him, and exerted their own influence to such an extent that he was unable to bear up under the pressure.

Almost in spite of itself the staff has come, in the course of Jack's directorship, to have expectations about the extent to which they ought to be able to control the organization. They continued to want a voice in selecting the issues for which they advocate, and they maintained involvement with decisions affecting the image the organization presents to the public.

The Advocates' participatory organization, currently between directors (a common condition for them), is in flux with respect to the formal means by which members may exert control. The organization of members' work is also in flux, with some uncertainty on whether the Advocates should hire full-time organizers for campuses so the staff can devote more energy to lobbying, its first love.

There was a time, shortly after Jack's departure, when staff members felt their experience was some sort of proof

of the shortcomings of participation. Now they're not so sure, as they're becoming aware of how the experience with Jack raised their expectations and consciousness. They may even try it again.

THE ARCHITECTURE FIRM

Family

Work in the architecture firm of Benjamin Adams was always, in the memory of current members, a pleasure. Under the charismatic leadership of its founder, the firm attracted a half-dozen talented architects who enjoyed, worked with, and learned from each other. The building of this group occurred at the same time that the firm developed a reputation for competence and creativity, and the combination of the two helped attract interesting and lucrative clients to its burgeoning Sun Belt locale.

Clients helped the firm strengthen its reputation. The firm's work attracted clients who liked what they saw and wanted more. They came to the firm expecting innovative design. Clients, members of the community, architects in the firm, student interns, draftspersons, and secretaries alike, came to view the firm as a vehicle for doing interesting, challenging work.

The firm's track record in the early 70s reinforced these notions. The firm won awards for its mental health facilities and office buildings, and began to experiment with landscape work in urban parks. Some of these projects expressed, beyond creativity, a political point of view. The

firm went out of its way to take on projects with social import, even if the financial returns weren't great. The founder staunchly resisted the sort of architecture that "builds monuments" for clients focusing instead on projects that he and the others enjoyed.

The firm grew. The handful of architects with whom the founder started grew to six, then seven and eight. The "back room" of draftspersons reached a size of fifteen, and a secretarial staff of three or four emerged to help the beleaguered bookkeeper. Ultimately the firm had to move from its personable ante-Bellum quarters in a converted house to an anonymous office building blocks away.

In this environment of success and growth, members of the firm came to feel they had a right to work on interesting projects. The firm's founder, who felt that way about his own work, tried to respond to their interests. The firm's emphasis on creativity spawned a special set of norms for day-to-day work. People expected not only to work on interesting projects, but also to take the work seriously and at the same time to enjoy it.

It was not unusual for people to work nights and weekends, and to get emotionally involved as well. Working extra hours was a source of pride, and the emotional raw edges that might result, a regrettable but necessary consequence. Architects' occasional emotional outbursts were at least partially viewed by members of the firm as legitimate expressions of concern.

The more serious aspects of creative work also included elements of play. Individuals working alone on a design project used "play" as an element to "push" a design to new boundaries of creativity. There was always a lot of chatter, backtalk and fooling around. Occasionally, a prank would take people off their guard. Working together, the architects developed an informal, free-flowing style.

As a matter of course they would circulate among colleagues in the firm, offer advice and give criticism on whatever drawings or models were being worked on. They stayed in close touch with one another. They expected to be supported by one another through criticism and advice, and through the maintenance of a "loose" atmosphere that cultivated their creativity.

The firm resembled a family in the quality of its interactional processes. Indeed, the theme of family runs throughout the firm. The theme begins with the founder, whose father had been an architect and whose brother, who practices in the same town, is referred to by the members of the firm as a kind of inverse of what they enjoy and respect.

Unlike his "establishment straight" brother, Ben is emotional, divergent, turbulent, and openly so. His departure from the family's practice was fiery, and so were the early years of his own practice. During those years he built a strong organization only to quickly dismiss his subordinates on the day he realized he had re-created the organization he

thought he left behind. Having "swept the place clean," he began to build again, with the current core management group and support staff the result.

As surely as Ben's (very good) artwork decorates the office, his somewhat renegade spirit also pervades the place. He likes to say, "I can walk out of here at anytime," making his current crop of architects cringes at that prospect. In the family theme, they view him as a kind of father, valuing his insights on design and client contact. They say, unabashedly, that his presence is a major reason for their choosing to work in the firm. "I've learned more here than I would have in any firm in the state," one of them remarked. They also experience somewhat more than cognitive enrichment from the relationship with him. Fear, guilt, uncertainty and deeply emotional happiness are all a part of architectural work in the firm.

The family theme extends beyond the architects themselves. Their families interact socially. Ben's wife takes an active mother-confessor role in the firm. When a young architect left, she reassured him that he could come back at any time without consulting Ben or anyone else. Ben thought that was "beautiful," something he couldn't do himself but that she could, and should do. There's even an uncle in the firm. The in-house computer whiz is the brother of Ben's wife's first husband. People in the firm, all of them, call him "Uncle."

Growth

Riding on its reputation, the firm brought in several especially lucrative contracts, the largest of which was for a hospital. New staff was brought in. The "inner group" of architects, with a few years' experience under their belts, took on increased responsibility. Ben worried about being cornered into re-creating . . . again . . . the sort of organization he despised.

There had been a "coming of age" of the group of younger architects Ben had hired after his housecleaning exercise. He wanted to acknowledge their growth and have the organization reflect and make use of it as well. Ben did not want to put himself out to pasture, nor did he want to continue with as much responsibility as he had. The large middle ground in between the two extremes seemed a devil's triangle, though.

Ben was also concerned that the firm's recent success and larger contracts were threatening the quality of the firm's "family life." Interaction among the architects, once a foundation of creativity and learning, had become more pressured and limited. There were too many demands on Ben's time, and he felt he wasn't meeting any of them very well.

The architects to whom Ben hoped to give more responsibility had a different perspective on issues and priorities, based on their different experience of the firm and its

growth. Carl, one of the architects, was more concerned with his own work in the firm. In this third year of full-time work, Carl had had initial contact with the firm as an intern during his college years. He had been impressed with and enjoyed the amount of responsibility he has given. Wanting to live in the town in which the firm was located ("My family has lived here since the Civil War"), he came to the firm for full-time work and again was met with assignments that gave him challenge and responsibility.

The challenge meant a lot to Carl. He recalled, "It was a big point for me because I didn't know if I could do it or not . . . I knew . . . I would get more experience and more responsibility if I could handle it, because Ben gives you all you can handle, and then more. Just about everyone . . . has encountered situations and had responsibilities that a lot of the people who have been in the profession ten years haven't even experienced."

For Carl, responsibility in his work was a rite of passage, "sort of a proving test. You walk in and they say, 'Here's this (impossible project).' It was sink or swim." As a rite of passage, responsibility included a substantial element of emotional affect.

Also as a rite of passage, it was somewhat ironic: one was "given" responsibility, practically a contradiction in terms. This paradoxical matching of active and passive stances confused Carl somewhat, causing him to view the firm's giving of responsibility as arbitrary and unpredictable.

Along with his desire to have responsibility, then, Carl felt somewhat cynical about the way it came to him. As a rite of passage, "responsibility" was also a group issue. Those on trial generally saw their experience as individuals, but successful passage of the rite brought them into the group.

Carl's concept of responsibility pervades his sense of what is enjoyable and difficult in the firm. He believes his responsibility to be that of "project architect," but Ben impinges on that responsibility in important ways and affects Carl's work. Ben is a collaborator in the design process and in contact with the client--areas that have complications. In design, Carl wants more personal responsibility, especially in overall design, or design philosophy, "where we have no overall clout."

Carl looks with favor on the possibility of learning from the other architects: "We have a bunch of different people who are sort of pulling away . . . from a common center. And it comes from various background, various schools. That's good in a lot of respects." When I asked him if it was common for someone to look over his work in the course of a day, Carl replied, "Sure, I would hope for that." As collaborator in this sort of exchange, Ben has a problem in that he often has not got enough time to be helpful. This troubles Carl, who hopes to learn as much as he can from Ben.

Carl's difficulties with client contact are more complex, though, and are related very much to rewards and satisfaction. It isn't (as it might be in other firms) that Carl

doesn't deal with clients. ". . . (I)t's gotten to the point where I deal with them more than he (Ben) does," Carl observes. The problem is more that the clients, for whatever reason, often want to deal with Ben on the most sensitive issues. The ego message in that causes Carl some unrest.

Another issue with client contact is Carl's difficulty in dealing with criticism. "If I'm doing something I like, and someone says, 'I have a real problem with that,' I'm going to get a little defensive," he notes.

There is an element of this defensiveness in clients' passing over the project architect to get to Ben, a sense that they are for some reason not good enough to handle the problem. The architects understand this to an extent. "Clients want to see Ben; that's who they signed the contract with," answers Carl. But it still hurts.

Then, too, Ben seems to help fan the flames of client difficulty. "We're a service organization," Carl explains. "Ben is very service-oriented. He works to please, sometimes at employees' expense." Ben, quick to respond to clients' interests, sometimes does so in a way that aggravates the sense of alienation from the client that the architects have. Carl and the others occasionally accuse him of "giving the firm a way."

Much of what is at stake in client contact is simply recognition. Meetings with clients are opportunities for feedback. In them, even criticism is a kind of reward, as

Carl notes that "for the most part people (here) think it's good to happen, (for criticism to flow freely)."

Without direct client feedback, with Ben standing in at the client interface, interaction between the other architects and the client is diluted, less direct and less rewarding. Architecture often defines itself through the client, so to be distanced from the client relationship is to be distanced from the work itself--to have the work segmented and to be relegated to only one aspect of it. Unlike "pure" art, architecture is not done only for the sake of the doing. The applied nature of the work implies some interaction with the client. Carl points out also that difficulties sometimes occur on the other side of the issue, with clients getting upset by architects who are unwilling to undertake any of their own decision making and deferring to Ben for nearly everything.

In addition to the issue of client contact, Carl is also concerned with the ways in which his contributions to the firm are rewarded. Carl comments, "This isn't the kind of firm where Carl Carlson gets credit for design work. The firm gets credit for it." When I asked, "What does Carl Carlson get credit for?" I was met with a blank stare and the response, "Gee, I don't know. I never thought of it . . . there aren't any real rewards."

Carl--and everyone in the firm, for that matter--cares very much about the firm and about architecture in general. Rewards and client contact are important largely

because the overall work of which they are a part are important. Carl portrayed some of his commitment to the work in describing a project he felt especially good about, a part he had been in charge of.

It was a good project. They don't come every day. It was a contribution to society, one of the "ideal" projects--that kind of thing. It gave us a lot of exposure. It was a project that I felt if it ever got built would be accepted and used by the community, and it was. . . .

When I asked if he "identified with all that," Carl replied, "there's always a piece of your heart in your first project, and there really was in that one." "I felt very lucky to be chosen to be put on it. But then, everything above and beyond that job has been small renovation work." When I came back to the firm for a second week of consultation, Carl sought me out at lunch time, and we walked to and ate in the park. Carl's satisfaction with the work and the firm, then, seemed very much wrapped up with the extent to which he could practice architecture, and that included autonomy in design and client contact, mixed with some interaction and help.

Responsibility seems to be as important for most of the other members of the firm as it is for Carl, and it provides an important context for thinking about participation. The issue in the firm is not, as it is in many attempts at self-management, to encourage members of the organization to feel more responsible: they already feel responsible, and want even more responsibility. The issue is more one of

translation, definition and design--operationalizing what everyone wants.

Others' commitment to their work is similarly deep. Harriet, a relatively recent addition to the firm, traces her architectural roots to her childhood. "I grew up in a house under construction," she recalls. "My father was always building, tearing down walls, adding on rooms." She enjoyed the experience and delighted in the changes that reshaped her house. "It was 'way back then that I started; watching, drawing, making plans," Harriet remembers.

Like Carl, Harriet likes the challenge and responsibility that comes with working at the firm. Not having been there quite as long as Carl, Harriet is not quite as sensitive to Ben's difficulties in getting in her way with client contact and design. She commented, "I guess I'm still in the honeymoon stage. I still feel that I'm learning a lot, and I think his heart is in the right place. Still I can see that it might get to be a problem later on. He's so nice that it's hard to stand up to him."

Harriet is pleased that Ben is moving to make the firm more participatory, but concerned about what that might mean for her work. She is pleased, on the one hand, about the possibilities for learning more about the firm and about architectural practice. She is concerned, however, that participation might take time away from her major interest--design.

Frank has no worries at all about his abilities to stand up for his rights, either in more involved participation later on, or any time. Frank has accumulated a justifiable reputation for his temper. The office bears scars from his bouts of temper. Most recently, a blob of white paint marks the firm's new carpet, memorializing Frank's having tossed the paint can across the office.

Frank's love of architecture and interest in the firm are second to none. He works late and on weekends more often than anyone (though everyone works more than a forty-hour week), and breaks his work day only for a vigorous game of racquetball at the club nearby. He thoroughly enjoys a challenge of any kind.

Of all the architects it is Frank who is most interested in what the organization might become and how it might affect him. Of them all, he is also the one most interested in the firm as an organization. "This place amazes me," he commented. When the firm moved to become more participatory, Frank was most diligent in clarifying new roles for himself, the other architects and Ben.

Other architects have different interests in the firm, their careers and in what participation in the firm might bring. Some older architects, who have given up most of their design work to manage the firm's finances, see participation as a way to legitimize a stock option plan that will benefit them. Still the prospect of participation scares them because of its

potential for putting others with less experience on equal footing with them. Younger architects, equally committed to the firm, are mostly curious about what participation might bring.

Organization

The firm was legally organized as a single-owner (Ben's) business. The organization of work--everyone's day-to-day tasks--was along project lines. There were different teams of architects and draftsmen for each project. Usually most people worked on more than one project at a time and usually each project had a team leader.

The senior architects who worked on projects had responsibility for major design decisions and planning, and for supervising the production of working drawings. Sometimes their responsibilities extended into the field, so that they might be involved in working with contractors and construction. They recently decided to hire one person who would take care of the fieldwork. This allowed the others to concentrate on design, and made it possible to better coordinate the firm's dealings with construction.

The chief difficulties with this organization mostly had to do with ensuring the senior architects' autonomy and control in their work in the face of their commitments to other projects and their responsiveness to the inputs of others. Other difficulties included coordination and information flow among projects, relationships between

architects and their draftsmen, Ben's involvement and useful input on all the projects, and architects' relationships with one another. All of these were communication issues, concerned with the movement of information from one area of the organization to another.

There was little coordination between projects, or in the organization overall. Ben had performed a number of management tasks, such as trying to match incoming work with appropriate people, meeting with project lenders, resolving interpersonal difficulties. Feeling somewhat overwhelmed with the scale of what needed to be organized he had several of the senior architects take on some of the management tasks. Then, as the demands for increased responsibility grew more pressing, he convened a group of senior architects with the intention of having them take on the responsibilities they sought.

At the outset, the group's chief problems were its lack of information and specificity. Group members knew they wanted more responsibility, but they didn't know enough about how the firm worked to express their wants in terms that they themselves could respond to. In the area of client contact, for example, they did not know enough about how Ben handled it, and how it connected with the firm overall, to be able to clearly state how they thought it should be. In particular, there was a lack of specificity on Ben's part about how responsive he would be to their inputs: was he simply asking for

suggestions, or was he enlisting their formal involvement in decision making.

Ben wasn't sure of exactly what he wanted, because he didn't know how things might materialize in the long run. He had faith and trust in the staff, and that, coupled with his desire to be free of some of the responsibilities he felt, was enough to give him hope for whatever the firm might become. He was willing to discuss any aspect of the firm, from its ownership structure through the intercom system, and willing as well to reorganize the firm along lines that would give others some of the power and control he had.

I was introduced to the firm in the midst of Ben's and the architect's process of resolving how to reorganize. I briefly describe dimensions of that activity in an appendix to this study. Here I will conclude by underscoring the difficulty of the task the architects undertook. They had a longstanding mutual involvement and understanding, a foundation of financial and professional success, unflinching and widespread commitment to the organization, and an overall aura of optimism and confidence. It was extremely difficult for the architects to redesign their firm and change their behavior to support a more participatory organization, but they made significant beginnings on both fronts.

CHAPTER 3
THE ORGANIZATIONS' EXPERIENCE

OVERVIEW

It is important to emphasize at the beginning of any analysis of the five organizations the extent to which they have expanded traditional boundaries in their respective fields. Work in each of them differs substantially from work in most other organizations in their fields. Members have more control over their work and over the organizations. They own their labor and, where such ownership is possible, own the organization as well.

On the other hand, none of the organizations has benefitted its membership to the fullest possible extent. Each organization has encountered problems in enhancing its members' work. Members have experienced problems in attempting to control the organizations.

The heart of the difficulty is in members' interest in both their work and the organizations. The two interests sometimes conflict, and the results of the conflict detract from the organizations' realizing the fullest potential of their ability to benefit members.

The conflict between members' interest in their work and in the organizations is complicated by a complementary relationship between the two. To an extent, members' interest

in their work implies interest in the organizations. The organizations enhance members' work experience by providing a needed organizational base, financial stability, access to more interesting work and an expression of members' values.

In some cases, the organization is almost a necessity in order for the work to exist. For example, one can't very easily be a teacher without a school or an advocate without an organizational base. In the Pottery Studio and the Fishing Co-op the organization is not a necessity but members would say it is very important, that it provides them with capabilities and resources they wouldn't otherwise have. More indirectly but perhaps equally important in both the Co-op and the Studio, the organization adds a note of stability and legitimacy to work which, when pursued individually, may be too flexible for members' comfort. "Being in the Co-op reminds me that I'm really a fisherman," a new member reflected. A potter observed, "It sounds more like I'm really a potter when I tell my friends I belong to the Studio."

The Co-op, fishermen agree, also makes a substantial difference in the amount of money they are paid for their catch. For the potters the organization also has economic impacts--it provides a gallery for sales and access to equipment that few of them could afford individually. Perhaps more important for them, the organization also provides access to other people and the resulting opportunity to learn, grow and develop as artists.

The architecture firm is similarly important for the architects. Few of them have the wherewithal to found a firm on their own, even after years of experience. (A Harvard Business School Case affirms their position--larger firms, though not necessarily more efficient, have an easier task of landing jobs.)¹ Besides this advantage of being with a larger firm--that it provides a measure of stability--the architects also say that the larger firm acquires larger-scale, and hence more interesting jobs. The architects also make the point regarding the firm that the potters make for the studio. An organization puts them into contact with colleagues so they can learn.

The five organizations also serve an important expressive function regarding members' interests and beliefs. The organizations all make a number of statements to the general public about members' feelings on politics, economics, and social priorities. They do this in a way that individuals could not, and serve a function that is important to members.

The potters are proud to be known as members of a collective. The teachers believe their governance of the school reinforces their pedagogic philosophy. The architects attribute quality in their design work to the free interchange of ideas reflected in their participatory structure. The Advocates point to the congruence between their views on political reform and their internal organization. The fishermen are quite articulate on the issues of

economic democracy represented by their membership in the co-op, and the positive effects of the Co-op for the town.

In sum, then, the organizations enhance members' work in a number of important ways simply because they are organizations. In addition, the organizations' participatory structure has made it possible for members to have a high degree of access to and involvement with the knowledge tasks of their work. The particular ways in which the organizations have gone about developing the participatory structure and the organization of work create several problems, however. To understand the nature of those problems, it will be useful here to examine more closely the organizations' design of work, and their participatory structures. This examination responds to the questions I outlined in the "Analytic Frame" in Chapter 1--considering the topics of the Organization of Work, Organizational Control and Organizational Effectiveness and Learning.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

The five organizations are striking in the extent to which they afford members autonomy in their work. The organizations impose few unwanted obligations, obstructions or distractions in members' work. Members say they engage in more of the knowledge tasks of their work than do colleagues in most other organizations in their respective fields.

Members' work is also striking in the extent to which it is an individual experience. The work of members of the five organizations is, for the most part, pursued independently. Others may be involved in some aspects of the work, but members' pursuit of the artful, rewarding knowledge tasks is usually a lonely one.

The fisherman like to say that "all cooperation ends at the dock." The teachers seldom if ever enter each other's classrooms. The Advocates hardly ever visit each other's colleges. The potters have never designed together. The architects discuss their designs together, but retain clear individual responsibilities for each project and cringe at the concept of "design by committee."

The autonomous pursuit of work rich in knowledge tasks was not inevitable in any of the organizations. It would have been possible in all of them to have made the work more collaborative. In fact, several of the organizations (the school, pottery studio and architectural firm) have discussed ways of making the work more collaborative. In all cases, the results were minimal. All the organizations except the architectural firm have given up on the idea. What remains in the architectural firm is a very loose expectation of mutual criticism, which stems in part from the norms of the profession and the practices of the early days of the firm.

Though not inevitable, it is possible to imagine why the organizations' members have arrived at a solitary kind of

work organization. They already devote considerable time and energy to the organizations' management and control. Those activities provide a vehicle for some interaction--and most of the organizations' members say they want some interaction. In some cases, members of the organizations want the rest of the time for their own work interests.

Members of the organizations are generally impatient with meetings, whatever their functions may be. Management and control tasks must often be taken care of in meetings, leaving little or no additional group time for the pursuit of other issues such as collective involvement in the design or pursuit of work. Further, the interaction members had in management and control tasks often touched on important issues and became heated and difficult. It could be difficult for members to shift gears from such discussions to a more free-wheeling spirit of collaboration that would make joint work on knowledge tasks more rewarding.

Members' actual experience with limited attempts at collaboration further inhibited more extensive collaborative efforts. The teachers found it difficult to give or accept constructive criticism on each others' teaching. The potters had a hard time teaching and learning from each other in a way that felt comfortable to them. The Advocates found themselves defending their own strategies and tactics in the face of suggestions made by colleagues. In all cases, members reacted as if their ownership and control of the work

experience was threatened by the involvement of others, even though those others were their colleagues, co-participants in the organization and, often, their friends.

Neither the norms of the organizations' respective kinds of work nor the logistical difficulties of making knowledge tasks collaborative fully explains the organizations' experience. The work of each organization has some norms of individual achievement. The "great designer" image permeates the work of the architects and the potters. Similarly, advocating (organizing, fishing and teaching) often spotlight individual performance and skill.

On the other hand, each organization has norms favoring some collaboration. The Advocates, for example, includes among its norms those of the political movements of the 60s that respect teamwork and meetings. The architects' norms, though concerned on the one hand with individual design creations, also underscore the special collegial work experience of a charrette, and the ritualized intensity and emotion of a "crit" or group criticism session. The architects in the firm enjoy both.

The economics of the crafts market reward individualism and work against group products, but the potters delight in the work of several people involved in firing the kiln. The organizational norms with which the teachers have aligned themselves--building on group discussions of pedagogic philosophy--conflict with teachers' experience of seldom

actually working with one another in their teaching. Even the fishermen's legendary preference for lonely work is compromised by their equally legendary story-telling and socializing in the local bar.

All five organizations temper the individualistic design of members' work with group experiences in which members participate and often take enjoyment. Though related to members' work, and perhaps even regarded as a respected or especially enjoyable aspect of it, the group experiences are not the central part of the work. Considering the examples above, the group experiences seem to function often to celebrate or make organizational note of the work of individuals. They may serve to inspire, renew and stimulate members, leaving them with some new ideas and a good feeling when they return to their individual tasks.

With some norms legitimizing group work the organizations might have evolved the collaborative pursuit of knowledge tasks more than they did. At any rate, the organizations' norms do not preclude collaboration, and offered more of a choice between collaboration and individual work than the organizations' experience suggests.

Logistical issues in coordinating collaborative knowledge also do not explain the organizations' experience. It may be somewhat complicated to organize group design work, but no more so than it is to organize the group firing of the kiln or the group's crit (which the architecture firm

often did) of an individual's work. Team teaching prevails in many schools. Some fishing boats (though few, if any, in the Co-op) are owned and run by several people.

The organizations' evolution of satisfying but solitary work experiences for members, devoid of much involvement with organizational issues cannot, because of the limited sample, offer conclusive evidence of the preferences or tendencies of most people. On the other hand, the extent to which members have refined the individual pursuit of the knowledge tasks of their work, and been uninterested in tasks of organizational maintenance and management, suggests an understanding of "job enlargement" that differs from that in the literature of job redesign experiments,² and appears to be more on the order of "job reduction."

For members of the five organizations, job enlargement sticks close to the job, and refines it along the lines of a craft, protecting and preserving knowledge tasks. Also along the lines of craft work, job enlargement is concerned with preserving and enhancing artful practices, tasks that have elements of surprise, joy and mystery and have a potentially high payoff, e.g., fish-finding, firing the kiln, shaping the clay, interacting with clients. When the work involves others, or includes tasks more a part of organizational maintenance and management, it is not very appealing.

In any case, the organizations develop members' work in a way that realizes their goals of autonomy and control. Members' experience of the workplace affords them maximum

access to and involvement in knowledge tasks, and most often in a way that does not include interaction with their colleagues.

In some ways the organizations' members pursue their work in the image of craftsmen. Like craftsmen they are dedicated to their work and (thanks to the organizations) they pursue it autonomously and free from many distractions and obligations. Their job satisfaction evolves through the craftsmanship model of work organization.

The craftsmanship image also suggests the outlines of issues of organizational control and effectiveness. Deeply involved in their work, craftsmen may cut corners when demands are made of them to put their work aside to be involved in controlling the organization. Further, if the organizations have succeeded in removing obligations and distractions from the work, one might wonder how they have done so. If one or a few members serve that function, they may also be in a position to threaten the craftsmanship model at some later point.

Looking more closely, the organizations' experience with the craftsmanship model differs from the basic notion of craftsmanship in a way that suggests problems in members' ability to control the organizations. Members of the organizations are at variance with the craftsmanship model in that they don't strive to work on a "whole job." The craftsmanship model includes attention to detail from conceptualization and design through polishing and finishing touches.

Often, the finishing touches could include tasks of execution that members of the five organizations have endeavored to be rid of. Their model of craftsmanship, concentrating on the conceptual end of the work and the knowledge tasks, raises the question of how the execution tasks are attended to. If members do not carry out tasks of execution, it will be important to identify who does, and with what consequences for the organizations.

CONTROL OF THE ORGANIZATIONS

Contrary to Michels' predictions, members have not lost control of their organizations to one or a few paid leader-managers. Neither, however, have members kept up the sort of broad-based involvements that characterized their initial efforts in getting the organizations started. The quality of control that members exercise over the organizations is characterized by two factors: the amount of members' involvement, and the way that involvement is structured.

In a general way, the quality of members' control, and the organizations' breaking of Michels' Iron Law of Oligarchy, also hinges on important differences between them and the political party Michels observed. The five organizations are smaller than the Party, and thus probably logistically easier to manage overall. In addition, the five organizations have a more direct and immediate economic concern for their members than the Party could ever have to its members. The five organizations not only serve some of the political

expressive functions of the Party, but also provide members with a workplace and a primary source of income. Members of the five organizations might understandably be less willing than members of the Party to allow oligarchy to set in.

The structure of members' involvement in three of the organizations would have concerned Michels. The fishing co-op, school and advocacy groups have managers. Their role in those organizations resemble that of the leaders in Michels' Party. They did not completely wrest control from their respective memberships, but their existence spurs recurring issues of control, and issues that differ from those in the other two organizations.

The potters and the architects have vestiges of leaders: a senior respected potter and the firm's owner. In both organizations, however, there was an explicit effort to avoid having a managerial figure and an attempt to have management work distributed among the members. Both organizations adhere more to a model of direct democracy, while the other three use more of a model of representative and delegative democracy: managers represent their members' interest; members delegate some of their power to the managers.

Members of the organizations who don't have a formal managerial role have problems in controlling the organizations, mostly concerned with sorting out the logistics of group management. Lacking a manager, they are concerned with getting the managerial work done. They rotate management tasks among members and attempt to spread the work among

members in an equitable way. Task rotation sometimes causes problems in performance, since members new to a task may incur some costs of learning until they have mastered it.

The two organizations' use of the more direct democracy model also has evolved along with their increasing sensitivity to issues of group process. Without a manager, both organizations are more dependent on the workings of groups of their members to carry out management tasks. Both have acquired skill in this area. Still, both have encountered occasions when the presence of a manager would have been helpful.

Too, the involvement of many members in management has involved their taking time away from their work in a way that makes many of them uneasy. "I wish we'd spend less time talking and more time working" is a sentiment frequently expressed by members in both organizations.

Members of the organizations that do have a formal manager position also encounter problems of control. Their problems stem in large part from that position. A considerable part of their problems are in the recurring tendencies of managers to take control from members. In most cases these problems are not the result of managers' intentions to take control, but a product of their proximity to information and the necessity for them to act.

A subsidiary kind of control problem occurs in members' conflict-based relations with managers. Members' vigilance helps keep managers in a managerial, rather than a leadership,

role. But the long-term effects of vigilance seem often to be a strained, ritualized relationship that impedes organizational effectiveness and learning.

For the organizations that have a manager, members' control of the organizations is characterized by a kind of standoff between large numbers of members, and managers or small groups. The standoffs are disturbed on occasion by initiatives of the managers that members see as inappropriate. These usually lead, as in the fishing co-op, to members' taking a clear stand and managers' rededicating, though perhaps begrudgingly, an interest in members' involvement.

Because of their interests in the organizations and their own work, and the participatory organizational structure that enabled it to happen, members' involvement at critical times has inhibited the onset of oligarchy. The more specific way the organizations have defined the managerial role have also helped break the Iron Law.

For example, the organizations that have a manager, separate the managerial position from the status and roles of leadership in a way that Michels Party did not. In fact, the combination of the two is essential to Michels argument. The principal, manager, founder, original owner and Executive Director of the school, co-op, pottery studio, architecture firm and Advocates, respectively, are not seen as, nor allowed to have status, influence or power much if at all beyond that of members. In fact, part of the managers' job is defined as building members' control of the organizations.

Stemming from this particular definition of the managerial role and the fact that the structure is there to enable members to become involved as they choose, the development of oligarchy is usually stopped fairly quickly by some combination of the awareness and action of both the offender(s) and the membership as a whole.

Managers by their own will take, or are put, in their places by vociferous memberships--places wherein they continue to work toward the goal of maximum member control. In cases where the offender has persisted, the memberships have thus far always prevailed, e.g., both the fishermen and the Advocates fired their manager; members of the Studio have caused the departure of several among them who were on "power trips."

In the long run, these skirmishes also seem to lead to members' increased belief in their ability to control the organizations and their development of a sense of empowerment concerning their influence. One of the architects explains the sense of empowerment in terms of his having opinions: "When I started here I didn't have any opinions. The more we changed the organization, and the more I saw what we could do, the more opinions I had. Now they all tell me I'm opinionated." Initially docile, he became quite vocal in asserting his rights and confronting the original owner of the firm.

The ups and downs of members' involvement with issues of control in the organizations that have managers outline

the parameters of the effects of the amount of involvement members put into the organizations. The organizations have all settled into a kind of equilibrium wherein members exert control on a continuing basis in response to specific needs. Those specific needs may be occasions when members see their managers stepping beyond what they perceive to be appropriate bounds. Or, the needs may be members' own interests in having the organization undertake a particular issue or task. Those interests, in the experiences of the organizations, have varied widely in their depth and substance, but they are marked by oscillations in members' interests, and by high and low points that sometime make the oscillations extreme.

In all cases, these seem to be organizations where, in comparison with others in their respective fields, the volume of emotional involvement is turned up. Recall, for example, the potter who effectively became House Mother of the Studio, the extreme commitment of the Advocates to their chosen political issues, and the architects' intense debate over the jobs they would take on. Also, recall that virtually no one in any of these organizations worked a mere 40-hour week. Conversely, recall the deep funk of the potters after the Christmas holidays, or the anomie and confusion of the teachers in dealing with the shortage of pupils.

The peaks and valleys of emotions are extreme. And consequently, members' interest in controlling the organization, stemming in part from their general emotional involvement, also varies.

High points of emotional involvement seem often, as with the potters after the holidays, to burn themselves out, resulting in a general sort of apathy. Similar group burnouts happened in the architecture firm after meeting a deadline or completing a building, and in the Advocates group after a state election including a referendum for which they had vigorously lobbied. In all these cases, burnout in members' work was accompanied by burnout in their interest in controlling the organizations.

In a different way, the high end of emotional involvement also obstructs members' control of the organizations. The architects, teachers and fishermen, even the advocates, also occasionally find themselves tongue-tied on organizational issues of personal importance. One reason for this silence, some say, is that their feelings are on the line and they consequently are unable to think clearly.

Others say they are surprised, or afraid to enter a discussion that might turn out to be highly emotional. They prefer to let the decision sort itself out, preferring serenity over their involvement. Most often, members discuss missed opportunities for their involvement with regret. In retrospect, the conflict that was avoided in the meeting often is viewed as more of a long-term problem because of the avoidance.

In particular, the organizations' expressive functions contribute to members' loss of control because the issues of control often are vague and the roles and responsibilities of members ambiguous. For example, the architects occasionally

find it hard to discuss prospective new projects because, though important to them, their interests are difficult to put into words. They are not always sure why they prefer one kind of work over another and thus are reluctant to advocate for their own priorities.

Even when they are clear to themselves about their preferences, they are often unclear concerning their role. Some feel they should yield to the preferences of older members; others think they should always take a strong stand, even if their feelings do not support it. They want a "say" on the issues, but are unsure about the best way to come to a final course of action.

With the Advocates the problem is more one of desensitization. Since they forcefully speak out on nearly everything--a consequence of the norms of their profession--it is difficult for them to distinguish different levels of concern among one another and occasionally in themselves. With the potters the problem is more one of familiarity and assumptions. They sometimes hotly debate issues without clearly defining what the issues are because they know what "sales" or "cleaning up" means. They can argue at length before discovering that they differ widely in the kind of sales or extent of cleaning up that each has in mind.

The emotional intensity of members' interests coupled with the vagueness and ambiguity of those interests, and differences in basic assumptions concerning important issues, sometimes hinders members' ability to exert control

in their own organizations. Sometimes, though, their control is more threatened by their shortage than their surplus of interest. Members are not uniformly, primarily motivated by and committed to making their organizations work. They have competing interests--most notably, their own work.

Members' control of the organizations is marked by structural and quantity issues, both of which impose problems and constraints. The delegation of power to a manager creates problems along the lines that Michels presages, and the manager-member relationships often acquire a character that blocks communication, information flow and mutual learning. I examine the managerial role and the nature of manager-member interaction in detail in a subsequent section.

Oscillation in members' involvement also affects organizational control, though differently according to whether there is a manager or not. The organizations that have a manager experience conflict at the peak of members' involvement and much managerial initiative at the ebb. The organizations that do not have a manager experience much group work in high periods of members' involvement, and a vacuum of organizational action at low points.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND LEARNING

The organizations' experience in the domains of organizational learning outlined in Chapter 1--adopting new technologies, implementing policies, organizing the flow of information--includes instances of both what could be seen as effective and ineffective performance. The dynamics

of theory and action responses, which influence all three domains of learning, help illuminate the nature of the problems the organizations encounter.

In adopting new technologies, the organizations undertake some noteworthy courses of action. The school, for example, established committees whose explicit task was to identify and examine new teaching techniques with an eye to their potential use in the Compton School. The architecture firm established several such committees for different parts of its work as a part of its more general task of organizational inquiry described later.

The school does poorly in diffusing new ideas among teachers, though in fact, one of the chief roles of "specialist" teachers for music, art, etc., has been to assist in disseminating ideas that the regular teachers passed by. Similarly, it is possible in the firm for a new piece of equipment, e.g., a blueprint copier to be around for several months before everyone fully finds out how to use it.

In like fashion, the fishing co-op never formally crystallized the pros and cons of electronic gear for its membership, although their knowledge of such gear could contribute significantly to their ability to catch fish. Although the Co-op provides a latent organizational structure through which members can informally trade information, it did not provide the full extent of information from which all its members could maximally benefit with electronic gear.

The organizations' failure to enact policy on the new technologies is a problem of both information flow and policy implementation. It is not the same problem of policy implementation that concerned Pressman and Wildavsky, who worried about the negative consequences of separating policy design (and policy designers) from policy implementation (and implementations).

Members of the organizations are in a position to formulate and implement policy, but they seem sometimes to do neither. Though they may have an awareness of new ideas and technologies, they have difficulty in bringing that awareness to bear on formulating organizational policy and taking subsequent action. They receive information from their environment and have the potential, through the organizations' participatory structure, to act on that information. Why they don't always act can be better explained by applying the notions of theory and action response.

The Co-op's failure to respond as an organization to members' needs regarding electronic gear illustrates an absence of individual and organizational theory response. Neither members nor the organization ever tested the major assumption or theory that it didn't/shouldn't get involved in serving as a vehicle to disseminate information on electronic gear to the membership. If it had tested the assumption, the organization may have rejected such a course of action, but the Co-op never engaged in such a test.

All the organizations experienced similar absences of theory responses and a complementary emphasis on action responses. The fishermen's neglect of electronics was coupled with their refining of more intuitive approaches (action responses) to finding fish. The teachers' neglect of schoolwide marketing issues and the Advocates' failure to confront the funding mechanism were marked, similarly, by efforts to work harder within, respectively, ongoing (minimal) marketing efforts and existing funding arrangements.

In each organization major organizational questions go unaddressed, undiscussed. The Advocates neglect discussing their funding mechanism; the teachers and potters ignore the establishment of a structure for working together; the fishermen don't use the co-op to enlarge their market; the architects haven't yet confronted their long-term career plans and their expectations of the firm.

The organizations' participation structure aids their selective inattention. The architects and potters, who don't have a manager, lack a person with the explicit responsibility for formulating and coalescing ideas and information into policy. They lack the perspective of an "outsider" who can see what they need and act on it. A manager might be able to help each of them establish the collaborative work arrangements they say they would like to have, for example.

The Advocates, teachers, and fishermen, who have a manager, however, are bound by their relationship with him

also to encounter problems in selective inattention. In practice, the managers predominantly attempt to move the organizations on issues that seem important from their perspective (e.g. in the fishing co-op: the accumulation of capital, not electronic gear). Then when the managers do champion an issue, their institutionalized conflict with members often works against implementation, discussion and mutual learning. There are difficulties in both individual and organizational learning. Individuals immersed in their work neglect to push the organizations to act on issues of long-term interest. Individuals don't learn how the organizations can best serve them. Nor do the organizations learn how to best serve their members or to help members learn how to participate.

CHAPTER 4
PUZZLES AND TENSIONS

Several puzzles emerge in the responses, in the preceding chapter, to the questions in the Analytic Frame. One puzzle concerns the work not done by the organizations' members once they have focused on the knowledge tasks: Who does the other work? What is the other work? What are the consequences for the organizations overall?

Another puzzle concerns organizational control. The organizations all have a managerial role such as the one Michels predicted would inevitably lead to oligarchy. Yet none of the organizations has become oligarchic. How have the organizations developed the managerial role and kept it from bringing about oligarchy?

A final puzzle concerns organizational effectiveness and learning: Why is it that, although the organizations' participatory structure would seem to enhance learning, it sometimes does not?

Answering the questions posed by the puzzles can begin with a recognition of the tensions inherent in the organizations. Members' original commitments to their work, which in most cases preceded their involvements with the organizations, establish the beginnings of the tensions. Members are, were, and always have been workers (teachers, architects, advocates,

fishermen, potters) first. The organizations all grew out of members' efforts to create a place within which they could pursue their work in ways satisfying to them.

Members' original, primary commitments to their work set up a basic tension between issues directly related to work and issues less directly related, such as organizational control, and organizational effectiveness and learning. Organizational issues take time and effort that might instead go into members' pursuit of their own work.

The organizations' development of work as a solitary endeavor reinforces the initial tension. As long as the knowledge tasks that interest members most can be pursued only in solitude, they compete for members' available time with other activities related only indirectly to their work--activities including organizational control and effectiveness. The absence of the collaborative pursuit of work reinforces members' pursuit of knowledge tasks as a lonely endeavor.

Further, members' definitions of work have not proceeded along the lines of job enlargement followed by many experiments in the redesign of jobs. Members of the organizations have not generally chosen to enlarge their jobs in ways that extend into the management and control of their organizations. They are interested in controlling the organizations, but more as a means to the pursuit of their own work than as an end in itself. If anything, members' design of their work could be seen as a kind of job reduction, a paring away of

tasks not immediately connected with the knowledge tasks of their work.

Concentrating on their own solitary knowledge tasks, members of the organizations have pared off three kinds of tasks: the organizations' standard operating procedures; "dirty work"; and managerial work.

All the organizations use standard operating procedures to carry out some aspects of their work that demand stability and predictability, but that are not an integral part of members' preferred work. Standard operating procedures are uniform, predictable practices whose execution is not dependent on personality but on rules and regularity. The architectural firm, for example, has a set of standard operating procedures to carry out its production of correspondence.

The organizations also help preserve members' access to and involvement with knowledge tasks through their use of "capsules" of hierarchically structured processes to carry out various aspects of "dirty work". The potters' apprentices, the fishermen's crew, the architect's draftsman, and the teacher's and Advocate's volunteers all carry out tasks that members of those five organizations do not want to take care of themselves.

The organizations' establishment of a managerial role is another instance of paring away some non-knowledge tasks of members' work. Managers in each of the organizations (some more formally identified than others) carry out tasks of

organizational maintenance tangential to members interests in their own work.

All these practices of "job reduction" to enhance members' access to and involvement with knowledge tasks also inhibit their efforts to control the organizations. Standard operating procedures, "dirty workers" and managers remove different kinds of incoming information from members. Without the information the "job reduction" strategies could provide, members are potentially limited in the extent to which their efforts to exert control can best be informed on their own behalf. Similarly, they are limited in their ability to work on behalf of organizational effectiveness and learning. The "job reduction" strategies are both a product and cause of tensions inherent to the organizations between members interests in both their work and the organizations. The tension impacts their work, their control of the organizations, and the organizations' effectiveness and learning.

In addition, all three practices create constituencies that can take on lives of their own and threaten organizational control in a direct way. Further, the concept of the practices --particularly the "dirty workers"--compromises the democratic values the organizations espouse.

In subsequent sections, I examine in detail the organizations' experience with standard operating procedures and "dirty work"--two pieces of the "puzzle of the 'other' work" I outlined above. The third piece, managerial work, is also a

part of the "puzzle of control," which is concerned with how the organizations can have managers and still avoid oligarchy. Here, problems of members' ability to exert control occur at low points in their oscillating involvements in the organizations. That puzzle includes a second piece, which examines some of the problems inherent to the conflict-based relationship that often exists between managers and members. Such a relationship occurs in organizations that have a manager at high points of members' involvement.

The "puzzle of non-learning" is the final section. It examines the organizations' experience with adopting new technologies, and stems from the tension in the organizations between their mechanisms of control and their interests in organizational effectiveness and learning.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

The organizations usually developed standard operating procedures for functions that have to be done in order to comply with demands, schedules or market structures imposed by the external worlds in which they function. The Advocates, for example, interact with universities and government agencies; the fishing co-op with the rigidly structured wholesale market. In a different way, schools must interface with parent groups and town governments; pottery studios with suppliers and customers; architectural firms with clients and subcontractors; etc.

All of these external worlds have cultures with rules of etiquette and compliance and views of accepted ways of communicating and interacting. All have schedules of their own. All have ways of evaluating and regarding legitimate co-members and colleagues.

Demands for standard operating procedures might also come from within the organizations, from members' needs to have access to materials and supplies, a clean work environment, or regular pay checks. Standard operating procedures that arise from within the organization seem more in direct service to members' work interests and needs.

Whether in response to demands outside or within the organizations, the standard operating procedures the organizations develop often protect members from addressing the "knowledge tasks" of their work. Often, standard operating procedures "take care of" tasks that have to be done, but might understandably not be of much interest to members' preferences in a work experience.

The fishing co-op, for example, has a handful of people who market, sell and deliver the fish. The architectural firm also has a standard operating procedure for marketing, though it differs substantially from the fishing co-op's. The pottery studio has standard operating procedures for handling its bookkeeping. The architectural firm has standard operating procedures for secretarial work, graphics, models, and answering phones. The school has one set of standard operating

procedures for enlisting volunteers, and another for insuring that teachers have the supplies they want. The Advocates have standard operating procedures for maintaining contact with the press.

Though effective in preserving members' access to knowledge tasks, the standard operating procedures could also be seen as threats to members' ability to control their own organizations. In the architectural firm, for example, the secretarial standard operating procedures seem often to be at odds with the architects. The office manager wants to protect "her girls" from being overworked and mistreated by the architects. The architects are more concerned with getting the work out. They don't understand how or why delays can occur.

Standard operating procedures may inhibit organizational learning on behalf of members. The fishermen often worry, for example, that their marketing procedures aren't sensitive enough to changes in demand patterns to help inform them of when to change the species of fish they try to catch. They are concerned that the manager, who is in daily contact with the fish markets, is more concerned about prices now than about what fish are travelling up and down the coast.

Removal of issues from members' consciousness by allowing them to be handled by standard operating procedures may also lead to continuing and increasing imbalances of knowledge among members to influence the organization. For example, members of the architectural firm were dissatisfied for years with

the firm's handling of some elements of office management: typing, mailing, grammatical form, etc. They were unable to do anything about the system because they didn't fully understand it. It was working on at least minimal levels, and they had never crystallized the issue as a problem. As a result, the few architects who understood secretarial procedures wielded disproportionate influence. Their work had a way of getting out, even when other work, more important to the organization overall, piled up in the secretaries' in-box.

Similarly, in the advocacy group there is a continuing concern with the receptionist's taking care of the phone-answering job. Doing this, she frees up time for the Advocate's staff to spend more time on issues and organizing. However, the position also puts her in the place of potentially receiving important information and not knowing how to act on it. She has access to information on the organization that might be needed by members and thus, indirectly, she limits their control and their ability to contribute to organizational effectiveness and learning.

The five organizations also have difficulties in balancing members' differing interests in wanting to be involved directly with standard operating procedures. Though most simply wanted the problem taken care of, for example, some members of the architectural firm wanted to design the internal telephone system themselves.

If the organization can respond to both the members who want involvement in an issue and members who don't, the response may incite other problem. Members may not be able to actively influence the organization at later times if they were not been involved in earlier efforts. Long-term impacts of an imbalance of involvement may also contribute to buildups of guilt or resentment on the different sides of the imbalance.

As happened in the architecture firm, members who abstain from involvement in making a particular decision may also find it difficult to alter the results produced by others. Those who were not involved in designing the phone system were also those most dissatisfied with the system that was installed. They found the architects who had been directly involved initially resisting their late-arriving suggestions. Likewise, the potters who were least involved in the construction of the kiln are tolerated least in group discussions that include criticisms of the kiln.

DIRTY WORK; CLASSES OF MEMBERSHIP

In much the same way as with standard operating procedures, the organizations' handling of "dirty work" illustrates the tension between members' interest in their work and their interests in organizational control, effectiveness and learning. In all the organizations, tasks that are farthest removed from the knowledge tasks that interest members, often a particularly poorly regarded set of standard operating procedures are often carried out by non-members, or members with a special, low status.

This division of labor removes non-knowledge tasks from the obligations of members, and makes more of their time and energies available for knowledge tasks. While preserving the knowledge tasks for members, this handling of "dirty work" also poses a threat to members' ability to control their organization, and thereby, to organizational effectiveness and learning as well. In addition and perhaps equally important, this sort of handling of dirty work can be seen as compromising the democratic values that the organizations espouse which are themselves also an aspect of members' job satisfaction.

The members of the fishing co-op, all boat owners, do not make the slightest attempt to bring to their relationships with their crew any of the elements of participatory work and process. Co-op members seem fond of saying, "all cooperation ends once we leave the dock," referring both to relationships among boat owners and within their crews.

Captains, members of the Co-op and non-members alike, often use military metaphors to describe the organization of the boat. They are, after all, captains, and they often see themselves as "tough," "strict," and they believe with good reason, for they contend that the productivity and safety of the boat depends on their strong leadership.

Crew are seen as transient, almost second-class humans. They depend on the captain for their income, and in a very direct way since their salary is usually determined by a "lay"

system that bases crews' income on a proportion of the catch. The proportions vary among boats and crew members with different levels of ability, but the framework of the formula is constant and has remained basically unchanged at least since Herman Melville described it in Moby Dick.

Crew are seen as dependent and basically untrustworthy, as well. In the "old days," crew members would usually settle into a long-term relationship with one captain. More recently, such relationships don't seem to hold up. Captains see natives of the town as opportunists, bouncing ficklely from one boat to another in a continuing attempt to get work on "highliners"-- the most productive boats. "They come and they go. They're like the weather," one captain complained.

On the other hand, there is a degree of suspicion and disrespect surrounding crewmembers who remain crewmembers for long, as there is some sense that crewing is a stepping stone to becoming a captain. To not take the step to ownership after some years is a sign of weakness, fear, personal difficulty, tragedy, or the mismanagement of one's income.

At least the local corps of crew has a minimal amount of energy and ability, qualities too often found in short supply among the out-of-towners, students and transient folk, who come into the town in the summer. The work takes stamina that initiates don't often have. One captain explained with uncharacteristic sympathy that after a first time out, new crewmembers' forearm muscles are often so sore (from pulling

in miles of heavy line in the course of a day) that they can't sleep at night because of the pain. That an inability to sleep should ever be a problem is in itself remarkable, as the crew usually puts in a fourteen hour day, beginning before sunrise and including no time off for lunch until the captain decides to leave off for the day and steam back to port.

Thus, it is unclear whether a captain should seek out experienced local crew who may lack ambition, or experiment with newcomers who may spend the day doubled over the railing with seasickness. Different captains adopt different policies which they vary according to the availability of crewmembers. Some are willing to "give newcomers a break," others "help keep the locals in work," but all share a perception in this of themselves as patron. They're employers, and they tend not to be humble about it.

In some ways the captain has the easiest job; certainly his makes the fewest demands physically. He pilots the boat, reads the navigation and fish-locating devices, and decides when and where to fish. Often, he does not bait the hooks, or ever come in contact with the line of the fish. He is more of a manager, and is financially rewarded more for his ability to manage crews' labor than for his willingness to do the work himself. Too, since the work is so physically demanding and captains are usually (and sometimes very much) older than crew, the captain may simply be less physically able to do the heavy work.

Here is a summary of the elements of the captain-crew relationship which appear in some form in each of the four other organizations:

- The captain is a member of a co-op. The crew does not and cannot belong, but may have some organization of its own.
- The co-op is participatory but the organization of work on the boats is not. The captain is the decision maker.
- The crew does the direct contact work of fishing, the captain is more of a manager and policy maker.
- There is an element of learning involved in being a crewmember, and an expectation that crew will one day become captains themselves. Crewing is a purgatory, a temporary but necessary state which one can escape if one works at it.

The hierarchical work capsules allow members of the cooperative to devote more time to doing work that is interesting or more appealing to them. Captains tend to take on those aspects of fishing work that are less demanding physically but also that are more demanding intellectually.

Similarly in the architecture firm: the architects design, and the draftsmen (or "backroom") draw in detail the designs that the architects produce. Design is more intellectually demanding and, like managing a fishing boat, involves more decision making and policy formulation. But architecture is not design. It is said among some experienced architects that 90 percent of the practice of architecture is in the production of working drawings--not very stimulating work. Architecture schools themselves tend to glorify design so that architects

may often justifiably complain that newly employed graduates don't know how to draw, they only know how to design.

The crew does the "dirty work" in fishing, the "back room" handles it in the architecture firm, leaving, respectively, the captains to captain and the architects to design. In the advocacy group the volunteers do the leg-work or the organizing and fund-raising while the paid staff works on issue formulation and makes most of the media appearances. Apprentices in the pottery studio mix and color clay, keep the studio clean and seek out advice and criticism from the "working craftspersons" whenever they have a few spare moments. Volunteers in the school do phone calling, make address lists, arrange parties.

In all five organizations, work that is not "dirty" includes the work of management, marketing, policy making-- "knowledge" tasks that create conditions, set boundaries, develop or enhance more specific tasks. Often the nonhierarchical organized work carries out details: it is the "dirty work" of direct service.

The capsules demarcate different groups of members in the organizations. Crew members, in fact, can't join the fishing co-op; neither can draftspersons in the design firm consider themselves architects. Each of the five organizations has at least two groups of people who might be considered members of a kind. The Pottery Studio has several kinds of memberships: full-time shareholders; tenants who occupy space

and use facilities but don't own shares; members "on leave" who may sub-lease their workspaces; and, recently, students. Formal rules support the split between members and non-members in each organization but to an outsider, members and non-members may look very much alike.

In all five organizations there is a hierarchy of influence of members over a marginal, captive labor force. At the same time, the "dirty workers" possess an influence of their own. Since most of the school volunteers are parents of children in the school, teachers take some care to respond to their interests and work them into their classes if at all possible. In some cases this involves allowing the parent to pursue whatever he or she wants to in the class--playing a guitar, singing, or leading an art group. Teachers also occasionally call for parent assistance in lessons, projects or trips that are part of the teacher's agenda.

Teachers seem to see parents as a resource that supplements rather than supplants their own work. Most of them divide their classes into smaller groups and work with one group at a time. Volunteers working with groups provide more direct contact time with children, and teachers seem to see this as positive.

The Advocates also espouse a measure of responsiveness to its volunteers who, like the parents in the school, are, though in a more direct way, a source of the organization's financial support. In fact, the staff bills itself as a group

of professionals hired by the volunteers, and spends a considerable amount of time trying to respond to the needs and interests expressed by the membership.

In both cases, the "dirty workers" find themselves in the ambiguous situation of having indirect and symbolic control of the people who control their direct, day-to-day experiences. The ambiguity helps improve contact between members and their clients in some ways, providing a continuing forum for interaction and discussion. In other ways, though, the hierarchical nature of the contact makes interaction more strained. In both cases, on occasion, members view volunteers as "spies" for the clients.

In a very real way, organization members at the top of the hierarchy (the teachers, the organizers, etc.) depend on the "dirty workers" on the bottom. In the Advocates the dependency is for financial support, as well as for getting some of the work done and in some cases, defining what the work is to be. In a similar but not so extensive way, captains depend on their crew, architects on their draftspersons, potters on their apprentices. More than dependents, some of the organizations define themselves in terms of their response to a group (parents, students) that also seeks some sort of direct involvement in their organization.

The nature of the dependencies differs according to how much real economic and political power the "dirty workers" have. The teachers and Advocates derive their economic well being

from a larger constituency of volunteers in a way that the fishermen, architects and potters do not. The latter depend on their "dirty workers" more for information and for supplementing their own knowledge tasks.

In all cases, the marginal "dirty workers" exert influence over the whole organization's productivity, and in some cases they even set a kind of policy. The "dirty workers" are concentrated in the implementation aspects of the work, and thus it is often their work with which outsiders come in contact. Organization members therefore depend on them not only for simple productivity but, in a much more complex way, to carry out the very thoughts they have conceived.

Participatory organization structure enables members to design their jobs as more "whole," but the five organizations do not quite do this. Rather, they take for themselves the aspects of the work that interest them most--often the most intellectually challenging and stimulating aspects of the work and the most cognitive aspects (piloting, navigating, design, issue selection, classroom planning).

Thus segmenting their work, the organizations must also attend to the output of the lower echelons. The production of working drawings is thus not merely "production" but completion of a cognitive process in which an architect has invested a great deal. Thus organization members have a strong motivation to see that the lower echelons carry through what they have begun.

The participatory structure offers an opportunity for job enlargement, but people seem actually to reduce their jobs by giving up the non-knowledge tasks. Maximally left to their own devices they can pursue and organize their work as it suits them best. By this approach, members create problems of segmentation and implementation not at all unlike the kind of problems they often describe as their own motivation for leaving their previous workplace.

Segmentation generates problems of job completion. Draftspersons, for example, are charged with completing drawings for ideas that are not theirs, that they thus do not have full information on, and that they consequently complete in ways that surprise (not always pleasantly) the architects. There are also problems of motivation: why should, how can a draftsman care about a design which is not his? And overwhelmingly, there are problems of communication, as interactions between members and the lower echelons are often emotionally loaded and difficult.

Members of the five organizations are ambivalent on the issue of the workers in their "capsules." There is much testimony on the behalf of the volunteers (crew, apprentices, etc.)--~~their dedication, their sense of duty, their real value~~ to the organizations overall. At the same time, there is always at least some shred of a possibility of difficulty. Part of the difficulty is in volunteers' need to meet the very high expectations and standards of members, and this is understandable in the light of members' own extreme concern for their work.

A different part of the difficulty, though, is in the areas of responsibility that accrue to the "dirty workers." Volunteering parents often have free rein in deciding what they will do (and when) and they do help, but occasionally they are seen as an interruption. Volunteer students are zealous but have to be watched in case they misrepresent the organization in some way. Crew members are well cared for but require constant prodding in order to be certain they will produce.

The capsules could be seen as posing a direct threat to the organizations' ability to be participatory. It is not only that the existence of the hierarchical work capsules threatens the organizations' ideological consistency but that the capsules threaten, more directly, members' ability to exert influence and control in the organization. Michels' political party lost its participatory nature and became oligarchical as leaders at the top of the party concentrated information and power. The capsules of hierarchical work threaten the five organizations by isolating information about the organizations' clients or products. Though at the "low" end of the organization, they are the constituents of that body of organizational members that some theorists believe are the crux of organizational behavior.¹

The capsules also threaten members' direct control of the organizations because they take up parts of the work process that members may want to return to at some point. Part

of the *raison d'etre* of all the organizations is the protection of the nature of work so that it can be satisfying to members. Members' interests, however, are likely to change and when they do, they will have not only to alter their organization but to deal with people who have developed their own interests.

The hierarchical work capsules in the five organizations preserve a particular kind of work organization for members, but possibly at the expense of members' ability to control the organizations and the organizations' effectiveness. The five organizations have done little to alter the character of the capsules, but they have taken different kinds of action to minimize the capsules' possible negative consequences.

The fishermen, at one extreme, have mostly stuck to a point of view that demands compliance by the crew. The Advocates have sought more to align volunteers' interests with those of the organization by widening their responsibilities beyond "dirty work." The public school, running before the threat of declining enrollments, has solicited parent support and involvement to such an extent as to rile some teachers, who deem the demands on them to market the school as "unprofessional." The potters and architects intensely discussed and vigorously debated the status of their "dirty workers" and arrived at opposing conclusions. The architects decided to find ways to coordinate and involve the draftsman more; the potters decided to ride with and monitor whatever difficulties the existing intern position had.

In all cases, the utility and value of the action members take with regard to the capsules seems to be in proportion to how well they recognize it as an issue and how much they discussed it. The architects' and potters' resolutions, though different in substance, are more representative of members' interests than the previous arrangements. They are thus probably better, in both cases, for the organizations because members are committed to making the resolutions work.

The Advocates' and teachers' resolutions were discussed less and thus may be less representative. The fishermen's near total lack of discussion of the issue suggests that they may not see it as an issue and thus may be most unprepared to respond to its consequences. If crew members would ever organize for better conditions or more salary, the fishermen would have little of the benefit of forethought and discussion.

MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

The crux of Michels' concerns was in the special interests and powers that accrued to the political party's paid staff, and the staff's subsequent wresting of control from the Party's membership. There is no such complete loss of control in the five organizations, but there are managers whose position parallels that of the Party's staff, and whose experience in the organizations frequently poses a threat to members' ability to exert control.

The organizations' managers often handle tasks such as those described as standard operating procedures. In many ways the difficulties the managers cause are similar to, or are special concentrated cases of those outlined for standard operating procedures. Likewise, the work of the managers can often be seen as taking care of aspects of members' work that members themselves prefer to be rid of.

The five organizations all have managerial tasks to be carried out. Three have positions with the title of manager. All, however, have often been able to separate these managerial functions from positions and status of leadership, avoiding the task-role bond of manager-leader that troubled Michels, and inhibiting the process of oligarchy.

Managerial tasks do not necessarily need to be performed by leaders, but the nature of the position helps make leaders of those who occupy it. This tendency troubles all the organizations. Even those that do not have formal managers find that members who take on management tasks acquire a status

of leadership that inhibits others' ability to control the organizations. A closer look at the five organizations will help clarify this point, and the more general issue of separating leadership from management.

All the organizations require support, attendance, and supervision of their functioning in a way that no individual member can (or wants to) undertake. Members tend to be more interested in their own work. Within each organization there are thus tasks of management to be done.

The fishing co-op has a manager who does not fish; the school has a principal who does not teach; the advocates have a director who does not organize; the potters have an informal leader; the architects a senior partner. None are leaders in the authoritarian sense. Their job is to be responsive to the organizations' members. All espouse a different sort of relationship to the membership than one would expect from a boss.

For example, the principal calls himself a facilitator, and says his role in the school is defined through the teachers. He helps them do what they want, responds to their initiatives and refrains from taking initiative on his own. The Advocates' director tried similarly to respond to the organization's members. The co-op's manager has said, "it's my job to get members to participate."

In spite of their commitment to their organization's membership, though, each of the managers has some difficulties in making the commitment work. Part of their problem is in

experience. Each frequently encounters situations in his work which can be carried out quickly through his own action, without members' involvement. The fishing co-op's manager, for example, sometimes can get an exceptional price on fish if he can make a commitment to buy a large quantity involving a total price higher than he is authorized to spend quickly. Participation can clog executive action, even if it could be organized quickly enough to respond to the moment. Most of the organizations have found ways to structure such action or account for it after its occurrence, refining the parameters and boundaries within which managers can act. However, new occasions arise each day for managers to test those boundaries.

Another problem in all the organizations is the spectre of dependence: there is occasional longing in the membership of all these participatory organizations for outside authority. The manager of the fishing co-op reports with disgust that some members complain because the co-op does not give them a Thanksgiving turkey, in the way that the profiteering local buyer used to.

At the school, too, there is some sense among teachers of wanting more of the responsibility of management taken from them. They gladly accepted the initiatives undertaken by a more managerial teacher who stood in when the facilitator principal took a year's leave of absence. Members of the Advocates, in contrast with their activist role at work, at one time wanted to take more of a back seat in the organization.

This is not to say that the organizations are not essentially participatory or that their members yearn only for authority, but to suggest that the nature of participatory organization is not one-sided and uniform. As part of the oscillations in members' interest in the organizations, there is also some ambivalence, sometimes, on their part regarding their willingness for and interest in continued involvement. Members, after all, have their own work to attend to. Even if their ambivalence is short-lived, though, it may strongly affect the organizations, which must continue to respond to external demands no matter how members may be feeling on a particular given day. When a vacuum of participation occurs, it is understandable that a manager would step in to keep the organization going.

In all the organizations the daily work of the manager differs from the work of the members. The manager's work is the organization, not the work itself, and it is in that split that difficulties arise. Spending most of his working hours on the phone with fish buyers in New York and Boston, the fishing co-op's manager has for his day-to-day work a set of tasks that differs from those of members. His whole career path and future is not in any way like that of the members. He is a manager, they are fishermen, and in that initial difference is the beginning of special interests on each side of the relationship.

While the manager spends his days on the phone, hunched over a desk in the co-op's office building (which is

nestled in a clump of pines well out of sight of the harbor), the fishermen are at sea, in their boats. In a different way than the manager's, their days are long and hard, draining much of the energy that they might have to invest in the Co-op. (My few days at sea with fishermen impressed me with the enormity of the task they undertook in founding and continuing to sustain the Co-op, for it was clear that the work of fishing left little time for anything else.)

Even if they had the energy to put into the Co-op, the fishermen probably would not do much because the Co-op's management does not much interest them. They like their work, but the aspects of their work that attract them are not those that involve the Co-op. Fishing is outdoors; it is conquest, boats, the hunt, the sea. It is not selling or bookkeeping, which, in this context assumes the status of "dirty work."

For most fishermen, the Co-op is an economic necessity but not a source of personal involvement and interest, and this is at the root of their difference of interests with the manager. The fishermen and the manager are concerned for the Co-op's well-being and viability, but their concern has different sources and different products. The fishermen's primary interest is their own personal economy: they want to be paid as much as possible for their fish.

Consequences of the manager-member differences in the Co-op crop up around several issues, including simple trust. Though they have hired him and have access to his

accounts at all times, the fishermen do not entirely trust the manager. "You've got to have faith," one of them remarked. They are not certain that his wheelings and dealings in the wholesaling business are as sharp as he claims, and their uncertainty is compounded by their lack of understanding of exactly what he does. Their uncertainty with this is not so much a fear that he is pocketing a little money on the side, but rather that he simply is not working hard enough for them.

The fishermen's uncertainty leads them to action that riles the manager; this in turn further upsets the fishermen, etc., etc. One form that this action takes is "little hints." The fishermen ask, "Have you tried this strategy? Have you checked that approach?" These kinds of questions upset the manager, as they imply that he might not be doing his job, which of course he is, he thinks. It also leads him to think that the fishermen do not trust or appreciate him--and this after all he has done for them.

Another kind of action the fishermen take that upsets the manager is inaction. Pleading ignorance of the whole marketing operation, they conspicuously absent themselves from marketing matters and even, occasionally, from the Co-op--until there is a problem. Then, they descend on the Co-op with a vengeance and then, because they have little information, reasonable discussion is difficult and resolutions difficult indeed.

In spite of all this, manager-membership relations are not on the brink of collapse. There is, overall, continuing conflict, but it is matched by an expectation for the conflict to be there. The fishing Co-op's manager and members have worked themselves into a kind of Mexican standoff. Members' "negative participation," however unnerving it may be to the manager, also does seem effective in reversing actions he has taken that the members don't like. More subtly, but equally effective, the anticipation of negative participation seems often to inhibit the manager from taking controversial action, or to move him to involve or check with members in whatever ways may be possible.

In the Advocates the managerial position is even more difficult than in the fishing co-op, for the actual work of all the members of the collective implies an ability and an aptitude for the manager's job. All the Advocates are supposed to be articulate speakers, persuasive debaters and competent organizers. Unlike the fishermen, the staff cannot plead ignorance of the manager's job--for them, the title is "director," which says something in itself.

The staff of the group think of themselves as organizers and advocates; the director is one of them. In fact many aspire to the directorship, if not in their own then in another organization. There are not many other paths of advancement within the work they do.

Differences in the occupational cultures of the manager and membership cause problems in the fishing co-op;

similarities and resulting double-binds cause problems for the Advocates. As organizer-advocates, they come from an activist tradition that traces its culture back through the 60s and earlier, to Alinksy in the 1950s and to union and political organizing in the 1920s and 30s. Several have family ties to those eras.

In the activist tradition there is a healthy respect for gut-level organizing, emotional speech-making, concentrated politicking. Charisma has an extreme positive value which is equaled perhaps only by one's ability to convince and one's ability and readiness to act. All this makes for extremely interesting work with clients--the external world--who needs to be convinced. But bringing all that charisma and convincing together in a group, and one that espouses (as people in this tradition often do) to be participatory, fuels continuing conflicts.

Group members seem to try to advocate and convince one another, making meetings a very highly-pitched set of events. The levels of conflict are strong and severe enough to make discussion difficult. Other groups may shy away from conflicts; this one revels in it, but their approach seems more symbolic--they appear to be acting. Advocacy and conflict, not resolution and discussion, receive the lion's share of attention.

The task of a leader or manager in this calls for skills in both advocacy and group facilitating. More than anyone else in the organization, he has access to the media. He

appears frequently on radio and TV, and is often quoted in newspapers. Thus, more than anyone else, he ought to be able to make a strong case for the issues. Further, he may be looked to for guidance and leadership in strategy-building and politicking by members and by other organizations. He is thought of as a master of logistics.

Yet it is also his job to manage the group, and as long as they want to participate in controlling the organization, they demand skills other than those of sheer advocacy. A leader's ability to agitate, advocate and convince might give him the attributes of an extremely successful manager in a hierarchical organization but would, one expects, lead him to difficulties with a staff that wanted to participate. And yet the norms of the profession might also make it difficult for him not to behave as an authoritarian leader.

As noted earlier, the Advocates got caught in both conflicts with their departed director. They saw in his attempts to accommodate them a certain lack of character. They felt that at best he was "soft," and at worst he was perceived as "insincere." The previous director, a much more abrasive character, had less trouble with the staff because they respected him more. There was more noise and upset, but those are occupational facts of life in this line of work. On the other hand, he had troubles because he came on too strong.

One difficulty for both directors, and apparently for the staff overall, is that the noise and upset, the advocacy "shtick," seemed to have a life of its own. People

lapse into it--at meetings, in conversation, perhaps even in their own private thoughts. The Advocates seemingly unknowingly give themselves up to the act of advocacy, and that leads them to some tight spots in meetings among themselves and with outsiders.

The Advocates' respect for confrontation and for a director who is adept at such behavior make it difficult for them to effectively exert control. They expect to be one-upped by the director, respect it and even look forward to it. Acting with an expectation of being beaten back, though, they seem destined either to be beaten or to become laden with argument for its own sake. When they take on conflict, they seem more concerned with the quality of the fight than with its outcome. Like the fishermen, their participation is thus partial and, in some cases, negative.

Also like the fishermen, the Advocates' relationship with their departed director had a dependent emotional tone. There was an occasional yearning, not only to be taught, but also to be relieved of hassles and boring work. The director was to be partially a mentor, and also partially a lightning rod, efficiency expert and parent-confessor. In both the fishing co-op and the Advocates, the director must also provide fuel for the very high level of commitment that prevails in the organization. If his enthusiasm should flag, he'd better keep it to himself. While members may occasionally lose touch with the dream, the director must remain constant.

The two managers I've described thus far provide service for the group that other group members are either unable or unwilling to perform, illustrating the kind of division of labor suggested by Michels. In both cases, the manager's duties could not sensibly be spread among many people. The fishing co-op manager sells fish in a wholesale market culture based on personal contact. The information he handles is so detailed and subtle that it would likely take him much longer to share his insights and work with a colleague than to simply take care of it himself.

The directorship of the advocacy group is similarly structured by the external world. The media needs to deal with a spokesperson, not a group. Conversely, the group needs to present a unified, cohesive front--difficult to do if a half-dozen people are shown on camera, or quoted in a press release. Like the fishing co-op manager, the director also operates in a highly personalized network. His is made up of directors of other, similar groups, lobbyists and politicians.

How the external world can shape the directorial position is further clarified in the public school where the principalship was originally established as a collegial sort of position. In fact, there was apparently even a degree of stigma originally attached to the position, for the founder of the school intended that the most exciting things would occur in the classrooms. The teachers and parents

who founded the school rejected the original proposal for an authoritarian, traditional sort of principal and replaced it with a colleague-gatekeeper. The principal was to be a "front man" for the school, someone who would explain to the external world what the school was all about while the teachers were left to teach, and to make policy decisions about the school.

But the principalship has come to be somewhat more than that. The principal does in fact represent the school to visitors, of whom there are a large and continuing quantity. In doing this he may have gained a sense of responsibility for the subject of his representation, for he has grown increasingly concerned with matters of quality in the school and has begun to take an increased interest in working with the teachers. At the same time, teachers have grown increasingly to look at him for some of the same sort of guidance and relief for which the organizers look to their director.

The difference between the school and the Advocates has been that, although the principal has seemingly participated more in the internal affairs of the school, he has done so in a way that has helped to maintain the collectivity. The principal has been seen, and dealt with, more as a facilitator than an executive. He retains some executive powers, and the nature of his work is different from that of the group members. For him, much more than the other two, helping the group function as a group is the nature of his job. Providing such help gives him a job that is different from theirs, and different

in a way that gives him a more general responsibility for the group.

The relationships of the principal and the director with their respective groups are each negotiations that have had similar results. The principal and director tried to create a relationship with the members that was more facilitative and less directive than the members wanted. The principal has persisted and been more successful in keeping to this intent than the director, who was fired. In both cases members' preferences were reinforced by other norms in their organizations that legitimized structure or debate and argument. The fishing co-op manager in the same general way seems to have reincarnated in his relationship with the fishermen the independence, autonomy and nagging lack of trust they have for one another.

The two remaining groups--the architects and the potters--offer interesting variations on the position of manager. Neither has a manager per se. Both attempt to disburse managerial tasks among their memberships. However, both encounter difficulties in this attempt, and both have, perhaps in the absence of a manager, a leader.

The potters have a senior, older founding member who took much of the responsibility for starting the group, and who continues to be a kind of advisor. More than the other members, he took initiative and responsibility to make sure the group got started. His interest and involvement in the

organization continue. Members, despite the group's collaborative ethic, often defer to his opinions and priorities.

His influence, however, is tempered by the potters' nondivision of the managerial labor from their work as individuals. They share in all things, decide by consensus, and generally oppose hierarchy. Their only surrender to leadership has been in their establishment of rotating positions for specific tasks.

On the other hand, their organization does not provide the services and functions of the leaders thus far described, and current complaints in the Studio have much to do with the absence of those functions and services. People complain that the group has not provided as much of a learning experience as they had hoped, that there simply is not as much informal or formal learning as there might be. No one person has undertaken to do this either by teaching him(her)self or by organizing the others to teach. There is not much agreement on who might do this, because there is a divergence of viewpoints on who is most qualified.

There is also a cluster of difficulties in the group's relationship to the external world. Incoming phone calls are a problem, pulling people away from their workspaces. Incoming customers are an even bigger problem. Perhaps the biggest problem with the external world, though, is in the very general category of sales. All the potters are busy potting, but no one is selling very much. Individuals had thought the group would "help" sales, but it hasn't very much.

The architects' "leader" is the firm's owner. His position resembles the school principal's in the sense that he is trying to get rid of the status attached to his position and make the firm more participatory. He has tried to understand his role better, to keep some parts of it but get rid of others. He wants to hang on to the more pleasant aspects of his "guru" role, continuing to serve as mentor and as client contact person. The others want to keep him in these roles, too, so they can learn from him and so the firm can use him most effectively. They place the highest value on his client contact skills--again, the mentor/director is charged with interacting with the outside world.

The terms of the relationship between the owner and the group at present are less constricted than in the other organizations. There are no contracts, no terms of continuing employment. If there were, they would still likely reflect the fact that, at bottom, he is the owner. But he is quite serious about wanting the firm to be participatory, giving up rights and responsibilities to others in the firm and explicitly instructing them in what he does. When the negotiating is finished, he could conceivably end up "on the shelf," an ineffectual "spiritual advisor," or he could end up at the other extreme, much as he was before the firm thought about participation in controlling their work.

One factor that will likely figure in the end result is the architects' culture of work. One aspect of the occupational culture in the profession is a reverence for the creative process and an enshrining of that process as a strictly individual enterprise. Creativity and individual achievement are highly valued, but when that value provides a context for a group, it may work against cohesion and collectivism.

The firm actually does not glorify individual achievement so much, and upholds a fairly strong norm of collegiality. People like to work together and are not in any way hesitant to say so. They like it, they say, partially because they learn and partially because they simply enjoy one another's company. They socialize outside the firm, with families and without. Altogether, this level of interaction, and the high regard people have for it, counters the possibility that individual achievement may take over.

To summarize, managerial work impacts all five groups as a consequence of their excluding such work from the knowledge tasks they pursue as individuals. Several of the organizations have managers whose work and self-interests differ from those of members. In some of those, members actually look down on the work performed by managers.

Having a manager negatively affects members' ability to control the organizations. Much as Michels presaged, their access to information and the occasional downward swings in members' interests in the organizations encourage them to act

in ways that sidestep members' involvements. As they pursue such courses of action their information and power increases, leaving members less able to exert influence and control.

The separation of management tasks from the roles and status of leadership helps keep the organizations from becoming oligarchies, however. When members' interests in the organizations increase (in reaction to too much managerial initiative, or simply as a function of changing members' interests), their ability to regain control is facilitated by their view of the manager (and his view, too) as essentially their employee and in some ways, their subordinate.

When leadership and management are more integrated, as in the Advocates, the issues of member-manager confrontation are more difficult. The manager who led too little left members in a leadership vacuum in which they felt uncomfortable. The manager who led blocked them from control to an extent that also made them uneasy.

The organizations that do not have managers per se have problems with the logistics of making sure the management work gets done. In addition, perhaps in the absence of managers, they have leaders who also represent, because of their roles and status, obstacles to members' control of the organizations. Members defer to the leaders too readily, too quickly, and the leaders have to work to ensure that they don't take control from the memberships.

INSTITUTIONALIZED CONFLICT: DEMOCRACY IS NOT ENOUGH

The organizations that have formally designated managers illustrate that a special problem is members' ability to exert influence and control. The problem suggests an inadequacy in the approach of some popular ways of thinking about organizational control.

Specifically, the problem occurs at high points in members' oscillating involvements with the organizations. Attempting to exert control, they find themselves in opposition to managers, in a balance between managers' executive and their own legislative powers.² Looking more closely, though, the balance, which is characteristic of notions of organizational democracy, is more a ritualized standoff. The nature of that standoff ultimately limits organizational effectiveness and learning. The standoff illustrates the tension between manager-based methods of organizational control and organizational effectiveness and learning. The experience of the fishing co-op helps illustrate this issue.

Being in a co-op runs against the grain of fishermen who say that their work is "anti-social." Many of them would simply rather be alone than have to work with one another. Their attitude comes through in a remark by one oldster who mans his 34-foot boat alone. "I don't like the idea of a crew," he observes. "The paperwork is a bother, and I've never found anyone who could work hard enough."

Working a 34-foot boat alone is no easy chore. Nor is putting in 16-24 hour days with nothing but seagulls and cod to talk to. The oldster has his preferences, though, and they are not at all unique. He enjoys talking with cronies on his rusted CB, but largely because he can keep his distance.

The Co-op is an organization of loners, people for whom collegiality and (for some at least) the very notion of organization is anathema. In this context, the motivation for participation is often distrust. Members sometimes participate because they do not trust one another, or the manager of the Co-op. In fact, in one way it would be possible to view the history of the Co-op as being founded on mistrust, tracing back to the original breach between the founders and the profit-taking dealer against whom they organized.

With this distrust as context, it is possible to trace democracy in the Co-op to three more specific features: the legal structure of a cooperative, the special interests of managers and members, and the culture of conflict that has grown up in the Co-op.

The Co-op's legal structure as a cooperative, which is a chartered legal form in Massachusetts, establishes the outlines for a system of checks and balances of power and influence between the manager and members. These rules inhibit oligarchy to the extent that they make it difficult for either the manager or the members to act in extreme ways, thereby concentrating power. However, these are only ground rules; they are refined by the differing interests of managers and members and the Co-op's rather unique culture of conflict.

Kernels of continuing tensions are also embedded in the different work interests of the manager and members. Beyond this, the Co-op has developed a particular kind of internal culture around the different interests. The fishermen do not understand management and sales, but need and want to have control over these functions. For them, a participatory organization is a must in keeping management honest and on its toes. Yet since the fishermen do not understand management, the nature of their participation seems destined to be troublesome.

"They never have anything constructive to say," the manager observes, "never anything helpful. All they do is criticize and complain." He does not mind that so much, though, because it means to him that he is supposed to "take the initiative, be in control." As long as he interprets his job in this way, they participate by stopping him.

"Negative participation" occurs in one common way through cost-cutting. When the board of directors (seven fishermen elected by the overall membership) reviews budgets and plans formulated by the manager and auditor, their first responses seem to be, "Do we have to do this?" More generally, the board worries about the overall largesse of the Co-op, frequently asking if the organization can fire some workers, complaining about the seeming sloth of Co-op employees.

This kind of participation continually challenges the manager, but it always stops short of taking on the managerial role. The fishermen do not want to manage but they do want

to influence. Complaining gives them a way to do this, an input that satisfies them.

The tone of their involvement, though occasionally gruff, is not so troubled overall. The manager sees conflict with the board as ritualized. He notes, "It's like a family. We have our fights, but we stay together." In the relationship between the board and the manager, it seems the Co-op has institutionalized a forum for continuing conflict and, through this forum, has helped keep the Co-op participatory and responsive to its members. The manager expects the board to question him and even encourages their involvement.

The norm of manager-member conflict probably has helped to keep the air clean and to dispel rumors. It has also helped keep the manager from "getting too big for his britches," a general condition that takes several specific forms, such as the manager's affecting superiority over the fishermen. He may know something(s) they do not, but they do not want him to put himself above them. Independence and autonomy are important to the fishermen, and a manager "too big for his britches" conflicts with the fishermen's regard for themselves.

Aside from reducing the effect of big britches, the norm of conflict in the Co-op also literally keeps the manager honest. "The more money the manager has, the easier it is to lose it," one oldtimer avers. The manager is kept to a manageable role by the members by restraining the financial resources available to him. The norm of conflict also affects the

manager's style of leadership, encouraging him to involve members more integrally. "If I don't work with them, I know they'll just work against me," the manager remarks. Anticipating their negative participation, he acts to involve them in a more positive way. The Co-op's culture of conflict has been advanced for members by the structure of the Co-op, which rotates the directorate among the entire membership. Thus, most members acquire firsthand involvement in management issues and experience conflict with the manager.

Anticipating negative participation, and familiar with the Co-op's culture of conflict, the manager has not accumulated as much influence and power as he would have in a participation vacuum. Members, imbued with the expectation of conflict, have taken a watchful stance.

Negative participation and formalized conflict mark the Co-op's resolution of the tension between members' interests in their work and their needs to control the organization. This resolution may well work to keep members involved in the Co-op, and to keep it participatory by keeping the manager from being able to take control away from members.

However, in the intricacies of board-manager conflict the best interests of the Co-op overall sometimes get lost. For example, the membership's sense that the Co-op ought to be kept lean ("The more money the manager has, etc.") was an organizational issue, not only a concern for restraining the manager. The Co-op suffered severely from undercapitalization

for years, and never took any steps to remedy the situation until forced to by a bank.

The bank made as a condition of its loan the Co-op's promise to collect additional funds from members. The membership grudgingly accepted the bank's terms and has since come to generally agree that it was a good thing: the Co-op benefits from having more capital available to it, and the members have not lost anything through it. (The manager remarks, "I had been telling them that for years, but I never got to first base.")

In the Co-op's culture of conflict increased capitalization was never fully discussed, but taken as simply another of the issues on which members and manager differed. The conflict that existed did restrain the manager from acquiring more power, but the nature of the conflict inhibited a still more effective solution. The manager and members might have embraced and discussed the issue as an organizational concern, but the standing conflict between them transposed it into a more parochial issue. The standing conflict personalized the issue, rendering it a matter of members vs. manager instead of members vs. difficulty.

In a conflict, opposing points of view guaranteed a forum. In the fray more information may get into the air, available to more people. More people can participate based on more information, and that seems useful. Too, the existence of structure for conflict may sometimes generate a kind of information surfacing through nay saying. When the Co-op

manager says, "I know they'll say black when I say white," he is complaining. Yet the fact that Co-op members unthinkingly take an opposite point of view helps ensure that opposing points of view will be raised. In both cases, members with more information can remain on equal footing with the manager and with each other.

The Co-op also benefits from the vigilance of individual Co-op members, many of whom are engaged in a continuing struggle to keep the operating costs of the Co-op down. Their very contact with Co-op staff and operations is an occasion for trying to devise a less expensive way to do the job. Often their ideas are not useful, but occasionally the organization gains-- if not in the form of a new policy or practice, at least in new information or ideas.

The problem with intergroup conflict is that it is limited by its lack of consciousness. It is possible for one faction to win, but often at the expense of the organization overall. This was what occurred in the Co-op's failure to pursue increased capitalization. Until the bank imposed its rule, the membership "won" but the Co-op overall lost.

In this case, whatever its benefits, conflict channeled members' interests away from the whole organization to the concerns of a subgroup; it encouraged ignoring the needs of the whole organization for the sake of supporting one subgroup. Because loyalty to the subgroup is an assumption (what Co-op

member would think of sticking with the manager?) that is unquestioned, it works against issues of interest to the whole organization.

Interorganizational conflict such as occurs under the banner of organizational democracy may thus encourage members to support without thinking, inhibiting their critical examination of the issues. It is not functional to reflect on one's position when one knows from the outset that one's position will be a product of reaction, a reaction against the position of the other side. Participatory organizations espouse members' involvement; to limit that involvement to unthinking internal struggle is to make the organization less participatory, less responsive to the interests and needs of members.

ADOPTING NEW TECHNOLOGIES

The organizations' experiences in adopting new technologies are mixed. The organizations don't always learn in ways that their participatory structure would seem to imply. Behind their problems with organizational learning are their commitments to and involvements with the knowledge tasks of their work, and the structures of organizational control they have established to preserve those knowledge tasks. The experiences of the fishing co-op help illustrate the issues.

One of the fishermen who was kind enough to take me on as transient crew told me the biggest innovation in fishing during his twenty-five years at it was nylon line replacing cotton. In Marsham most fish are landed on hooks, either

through handlining (one or two fish at a time) or longlining (anchoring baited long lines for several hours, then retrieving them). Methods have not changed much in the past hundred years. In fact, among the port's largest producers are the three weirs--intricate systems of nets set up at the breakwaters--that were originally established by the local Indian tribe.

In this tradition, innovations in gear or technique may be disproportionately influential. Recent innovations have included various electronic items: depth sounders, LORAN C, and CB radios. It would seem the Co-op ought to be involved in some way, helping members understand and use new products and practices. The spread of these among members pointed out a shortcoming of the Co-op.

Co-op members, who are mostly oldtimers, have often resisted buying electronics because "they make anybody a fisherman." Electronic gear provides instantly, to anyone who owns it, accurate, detailed information about the location of the fish and the boat, both key bits of knowledge in a business where position is nearly everything.

Besides making anybody a fisherman, electronic gear also alters fishermen's understanding of the nature of knowledge in their knowledge tasks. Finding fish is an art that fishermen often enshroud in myth and mystique, a central knowledge task of their work. To remove the mystery with a piece of electronic gear is also to destroy the mystery and compromise the knowledge task.

The oldtimers have their own artful, mystical ways of determining a boat's position, too. One that I crewed for took out a chart after we had been steaming through fog for a few hours, and pointed to a spot. "That's us," he claimed, and proved it with a quick check of the LORAN C. Not all members have the equipment, though, and those who don't occasionally do get lost. Co-op mythology is rich with stories of fishermen who never found their way back to port--even on clear days.

Oldtimers who failed to purchase the equipment were also outdone in their fishing. They would find newcomers (with depthfinders and fishfinders) in "their" spots and have to move along. Recently some have bought the equipment and use it "as a back-up," but it continues to irk them that anyone can easily find out what it may have taken them years to learn.

Co-op members' experience with electronics illustrates the tension between work and organizational effectiveness. The Co-op's handling of electronics represents a failure on its part to act in what appears to be members' interest. Without the gear they could usually catch an adequate amount of fish but with it they could often catch more. Also, of course, the gear makes the work safer.

With no impetus coming from its work-oriented members, the Co-op took no organizational action regarding the new equipment. It might have diffused information about the equipment among its members. It might have served as a

forum for weighing the pros and cons of the equipment among its members. It might have provided access to technical advice on how the equipment could be used best. It did none of these. Not dealing with the issue at all allowed the Co-op's competition, comprised mostly of newcomers, to make gains in the marketplace. Furthermore, the Co-op's failure to act has a self-perpetuating quality. It is in no better position to help its members or itself when another innovation is developed in the industry.

Despite the Co-op's lack of initiative, some members still experimented with a different innovation, a new (to Chatham) technique called Scottish seining. A Co-op member interested in the technique secured government grants to travel to Scotland, learn seining and try it in Chatham. His early experience has been so successful that some other fishermen have decided to try versions of the approach themselves.

Thus far, seining in the port has spread only among Co-op members. The initiating fisherman explained that this was because "they happen to be my friends." In other words, the co-op provided latent organizational structure for diffusing the innovation. The few people that the initiator interacts with are Co-op members; the Co-op provides an occasion and forum for interaction among fishermen. Even without taking conscious, deliberate action, then, the Co-op made it

more possible for fishermen to act on their own. But the diffusion was not conscious, so the possibility of its informing future action is limited.

The sort of formal action that the Co-op might have taken for electronics and seining is not without precedent. The Co-op has taken the initiative on behalf of members on a number of political issues, for example. And on the other side of the issue, some innovations have effectively been diffused among many fishermen.

For example, nearly all the members now have a CB radio, and the process of purchasing them a quick one. It is easy to guess why CBs spread so quickly. They are inexpensive and pose little threat to tradition or ego. More than that, they are fun, the subject of popular songs, jokes and bumper stickers. They add a warm dimension of schmoozing to the otherwise lonely work of fishing. The several boats I shipped on only rarely turned off their CB. The captains monitored the channels all day, and joined the conversation intermittently as the spirit moved them.

In terms of members' work, CBs enhance knowledge tasks rather than threaten them. CBs are a vehicle for trading advice and theories, and for providing help in emergencies. By providing a means for conversation, CBs also reduce one of fishing work's most disagreeable aspects: loneliness.

The fishermen came to acquire a CB either through individual action or through the port's informal networks. Like many other Americans, some simply responded to advertising, went to a store and bought a unit. Other fishermen had some contact with the unit first, either through a visit to someone else's boat or from news brought by crew that had been on a CB-equipped boat. Fishermen in this latter group, like the fishermen now learning about seining, are part of an informal network that makes public (to its members) some of the private information of fishing.

The informal network does spread some kinds of information. Occasionally it also does the unexpected. For example, the informal CB network broke a centuries-old tradition by spreading information, albeit in a haphazard way, on productive spots. Crew transfer is often the medium through which the informal network functions, but it also works in bars and through rumors.

Two important features of the informal network are that it is not systematic and that it places most of the initiative for learning on the individual. The informal network is one step removed from the usually totally private sphere of any one boat, but it is also far short of organizational action.

If it had consciously attempted--through members' establishment of a practice, program, or directive from the manager, for example--to diffuse information among members,

to act as a forum and medium, the Co-op would have been more responsive to members' interests. After discussion, they may have rejected CBs or seining, but they would have had more information for use in making their own decisions. Without that information, they could not act effectively on their own behalf for their own interests. The Co-op's role here might arguably have been to help members clarify what their interests were.

The four other organizations respond differently to innovations. Innovations in pottery are perhaps as few and far between as in fishing, but members of the pottery studio have a different stance than the fishermen. The potters are concerned with their learning and development as individuals, and so attempt to learn from one another and from sources outside the Studio. Unlike the fishermen, they view their current knowledge as in constant flux and transition.

Meticulously unbricking the kiln after what turned out to be one in a series of disastrous firings, one member reassured me, "It's never a waste." For her the conversation and learning were more important than the ruined pots. The Studio supports interpersonal learning by giving people a common workspace. They have extended what the organization started by developing norms that celebrate interaction. One effect of those norms is that technological innovations are viewed with an open mind. Members of the Studio generally

hope to learn more--either about the techniques they know a little, or about techniques that are new to them.

Despite the Studio's success in creating norms that support individuals' learning, in some important ways it has failed to do so. Members of the Studio are open to, even seek out, new potting techniques, and they share them with one another. However, the Studio has never explicitly attended to what it does for individuals in the way of helping them to learn from one another. While it is a friendly place, many members have told me that the friendliness seldom abets learning, and their hopes for growth in the craft are often frustrated. As with the fisherman who went to Scotland, if individuals do learn, it is not reflected or supported by organizational action.

The school has taken the matter of adopting innovations a step further, instituting committees for various aspects of its operations and explicitly charging them with the task of developing curricula, examining the quality of life in the school, special needs, children's services, etc. The committees' tasks are to manage the school in much the same way that a principal might do the job. Teachers work on committees that interest them and take much the same task as the potters. They bring guest speakers to the school to keep them informed, and run in-house seminars as well. It is not simply that the teachers are open to new ideas; they consciously attempt to dig them out and make them topics of

discussion. This stance on learning conflicts conspicuously with the teachers' rather different stance on learning from one another: they seldom sit in on each others' classes.

Discussion is the forte of the Advocates, too. They did not have, in the time I worked with them, an experience with innovation that fits the category of those discussed and have, instead, integrated into the structure of their organization the responsibility for inquiring into developing issues of discussion. Issue selection takes up a major part of their energy and attention.

The architecture firm makes for a fitting conclusion here for it has combined a concern for consciousness with experience in innovating. The firm carried an awareness of innovation further than the teachers did in the course of the inquiry the firm conducted into its practice. (This activity of inquiry is described in detail in an Appendix to this test.) Members established a number of committees to look into various aspects of the firm so they could redesign the organization.

In the course of all this the firm produced a number of its own innovations, new office practices, strategies and techniques. Some of these innovations were completely indigenous, home-grown responses to parochial issues. Others of the innovations built on, implemented or considered various available new technologies. The committee process and

structure (which the firm labelled as a project, "Theory Response") provided an occasion, a forum for a conscious exploration of the issues.

In the context of open discussion and the task of inquiry into how it might best be organized, the firm created conditions of synergy for innovations. It became within the interests of the architects to consider and discuss the range of available innovations and the ways they might be applied. The element of continuity created a norm of constructively critical consideration of available innovations. Thus new ideas often were not simply accepted or rejected but developed, refined, built upon.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS: ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING AND PARTICIPATION

DILEMMAS

The organizations' experiences with standard operating procedures, dirty work, management and leadership, organizational democracy and adopting new technologies suggest boundaries and dilemmas in the strategies by which they have attempted to respond to their members' interests in work and in the organizations.

The organizations' dilemmas stem mostly from the conflicts and tensions between members' interests in their work and their interests in organizational control and organizational effectiveness and learning. Members' work is important to them. The organizations enhance members' work experience in some basic ways, providing physical space, financial advantages and vehicles for expressing members' values and politics. Because the organizations enhance members' work, their interest in their work implies an interest in the organizations.

The way work is organized in the organizations forces some choices between members' interests in their work and their interests in the organizations. The solitary pursuit of knowledge tasks characterizes members' work experiences. Standard operating procedures, dirty work and managerial tasks are pared off, sometimes given to secondary classes of members.

Standard operating procedures and dirty work provide access to potentially important information about the organizations. Paring off those tasks from members' work removes that information from their purview, and consequently inhibits their efforts at organizational control, effectiveness and learning. In addition, the way dirty work is handled compromises the organizations' democratic values. Too, paring off dirty work creates a constituency of members who could conceivably come to actively threaten the original members' control of the organizations.

Paring off managerial work creates, in some of the organizations, a constituency of special members--managers--who threaten original members' ability to exert control by dint of their access to key information and their ability to act on behalf of the organization. The organizations that have managers keep them from completely gaining control by separating from the managerial position the roles and status of leadership that often accompany it in other organizations. In some cases, that separation goes so far as to regard managerial work as a kind of dirty work.

Though they do not become oligarchies, these organizations' effectiveness and learning is sometimes limited by ritualized conflict between managers and members. That conflict inhibits the discussion and exchange of information that could

inform members' action and which, thereby, could enhance their control of the organizations and the organizations' effectiveness and learning.

The organizations that don't have managers have problems in handling the managerial work themselves and while remaining as involved with their work as they would like. They also have leaders who, though not formal managers, threaten members' control of the organizations in similar ways.

The organizations' structure of participation (whether or not they have a manager) and members' characteristic oscillations in interest and involvement in the organizations frame their experiences with adopting new technologies and with more general organizational learning.

In the organizations that have a manager, his self-interests and those of the members predict who will be concerned with what, who will perceive what. Managers perceive organizational issues, such as the accumulation of capital, but not in a way that threatens their own work experience. Members perceive organizational issues that enhance their work experience, e.g., having the organization take political, lobbying action on an issue to protect their work.

Members don't perceive issues that threaten their work experience, e.g., new technologies or practices of collaboration that alter the nature of knowledge tasks. Managers may perceive these issues but their organizationally defined self-interests don't reinforce their pursuing them. In fact,

institutionalized conflict in manager-members relations would tend to help kill the issues if they did pursue them.

Organizations that don't have a manager, on the other hand, have vacuums of action at low points of members' involvements. They also have problems in bringing to fruition, without the help of a manager, the ideas and plans that members devise. Such implementation depends on their abilities to clearly identify group goals and courses of action, and those abilities are most evident in group process skills and norms and strategies for conversation and personal interaction.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING AND PARTICIPATION

The ways in which such norms and strategies can foster organizational effectiveness and learning apply in all five of the organizations. A closer examination of an instance of such activity, taken from the experience of the architects, helps illustrate the point. This example incorporates elements of an organizational learning response that I outlined at the conclusions of the preceding sections on standard operating procedures, "dirty work," management and leadership, organizational democracy, and new technologies.

In general, organizational learning differs from organizational conflict/democracy most clearly in its attempt to surface, engage, inquire and reflect on issues rather than force a decision, and identify issues in more polarized terms. Organizational learning is concerned with the substance of an issue. In addition, organizational learning

may hold open to inquiry the processes by which a decision is reached. Finally, organizational learning includes theory as well as action responses to a problem.

The example I'll use is the architects' handling of their marketing operating procedures, which involved their rejection of the firm's practice of accepting any work that came in. After much debate and discussion, which was not always directly related to marketing, but arose more often from members' concern with the quality of their work that resulted from the projects they worked on, the architects replaced the "take anything" practice with one that was more selective.

In terms of the tension between work and control, the new practice both enhances members' knowledge tasks and increases their control over the organization. The practice enhances members' knowledge tasks by altering and potentially improving the work from which knowledge tasks can be derived. The practice increases their control over the organization by involving them, though indirectly, in monitoring--an important part of the organization's operations.

What was involved in the architects' new marketing practice? Both individual and organizational learning took place.

In a way, the new marketing practice is a theory response to problems of work, involving a testing of some of the major assumptions that frame the work organization and process.

The new practice scrutinizes prospective new work and evaluates it in terms of both its financial potential and the nature of design work it implies. Projects that seem not to involve interesting work are rejected. Of course this practice has financial implications, and these were a key part of the discussions that brought greater selectivity into being.

The development of the new practice involved individuals' learning in that individual architects involved in designing learned something about themselves and their point of view. Few of them had an absolutely clear picture of either the issue or their stance regarding it. The discussions and deliberations enabled individuals to inquire, evaluate, and ultimately act on new information. All three of these might be viewed as kinds of learning.

Individuals' clarification of their own stance included the learning/clarification of others. Both kinds of learning happened largely in conversations. The growing awareness of self and others here also included evaluation of the notion that had surfaced: Was it workable? Could the firm survive financially and not take every job that came its way? Were there any possible harmful effects of limiting incoming work?

Individuals learned about the organization in that they clarified its policy toward marketing and evaluated it. They also learned more about how the organization works, especially about constraints and market conditions that

influence it. And they learned to act on the organization. The latter kind of learning might arguably contribute to their taking a more active stance in, and taking more responsibility for, the organization. This might lead them to ask more questions and take more action--the sum of which would be that they would be influencing the organization more on their own behalf, and hence, that the organization would be more participatory.

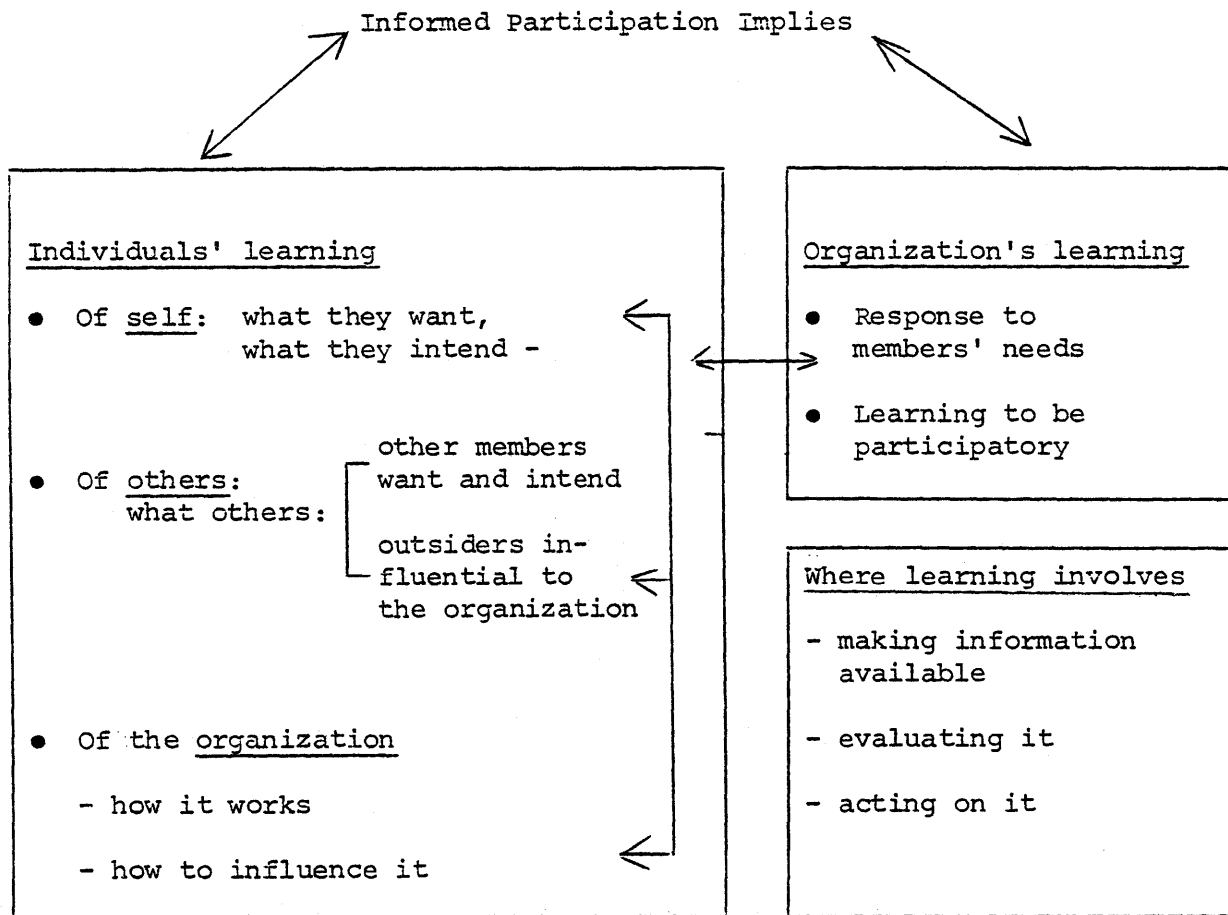
Individuals' learning about self, others and the organization seems intertwined to the extent that engaging in one kind of learning might well lead to the others. In the architecture firm, in this instance, the beginning point was learning about the organization. Engaged first in a discussion of how the firm marketed, individuals came to the other two points of learning in the course of the discussion. One could also imagine that the decision might have been initiated in group discussions of job satisfaction, or individuals' deliberations on their own work, and that these would have led to the other two kinds of learning.

In addition to the individuals' learning that occurred in the course of taking up the new marketing policy, there was also organizational learning. One kind of organizational learning was in the action taken by the organization--as an organization--in response to members' inputs, to behave in particular ways on marketing matters. Based on deliberation and evaluation, that action can be distinguished from simple

change and from the sort of conflict-bound change associated with organizational democracy.

The organization can also be seen as having learned in terms of the information it acquired--as an organization--on the substance of members' interests and needs, and in how to respond to members' inputs. A third kind of organizational learning would be the result, for the organization, of members' having gone through all this, which I would hypothesize would make them more likely in the long run to confront the organization, and the organization more likely to respond and, thus, to be controlled and influenced by them. This last point suggests a two-way relationship between individual and organizational learning.

I have attempted to summarize these thoughts on participation and learning in the following chart. I indicate two-way relationships between participation and both kinds of learning (individual and organizational) to represent (1) the notion that participation implies learning, and (2) the hypothesis that learning fosters participatory organization.



To summarize, the chart outlines several kinds of learning: individuals' learning with respect to themselves, the other members of the organization, and the organization per se; and organization's learning with respect to the substance of their members' interests, and their ability to solicit response from members.

The notion of individuals' learning with respect to themselves turns on my observations in the five organizations that individuals' position on and knowledge of many subjects pertaining to the organization can't and won't always be complete. In fact, in some instances individual members' knowledge of an issue only became apparent when they could "put it into

words." The learning involved in this is discussed in detail in Polanyi's work, which explores the processes and consequences of making tacit knowledge explicit.¹

The learning of self I describe occurs, more deeply, in some kinds of therapy. The organization processes I describe are obviously not on the same cognitive or emotional plane as therapy, but both subscribe to beliefs that (a) certain patterns of their own behavior and thinking are not readily apparent to individuals, (b) it is possible to discover those patterns, and (3) it is possible to act on them. I have been concerned with the learning implicit in (b) and the resultant action (c), which I take to advance participation. Viewing participation as based on deliberate and conscious action, I place emphasis on the learning implicit in consciousness.

Individuals' learning of other members is more readily understood but may be as difficult to practice as their learning of self. Research in ethnomethodology and face-to-face interaction suggests how easy it is to miscommunicate, to misunderstand and fail to learn what another individual knows, assumes, cares.² The research also elaborates on learning of self, as it contends that individuals often have elaborate cognitive mechanisms for shutting out information pertaining to self.

All three kinds of individual's learning (of self, others and organization) are a product of my concern with participation as informed control. Each kind of learning

enhances the exercising of control. In the end, control is exercised as the result of maximal information having been provided to individuals.

Organizational learning stems from change in the behavior or knowledge of the organization that is a product of newly available or clarified information--much as is the case in individuals' learning. Learning is organizational by degree, in the extent to which it is diffused through the organization's members, policies, behaviors and knowledge.

Responses of the organization--new policies, new actions and practices--to members' interests and needs are examples of one kind of organizational learning. Here the learning is the response to the newly available information. One might expect that an organization whose members were engaged in the sort of learning described above for individuals would witness a good deal of such learning.

A second order of organizational learning is in the organization's ability to make available information on which the responses in the first order of organizational learning are based. This might be something on the order of organizational awareness: having new knowledge, generating new insights as a kind of learning distinct from acting on them. In either case, a criterion for organizational learning would be like that for individual learning which concerns itself with how an individual represents and encodes learning. In an organization one would look for new policies or norms explicitly linked with the learning.

APPENDIX: INQUIRY AND INTERVENTION

I assumed an active role in two of the organizations in an attempt to help in the process of organizational learning outlined in the previous sections. Our efforts were not complete or comprehensive, but they do suggest some of the returns, risks and limits involved, and add further detail to the concepts of organizational learning.

I framed my work with the organizations as helping them "inquire into their practices." I intended to help them clarify, discuss, evaluate and act on aspects of their organizations' practices--the programs, procedures and strategies by which the work of the organizations were carried out.

I hoped to stage the conditions of a theory response. That is, I viewed activities of inquiry by stepping back from immediate organizational issues, not attending to immediate pressures for production, and exploring how things work.

I believed that engaging in activities of inquiry would help make the organizations more participatory by making more information available and thus enabling participation to be more informed. Also, I thought that engaging in inquiry--explicitly inquiring into how the organization operates--would place members in the sort of active stance with respect to the organization that would foster their continued involvement.

What I mean by inquiry differs from organization development in several ways. In his definition of organization development, Richard Beckhard specifies that it is "managed from the top."¹ What I mean by inquiry is managed by the membership--intended for use in participatory organizations. Perhaps more important, I would contrast Beckhard's notion that organization development intends to "increase organization effectiveness and health" with the connection of inquiry to learning, and with the concern of learning for attempting to inquire into the meaning of "effectiveness."

In my actual practice of intervention, I deviated from these notions such that more and more of my work resembled traditional organization development. I do not in this text assess my work, but use it more as a vehicle to outline what might be done to develop the idea of inquiry and connect it with participation.

Most individuals and organizations inquire into their practice in some ways as a matter of course. They evaluate products, have quality control, conduct research. Individual practitioners often "second guess" meetings with clients. They may take to telling "war stories" about successful meetings, and conduct armchair quarterbacking situations when things have gone wrong. All of these common forms of inquiry share in relating mostly to action responses--e.g., "Did we win?" "Did I make my point?" "Did I cover my tracks?"

These forms of inquiry take what Barry Jentz terms "the objective problem-solving stance."² Operating within this stance, the motivation of or purpose of inquiry is to get what one thinks one should be getting, solve problems, etc. The problems are clear, the definition of what they are goes unquestioned. Problem-solving sorts of inquiry may lead to more winning, but it never questions the morality, effectiveness or any other implication of thinking in terms of winning in the first place.

I focus on inquiry that is more exploratory and less bound to immediate solutions, more concerned with problem-solving in the long run--what Jentz calls the "inquiry stance." Within this stance, the definition of problems is itself held open to inquiry. Working within the general framework I have described, I used several more specific activities of inquiry: group analysis of tape recordings of face-to-face interactions; individuals' analyses of their own practices; and organizational redesign.

In group analyses of tape recordings of face-to-face interactions, members of the organization recorded a meeting that concerned them, a meeting between some of them and some members of a group that was the organization's client. Because face-to-face interactions are situations in which a substantial research literature argues that individuals are not rational players, have reason and ability to not learn, I believed that face-to-face interactions might be situations

in which learning and participation was not happening. Further I believed, following Lipsky, Goffman, and a number of other organization theorists, that face-to-face interactions are influential for organization practice.³ The particular meetings I analyzed, for example, had major implications for the organization's income.

Analysis of a tape recording by members of an organization enables individuals to hear their own behavior, reflect on it and consider altering it. They have the same opportunity to hear others, reflect on their behavior and consider altering that. In both cases the tape provides a vehicle for working through the three phases of learning--surfacing, evaluating, acting--that I described earlier.

In considering their own and others' behavior, individuals may also encounter organizational issues--policies, procedures, norms, etc.--that they may also surface, evaluate, act on. To the extent that they did this, one could also label their learning organizational. In another way, one might consider that the activity fostered organizational learning if it included new organizational action and/or if it helped the organization solicit members' input. In all of this, the organization would become more participatory in the extent to which it was controlled by members' inputs based on their learning.

In individuals' analyses of selves, members of the organization use different types of data--tape recordings,

written case reconstructions, journal notes, etc. Here the individual acts on himself as he is represented in the data. The data supplies the new information, and the act of inquiry the occasion for reflection, evaluation and consideration of new action. The emphasis here is on individuals' learning, though it is entirely likely that they would learn about the organization and that organizational learning could occur as a result of widespread learning.

In organizational redesign, the members of the organization examine and discuss the operations of the organization, consider alternatives and design appropriate new action. Here it is the organization that is acted upon. Individuals learn about others and about the organization, and the organization learns--new information is made available to all members, conscious evaluations are made of tacit and explicit policies.

I collaborated with the architecture firm and advocacy group firm in designing a program of inquiry that made use of all three kinds of inquiry. I offered proposals for specific activities and an overall packaging of them, and modified those proposals in the light of input from individuals on their specific interests and needs. Also, we agreed to keep the program flexible enough to respond to new interests and needs that arose in the course of our work.

I worked with the architecture firm intensively for one week, concluding with a task of organization redesign that they undertook over the course of six months. I returned for

a week to do more similar inquiry work and to help implement the redesign. I worked with the Advocates in weekly meetings with small groups or individuals over the course of several months. In both cases, the work of inquiry addressed some of the tensions and conflicts described earlier.

In the architecture firm I helped crystallize and formulate the group's enjoyment of interpersonal interaction. We discussed their desire to preserve that interaction as the firm's growth gave individuals increased responsibilities that threatened their time available to talk with one another. We designed strategies and practices for that to happen under the topic of "internal education" in the course of the organization's redesign efforts. This building of a collaborative, interactive approach to work helped reduce the firm's emphasis on individuality and helped legitimize meetings necessary for organizational control and effectiveness as parts of the architects' work.

We also addressed the managerial role. We used various examples of data on the work of group inquiry* to identify and clarify for Ben and the others how, specifically, he obstructed their control and influence. Listening to a meeting involving Ben and some of the others, we all identified instances wherein Ben, despite his intentions for increasing the others' involvements, decreased them.

*I provide an example of this work in this appendix.

My sense was that these exercises had both informational and affective consequences. They provided Ben and the others with a clearer understanding of the difficulties they were encountering. In addition, they reinforced Ben's claims of sincerity in inviting participation, and helped contribute to members' growing feelings of empowerment. Together, they were learning to participate.

Individuals' activities of inquiry, which were usually concerned with issues more personal than those brought up in groups, seemed to have similar information and affective consequences. These activities gave individuals an opportunity to attend in a detailed way to issues that concerned them, and which they thought the whole group might not want or need to be involved. Many of these exercises considered individuals' interactions with Ben, and thus further contributed to the resolution of that whole set of issues.

Such exercises also clarified information on standard operating procedures and on dirty work. I have already described, in the preceding chapter, an instance of the former. For dirty work, the organizational redesign efforts crystallized in the course of the discussions that involved the previously tacit thoughts and feelings members had regarding the draftspersons who worked in the "back room." Members feared a growing alienation on the draftspersons' part, and wanted badly, both because of friendships and because of a recognition of

their potential resources, to take some action regarding the dual classes of membership.

Their organization redesign involved draftspersons more in the governance of the organization. While not eliminating differences in members' status, the redesign did attempt to clarify the boundaries and paths of different kinds of membership.

The organizations' own plan for redesign, and its implementation, marked, I thought, real progress in making the firm a participatory and learning organization. A formal structure for participation was produced, and members, as a result of the detailed inquiry they undertook into the firm's operations, had acquired much useful information to make it work. Further, the nature of the interaction between Ben and the others seemed to change in ways that would support continued participation. On my second visit, Ben appeared more careful in his interactions with the architects; they were, conversely, more careful in accepting, scrutinizing and questioning what Ben had to say.

On the other hand, specific instances of inquiry that I undertook in the second week encountered problems between Ben and the others that were almost exactly the same as those discussed during the first week. Despite all the intentions, the new structure, new information and affect, there was still difficulty of enacting in the moment of a real meeting, in the

course of daily practice, the kind of participation that Ben and the others espoused.

The Advocates' experience with activities of inquiry was more negative. Much of my work with them focused (in a way parallel to the architecture firm) on the relationships between the Executive Director and the other members. Group and individual activities of inquiry elucidated for both sides the details of problems they were encountering in sharing responsibility and information.

The activities also helped contribute to members' sense of empowerment to an extent that they worked actively for, and were successful in, having the E.D. fired. It seemed that the consequences for them of continued inquiry and the continuing lapses of the E.D. in cultivating their participation confirmed their lack of trust in him.

On the other hand, members' experience with inquiry also empowered them to an extent that, despite their avowed desire to have a more authoritarian director, it seemed to contribute to their dissatisfaction with such unilateral power. They also fired the authoritarian director in an effort to return to more participation.

In both cases, members' general sense of the value of the activities of inquiry was quite positive. Both organizations applied the concepts and activities I presented to them to situations I had not thought of. Members were enthusiastic in saying that the work helped them clarify their

responsibilities and rights, and acquire a better understanding of the organizations. The second week with the architects had an almost festive quality as most of them were quite excited about completing the work of their organization redesign and putting it into practice.

In both cases there were also problems. One person quit the architecture firm during my second visit and several Advocates noted their discomfort with the fact that the activities of inquiry made them feel that their privacy was threatened. This issue provoked much discussion in both organizations. Members agreed that the immediate issues (the architect's departure, the Advocates' discomfort) were unavoidable and due mostly to factors outside the activities of inquiry. However, the more long-term issue of managing privacy was not resolved satisfactorily.

In both cases my role was unclear. As an outsider, I could see and help crystallize issues, like the architects' enjoyment of interaction, that they themselves could not. I could also push, in the name of inquiry, for aspects of interpersonal interaction that touched on feelings and emotions to an extent that members might understandably be unwilling to discuss them.

I also had troubles. I became a "garbage can," a dump for a wide assortment of personal and longstanding issues that were in some instances far beyond my understanding. Though I tried not to, and explicitly reviewed my own practices as an

intervenor, I sometimes lost objectivity and found myself taking sides on issues where I ought to have been silent.

In the architecture firm I occasionally had the feeling that my role was mostly symbolic, that I was a totem formalizing a rite of passage--Ben's passage of responsibility to others in the firm. In fact my presence did seem to serve the important function of underscoring Ben's sincerity in attempting to make the firm more participatory. Other members of the group remarked, on occasion, that it was my presence that convinced them that Ben was serious.

Little can be concluded from both organizations' experiences with activities of inquiry beyond an enhanced appreciation of the difficulties of both conducting such intervention work and the problems of engaging in learning. Even with the assistance of an intervenor, theory responses are hard to sustain. The returns of the intervention work, though sketchy, do also point to the potential value of inquiry into organizational tensions and conflicts as a strategy for cultivating learning and participation.

APPENDIX

CLIENT MEETINGS: AN EXAMPLE OF GROUP INQUIRY AND
ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

- Ben: Ted could have said it was raining outside, and been just as irrelevant.
- Bert: (Obstinately) I think not. You'll have to convince me that what Ted said was somehow off-track.
- Ben: I'll give you my view of it--I remember being really irritated.
- Ed: (Tentatively) Maybe there's a difference between a work session and a presentation. It came on sounding like you were having a work session....
- Ben: It was a presentation.
- (Excerpts from the group's review of the client meeting.)

On the face of it the meeting between the architects and the clients had been routine and effective. The tone of discussion was even and calm. Much ground seemed to have been covered; all parties left the meeting expressing some satisfaction with its productivity. This patina of normal appearances rendered all the more pointed the architecture group's discovery, in reviewing a tape of the meeting, that a number of fairly serious conflicts had occurred and were not resolved.

The more they considered exactly what had occurred in the meeting, the more problems the group discovered. Upon close scrutiny, it actually seemed that the meeting raised more questions than it answered and did not answer the questions it intended to.

Client meetings and the difficulties that accompany them are a fact of life in many organizations. Not only professional firms, but much less formal organizations usually have some kind of client. Organizations that don't have a client in the traditional sense often interact with individuals and groups in ways that resemble client meetings. Planners and political activists have community groups, doctors have patients, teachers have parents and students, non-profit organizations have their target populations.

Because so much depends on them, client meetings are frequently difficult. In this example, for instance, the client had to approve plans that reflected many hours of work and had to begin to discuss a major new project that would bring the firm a good deal of work.

This chapter, then, explores the path of one group--the architects--in trying to look back, attempting to make sense of its behavior. By reviewing tape recordings of a client meeting the group tried to make explicit the tacit knowledge which guided their behavior in the meeting. Such sense-making is a special kind of learning, connected intimately with the ability and willingness to think about and change one's behavior. It is involved work, and can be complex to the point of becoming surreal. But it is also stimulating and potentially very rewarding. It can add a level of understanding, appreciation and involvement in processes that may be taken for granted. This chapter portrays some of the possibilities and pitfalls of such work.

Four people in the group (an architecture firm)--Ted, Ed, Frank and Ben--were working on a hospital project. They had been at the evening meeting with a client (the hospital's administrator and a doctor) and a cost consultant to explore ways of reducing the costs of the multi-million dollar project. The meeting was one of a series of interactions with the client, meetings that are necessary to ensure that the developing design reflects the client's needs.

Ted, one of the architects in the meeting, analyzed the tape for the group. He took on the task because he was interested in his own performance in the meeting; he was not entirely comfortable with what had happened. Beyond being uncomfortable, he was confused, not at all sure of what had happened in the meeting and concerned because in his memory it was all a blur.

Ted was familiar with the process of thinking about his work. He took his work seriously and thought about it a great deal. At one point, an aspect of these thoughts even drove him to a psychiatrist--what he called his "Renaissance Man" complex, involving his tendency to throw himself into things, to be unable to do anything unless he did it fully and very well.

It may well be this sort of compulsion that spurred him to review the tape, which he did enthusiastically. Originally intending to work at it for an hour or two, he spent nearly a whole day listening through the tape, and prepared a presentation for the group based on one brief piece of the meeting.

Ted took the tape of the meeting and, at my suggestion, searched for one- or two-minute "snippets" of the meeting that seemed important to him for one reason or another. I asked him to take this approach because looking at very brief pieces rather than the whole tape of the meeting makes it more possible to focus on what exactly happened. The longer the tape is the more there is to try and comprehend--breaking the task down makes it easier to come to some sort of conclusion.

The piece of the meeting that Ted chose to work with was a brief exchange in which he began to introduce a new point into the conversation, an issue for the client to consider. He referred back to one of the suggestions for cutting costs that had come up earlier in the meeting, a recommendation that the client consider wood-cooling towers instead of ceramic or metal.

Ted pointed out that while wood towers might initially be less expensive, they would likely "cause the maintenance costs to go up." Ben interrupted him in mid-sentence, changed the subject and attempted to move the meeting on. (A full transcript of this snippet is appended to this chapter.)

I will attempt to describe how the group reviewed the tape: who said what to whom, how it sounded, how I heard it and felt about it at the time. At appropriate places, I will also comment on what is going on, analyze what the group seems to be doing and how it may be learning. The descriptions are typed single-spaced; my comments are double-spaced.

This sort of analysis digs rather deeply into what happened, proceeding at an almost sentence-by-sentence pace. It is a slow and detailed approach, but rich and very specific. At times the group seems to wander. In fact, I have tried in this chapter to preserve a sense of how that wandering progresses. I'll attempt in a later chapter to distill an order from the wandering, perhaps outlining stages of inquiry and insights reached.

I was present at the meeting, and participated in a way that I hoped would advance the group's learning. In this chapter I will not attempt to analyze my role as an intervenor, but will focus instead on the group as a whole.

Hearing the exchange on the tape and looking at the transcript Ted had made, I was unmoved. It sounded calm and even, not remarkable in any way.

The members of the group, however, reacted rather differently. They smiled as the tape played, and nodded as though they were familiar with what they were hearing. I asked Ted to turn off the tape and then asked the group, "Can you describe what has happened so far?"

Ben's reply that, "I remember being really irritated at Ted," surprised me, as I could not hear anger in his voice on the tape. Not wanting to lose the substance of this, but wanting also to engage the whole group, I said we should "hold on to" Ben's sentiment for a moment while also asking someone who had not been present at the original meeting to describe what he heard.

Responding, people first simply paraphrased what they had heard on the tape, then began to use the word "interruption" to label Ben's comments. One of them asked, "Did you all hear the impatience (in Ben's voice)?" and another observed, "The subject matter of what (Ben) said really had nothing to do with anything either."

The raised eyebrows all around the table portrayed well the tone of this part of the session. Eyebrows raised at the point on the tape where Ben deftly cut in, and again at Ben's comment about being irritated. The raised eyebrows signified, it seemed, an initial recognition of the issues.

As the group began to understand the relevance of Ben's comment, the session took on more of the quality of a detective thinking out loud. Ben was beginning to be seen as the culprit; Ted was the victim and an expert witness. The group became the master unraveller.

At this point, the group had listened to only a few minutes of the tape, but they had already taken some major conceptual steps. Most basically, they began to recognize a "problem," a recognition that was underscored by Ben's remark that he had felt "irritated." Simply recognizing a problem suggests, even at this early stage, that the snippet may be a classic example of group-think, an occasion when the momentum of the group in the meeting got the better of their abilities to make rational decisions. After all, if they could see a problem in reviewing the tape, why couldn't they have seen it when the meeting was occurring?

Accepting and beginning the task of describing, the group established an important perspective on the meeting, differentiated from their immersion in the meeting while it went on, and further differentiated later when they discussed the meeting in abstract ways. The emerging perspective is richer, more

critical, and more a product of their long-term goals, ethics, and intentions.

Attempting to describe and interpret what has occurred, the group legitimized the notion that there was indeed something open to interpretation. In order to interpret, they tacitly agreed that what occurred on the tape may have had one of a number of meanings. This agreement was strengthened by the quick feedback they got; that others in the group in fact did see matters differently.

But then, having implicitly accepted the possibility of attaching multiple meanings to what had occurred, the group wavered between trying to immediately discover which of those was "the truth," and waiting and attempting to remain open to further suggestions. Like an effective detective, they needed to spin out a number of possible chains of events.

The group attempted only to describe what had occurred, and I kept urging them to separate what they inferred from what they could actually hear on the tape. This insistence on splitting inference from "data" establishes a precedent for the existence of multiple realities, suggesting that we all make inferences, that we make them tacitly, and that they may be at variance with our conclusions if we articulate and reason through reconstructing a situation. Not doing this in the review of the tape would have been an invitation to have the review reproduce the problems of the "subject" meeting. Also, asking people to describe what they hear was a low-pressure question: there could be no "wrong answers."

At the same time, people seemed to agree that there was something at stake, that there may have been value in the group's agreeing on what their perceptions of the situation were. Having accepted the existence of multiple frames of interpretation, the group moved on to try and identify the problem and the solution. Sometimes they "discovered" these together, other times they "discovered" the problem--or the solution--first.

Before returning to the review session it is important to note here that describing, seeing multiple meanings and coming to view Ben as a culprit all occurs in the context of a key assumption--that action is implied. The group can play detective most fruitfully by assuming that, like Holmes, they can take action based on what they detect. In fact, they were in a position to change their own and the group's behavior if they chose. Even if they weren't in that position, though, the process of reviewing their behavior might either help them to see how they could have acted, or inspire them to want very badly to act. Simply playing detective has a way of making action implicit.

The group's formulation of the problem and the solution developed in a kind of design process itself, raising numerous alternatives, combining and selecting from the, and beginning to act on them. The group's formulation followed roughly these lines:

Various group members tried to frame the problem. Ed thought "the problem is Ted was challenging Dave," or "Ben didn't think what Ted said was necessary to bring up at the time." Ignoring Ed's hypothesis, Frank contended "the dilemma here is that it's too bad we can't

use signals between ourselves to indicate to one another that we don't quite agree with what's going on."

Joe refuted this, worrying that "you start getting into watching signals more than working with the client." Along the same lines, Bert argued that "if it's something that obvious, you'll know where the other person stands." At this point, I interrupted to ask Ted why he had chosen the segment in the first place.

Here the group functioned like a veritable Holmes-Whimsey-Poirot-Kojak-Strangeways-Columbo amalgam, dispassionately devising different understandings of "the problem," and tracing (at least some of them) out to some resolution. They had confronted and resolved the issue of giving signals, and I was pleased at the content of their resolution: they did not want to give signals.

As the formulation of the problem took shape, it looked increasingly like the meeting had suffered from a kind of groupthink. The group presented a unified front, a group show of solidarity for the client. The cost to them of doing this was Ted's (and maybe others' as well) submersion of anger and information.

I asked why Ted had chosen the segment because I thought his reason might provide a further clue to understanding the problem. Also, it had occurred to me that not having this bit of information was making the discussion somewhat abstract and unreal.

Ted began to give his motives for choosing the segment: he was one of the actors in it, and there were some "mental biases" being expressed in the tape. Then Ed, who was also present at the original meeting, began to paraphrase the discussion. In the middle of his recounting of what Ted said, Joe interrupted to ask Ted, "Why did you bring that up?"

When Ted said "mental biases," his eyes fogged over and focused momentarily on Ben. Ben met his gaze evenly and might have responded if Ed hadn't interrupted. This was an important turn in the conversation because it marked the involvement of the group in interpreting--they were no longer only offering answers for questions Ted or I asked, but formulating the questions themselves, taking their own direction, investing their own interests. The exercise was no longer only intellectual, but personal and immediate as well. They began to look less like detectives--who are supposed to remain cool and objective--and more like a part of the case, potential victims, or criminals, or a little of both.

Ed's recounting of Ted's story may have made it easier for this to happen, adding a personal barrier and making the asking of questions one step removed from the person involved. I played the tape of the original meeting once again, and the group continued its discussion by asking why the whole issue of unity before the client was important.

Joe asked of Ben, "Why was it important that you agree or disagree, and why was it important that you present. . . . Why were you so uptight about everything being unanimous? We've got rhetoric that basically says that we're all part of the team."

Ben replied, "I'm not saying that's as it should be."

Bert tried to make sense of the issue, noting "what I think we're guilty of at times when we have Ben there at a meeting is trying to portray to the client or consultant that we're involved, and just as involved as Ben . . . in order to prove that we're involved--knowledgeable about what's going on in this project--we bring up. . . ."

Ben then stated that "the resolution of the problem was that Ted agreed tacitly with me to keep the meeting going."

Very diplomatically, then, Joe asked Ben why he broke with the firm's espoused teamwork approach. Openly and to his credit, Ben admitted possible guilt. He was as interested in getting to the bottom of this as was everyone else. With Ben's guilt at least partially ascertained, the group could go on to other possibilities.

Having come to some closure on the issue of unity, Ted then began to move towards clarifying his lack of understanding of the point of the meeting. Bert's comment about the need for group members to "make a showing" added perspective to understanding Ted's behavior and suggested a format for the group's formulation of the problem. Looking over the comments they have made, it is possible to view them all as responses to the question, "Was Ted's remark relevant in the conversation?"

Their answers to this are mostly apologies implying that, no, his remark was not relevant but was supported by a good reason--he had to "make a showing" or "save his project." At a point later in the discussion, Ben himself offered a reason--that what Ted spoke about (life-cycle costs) was a part of his training, and in fact was an issue Ben expected him to raise. Ray further attributed to Ted a concern for the firm in his raising of cost issues, as such behavior projects to clients how concerned the architects are for their interests.

Still within the theme of relevance, Bert pointed out that "Ben tends to steamroll." In other words, relevance of remarks offered by group members is likely to be a chronic issue

for the group as long as Ben could be counted on to "create" relevance by his behavior. (Ben agreed that this was perhaps true, but defended it on the grounds that he knew the group's interests best.)

Several people tried to come to Ted's rescue, to argue that what he said was not irrelevant at all. "You'll have to convince me," Joe argued, "that what he said was somehow off the mark." But these people were all brought back to the view that he was indeed off the mark, though with a reason.

All of the pleas of "guilty with an explanation" performed a function for the group that was probably more important than the accurate determination of the relevance of Ted's remarks in the conversation. The explanations for the guilty pleas carried with them the implicit questions, "Is this good?, Is this what we want?" and by raising these questions the group was forced to examine its normal ways of doing things. For example, the members of the group accepted Kurt's hypothesis that Ted had said what he did because he needed to "make a showing."

By articulating this point with the whole group, Bert established that it was an issue. Meetings with clients may be a time when group members feel they must project their involvement; indeed, Ben at one point explained that he wanted Ted, Ed and Frank at the meeting to "show the client we have lots of good people working on the project."

Members of the group thus may well have asked themselves, "What sort of group is this where it is necessary for members to make a showing?" No one actually asked this question, but Ed affirmed at another point that Ted may have spoken because he did not want to "lose his project." The implications of these feelings for the group were not resolved in this meeting, but they were raised and stayed with the whole group to be drawn upon in their later work.

Some people did, however, ask the question, "Why is unanimity important before the client?" and thus extended the reach of the discussion of group expressions of conflict. The group began to distinguish, then, between experiencing conflict and portraying it.

More important than this, however, was the line of questioning that arose from the (guilty with an) explanation that Ted's comment was irrelevant because he did not know what the meeting was about.

Ben suggested, "...the resolution of the problem was that Ted agreed tacitly with me to keep the meeting going."

Ted, not so sure, partially agreed with him. "Yes, but when the meeting was over... I thought that the bottom line was that you decided that you were going to build everything, but you were just going to phase it so that in effect..."

Ben interrupted, "That was what I was working toward... We won; we both got what we wanted."

Dave, who had been listening impatiently up until now, thought he had it figured out. "The end result was that what Ted said there probably wasn't relevant to what was going to come out of there...."

In other words, Ted's comment was irrelevant because only Ben knew what the definition of relevance was, and he hadn't shared that definition with Ted or anyone else for that matter. Ted said of Ben, "you decided, you were going to build, you were to phase (the project)." It was Ben's decision and Ben's project, and Ben affirms, "that's what I was working toward." No wonder Ted's comment "probably wasn't relevant."

It was when Ted himself commented on his own remark, however, that the group's review of the tape took its most significant turn. Ted said, "I tend to agree with Ben that I got off the point," putting into words a sentiment that the group has thus far only talked around. However correct this may have been, Ted's stating of it himself seemed to enable the group to move on to other concerns. Ted no longer needed to be the object of the discussion, and there were plenty of other issues in the air. Ray asked how Ben would have responded to Ted's question if the cost consultant had asked it. Ed, whose position was similar to Ted's, pointed out that Ted's behavior might have been explained by his desire to save his project.

The members of the group, including Ted, reframed the problem they were thinking about. It was no longer Ted's problem but the problem of the meeting that they were addressing, and then they moved quickly from considering the one "sample" meeting to thinking about meetings in general. Their movement

proceeded thus, leading to the key insight of the review:

Joe: I thought this client was one that you (Ben) wanted to be more unified around because of the diversity of the client itself.

Ben: In this particular meeting, the game plan was to get out there and win; it was not to elicit input.... There is a great effort on my part (with this client) to inject other people into this project to let the client know that we've got good people and they're all involved and interested and all have something to say.

Bert: ...Maybe there's a difference between a work session and a presentation (in whether you feel you have to present a unified front or not). It came on sounding like you were having a work session, facts were being analyzed, but what you're saying is that it wasn't that at all.

Ben: It was a presentation.

Frank: And that's what bothers me when you say that we need to have some signals. That really sounds like flunkies sitting around waiting for the nose to twitch. It seems to me that the problem rather than that is to identify what the meeting is supposed to be about in the first place.

Frank went on to say what bothered him about giving signals, but he was alone in advancing the discussion. The others, slack-jawed, were struck with the realization that Ted had been thinking of the meeting as a "working session" while Ben saw it as a "presentation."

For members of the group, the difference between a "working session" and a "presentation" was enormous. Both labels were drawn from the common experience of all the members of the group apart of the vocabulary of the firm and the profession. When the group members saw that there was ambiguity about whether the meeting was a work session or a presentation,

they were able to better explain the conflict between Ted and Ben. Ted had approached the meeting as a work session in which much input was expected; Ben had seen it as a presentation.

The realization that members of the firm could enter the meeting holding such different views of its purpose upset the group very much. They worried about how they could hope to accomplish anything useful in the meeting; how they could work productively with one another and with the client if they did not share some understanding with one another and with the client of the function of the meeting. They also worried about how many other client meetings, or any meetings for that matter, experienced the same difficulties as the one they were reviewing.

Looking more intensely at the case Ted had prepared and with their understanding of the split in perception, their fears were compounded by further problems they found in the meeting. In listening to the tape some more, they found that the client had not made any concrete commitments or decisions, that there had been no summary or conclusion to the meeting and that, although the firm's entire agenda had been discussed, closure had been reached on only a few inconsequential issues.

They concluded that the meeting had not been effective either as a working session or as a presentation, and blamed its failure on the fact that there had been no shared understanding of the meeting's purpose. The meeting served more as a vehicle for resolving the conflict in understanding between

Ted (and the others) and Ben than as a resolution of business with the client. And with Ted and Ben in competition, neither could be of much help to the other.

Having documented the split interpretation of the meeting and the effects of the split on what the meeting had accomplished, members of the group began to suggest ways of avoiding similar problems in the future. First, Joe suggested that Ben simply tell everyone before a meeting about what he wanted to get out of it. However, Ben and the others rejected this, noting that it denied the possibility of getting anything but shallow input from the others.

Ed suggested, then, that all meetings with clients be preceded by a "premeeting" within the firm at which the people who were to attend the "real" meeting could plan and discuss the point of the meeting. That way, everyone present would not only know if it was to be a presentation or a working session; they would also be able to have some voice in determining which of these labels was most useful and, indeed, if some new label might not be even more useful. The surfacing of this point led the group to some pitched discussion--several of them were most interested in new possibilities for meetings, in getting more out of meetings than they had in the past. They thought that if they gave some attention to meetings before they happened, they might devise important new ways of working with clients.

The recounting of the meeting here does not do justice to the enthusiasm accompanying the "premeeting" idea. Voices were loud, jumbled, excited. There was a real sense of discovery, of learning, of a break-through approach to an issue that only a short time earlier the group had not even clearly formulated as a problem.

In itself, the premeeting strategy is not a terribly complex concept, but it is important to understand that it added a whole new layer of complexity to the process of meetings. In their own language of architecture, it was like being given a new design tool. They hastened to apply it.

Some of them said that better planning of client meetings would give them more time in the meetings to work with the clients in developing new design ideas. They said they didn't want to use meetings as an occasion to "do a number" on clients, or even to merely secure approval or "go-aheads." They said that clients often had very useful design ideas, but they were often lost because of the "normal problems" of meetings.

As the group's discussion progressed, Bert mentioned that what it seemed like they wanted with clients was the same sort of teamwork they had within the firm. He suggested that the essence of "premeetings" be opened up to clients too. He thought that every meeting ought to begin with some discussion by all present--about what sort of meeting it was to be, what was to be gotten out of it, what people hoped for.

Other members of the group agreed with Bert and built on his point to suggest that a discussion of the meeting also occur at the end of the meeting. From this, they hoped it might be possible to put an end to meetings that, like Ted's "case," reached no discernible conclusion. They thought that there might be a set of typical concerns that arose in any meeting and, responding to the fears of some group members that there often would not be enough time to devote such attention to meetings, several group members undertook to devise a "meetings format worry sheet" that would summarize what was to be covered.

There is much to be said in making sense of the group's experience, and in clarifying the link between it and participation. I will reserve most of such analysis for a later section that considers this along with two other activities of inquiry. Here, I will mostly clarify some points specific to this activity.

Reviewing the tape of the meeting was difficult and at times painful for the group. The sheer complexity of the meeting, all the nuances, innuendoes and implications that people picked up on in the review, caused part of the difficulty in making sense of what had occurred. More than that, though, the high

emotional pitch of the meeting inhibited the group's ability to make sense of it. Those who had actually been at the meeting were deeply involved in it, and while the others in the group who listened to the tape could identify with what occurred, they all found it somewhat difficult to discuss very specific aspects of the meeting. They seemed to categorize many of these as issues of "personal style" that were taboo for discussion.

People who had been in the original meeting became confused by others' different interpretations of what had occurred, and occasionally even forgot their own original point of view. People who hadn't been in the original meeting quickly zeroed in on the pervading problems, issues that were also important to them. Some conflicts that surfaced required immediate attention, forcing to a head some issues that had long plagued the group.

The high level of emotion also clouds what happened in the meeting. To clarify briefly, it seems that a chain of insights and focuses for the meeting could look like this:

- 1) Group's agreement that Ben interrupted Ted
- 2) Group's sense-making of the interruption
 - o of Ted: why did he bring it up?
 - o of group process: why do we have to portray unanimity?

- 3) Group's agreement that the interruption violated their policy of teamwork
 - o consideration and rejection of "giving signals" as a way of eliminating conflicts that cause interruptions
 - o Ben's guilt acknowledged
- 4) Group's awareness of basic conflict in goal of meeting: working session or presentation?
 - o new action based on awareness: the strategy for "pre" meetings.

Given this chain, it is possible to describe several kinds of learning as outlined in the previous chapter. New information and awareness was embedded in the group's articulating that Ben interrupted Ted, and that some of them had very different assumptions about what the meeting was to accomplish than did others (the presentation-working session split). Also, the group reaffirmed its "awareness" that teamwork is a valued practice.

This latter point was a product of their evaluation of the awareness that Ben had, in fact, interrupted Ted. There was not much of an evaluation of the awareness of the split in assumptions, but a fairly quick action--the pre-meeting strategy. There was, however, evaluation and rejection of the strategy to give signals.

In all this, it seems individuals were able to clarify their sense of what went on, their sense of a problem in Ben's behavior, and their general goals (teamwork). This learning by individuals was interconnected with their learning of others' stance on the same issues. Of course, too, some of them

learned what others had anticipated of the meeting (i.e., the working session-presentation split). Individuals learned how the organization worked, i.e., we meet with clients and have unstated norms for those meetings. In addition, individuals learned to act and the organization learned to respond.

Overall, individuals had a wealth of new information, much of which one might suppose could be useful in informing their continuing attempts to influence and control the organization. The pre-meeting strategy itself is one kind of result of the activity that will likely help them better control the firm. Less directly but perhaps equally important, their renewed sense of teamwork and of the problems in their meeting process may well also help them to better control the firm.

It may be that the group's new strategies for meetings could raise some serious problems. They may have scared clients off, taken up too much time, been unproductive, caused difficulties within the firm. The strategies may have been unworkable, not feasible. However, the fate of the specific strategies is not so important for the group as their realization that meetings, like building plans, can be subject to strategies. Having embarked on a design of meetings, the likelihood seems not that the group would give up the design process if the first strategy proves unworkable; rather, they would continue to work on the design, to refine and perfect it until it is satisfactory or better.

As it turned out, they did implement the strategy, and in a number of instances. Generally their experience with it was positive, but they maintained a critical view of it, and were not always able to follow up their strategies. Months after this client meeting, they appraised meetings in terms of a number of the issues raised in this one and applied some but not all of what was discussed here.

APPENDIX

TED'S TRANSCRIPT

- Ted: There are a couple of other things there too, Dave, on looking down the list. For instance, changing from a ceramic cooling tower to a wood or a metal cooling tower would cause the maintenance cost to go up.
- Dave: For sure.
- Ted: And that's not completely clear; there would be a few other things along that line. I feel we should clear that kind of thing up.
- Ben: The important fact is, however, as long as all of this Phase II/Phase III stuff remains unbuilt for now, that really is a separate building and it is, as far as a lot of people know driving in, could be a part of the box factory across the works, so I don't really get that upset about overhead electrical or wood cooling towers. That needs to be done to help get the most for the money now. By the time we get around to building this parking garage and building Phase III, we will have worn out those cooling towers and the boilers; so we can convert to coal and maybe we could afford the ceramic cooling towers. So, I can't get too upset about that.
- Ted: By the same token, if we do go to a metal or wood cooling tower and if we decided to stay that way twenty years down the road from here, and if it becomes important to look at that building as you enter, then we could always put up some kind of screen around it that could be compatible with the rest of the building, the same massing we have now.

NOTES:

¹See, for example, Eliot Jacques' "Equitable Payment" and Charles Winick's "Antonie: The Psychology of the Unemployed and Marginal Worker." Both are cited in Work in America, the introduction to which comprehensively reviews the psychological importance of work.

²My labeling of knowledge and execution tasks follows Braverman's delineation of conception and execution tasks in the third and fourth chapter of his Labor and Monopoly Capital.

³Braverman, *Ibid.* Also, see David Jenkins' Job Power and Work in America, Chapter 4.

⁴Frederick Taylor, The Principles of Scientific Management

⁵Of these Braverman's Labor and Monopoly Capital is perhaps the most eloquent and articulate. Chapter 4 of Work in America also outlines an implicit criticism of Taylor.

⁶Peter Berger, The Human Shape of Work.

⁷Frederick Herzberg, "The Motivation-Hygiene Theory."

⁸Work in America, p. XVII

⁹Robert Schrank, Ten Thousand Working Days

¹⁰Ibid p. 227

¹¹Op.cit., No. 8 p. 103

¹²Robert Michels, Political Parties

¹³James Coleman, Seymour Lipset, Martin Trow, Union Democracy

¹⁴Op.cit., No. 12, p. 365

¹⁵Ibid., p. 65

¹⁶Ibid. pp. 70-72

- ¹⁷ Ibid. pp. 149-171
- ¹⁸ Ibid. p. 88
- ¹⁹ Ibid. p. 72
- ²⁰ Ibid. p. 338
- ²¹ Paul Blumberg, Industrial Democracy cited in Jaroslav Vanek, Self-Management.
- ²² H. Peter Dachler and Bernhard Wilpert, "Conceptual Dimensions and Boundaries of Participation in Organizations," Administrative Science Quarterly, March 1978
- ²³ James Coleman, Seymour Lipset, Martin Trow, Union Democracy
- ²⁴ Seymour Sarason, The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change, p. 161
- ²⁵ Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, Implementation p. XVII
- ²⁶ Karl W. Deutsch, The Nerves of Government
- ²⁷ James March and Hubert Simon, Organizations
- ²⁸ Jay Galbraith, Designing Complex Organizations
- ²⁹ See, for example, Ray Hyman and Barry Anderson, "Solving Problems." They review the literature on problem solving and encounter a number of the issues described by Inhelder and Karmilof-Smith.
- ³⁰ Barbel Inhelder and Annette Karmilof-Smith, "If You Want to Get Ahead, Get a Theory."
- ³¹ March and Simon (Op cit., #27) and Deutsch (Op cit., #26) discuss these principles. They derive from generic systems principles outlines by theorists such as Ashby.
- ³² Peter Marris, Loss and Change
- ³³ Chris Argyris and Donald Schon, Organizational Learning

Chapter 2

¹Margaret Dewar et al. "A Study of the Economics of a New England Port." MIT, Department of Urban Studies and Planning 1978.

Chapter 3

¹Henri-Claude Bailly "The Architecture Profession: An Industry?"

²See, as examples of job enlargement, the tasks cited in Chapter 1, note #1 from Work in America.

Chapter 4

¹See, for example, Erving Goffman, Asylums, and Michael Lipsky "Street Level Bureaucracy and the Analysis of Urban Reform."

²This notion of balance of executive and legislative power in organizational democracy differ from the model of a two-party system outlined by Coleman et al, in Union Democracy. Their view maintains that a two-party system is essential for democratic process within the organization. There is no two-party system in the organizations I describe, but there is the element of institutionalized conflict that Coleman et al, viewed as essential to making the two-party system cultivate democratic process. My analysis of the organizations in Chapter 3 would thus apply also to the two-party system.

Chapter 5

¹Michael Polanyi, The Tacit Dimension

²See, for example, Hugh Mehan and Houston Wood, The Reality of Ethnomethodology.

APPENDIX

1. Richard Beckhard, Organization Development. p. 4
2. Barry Jentz and Joan Wofford, Leadership and Learning. Much of my thinking on intervention is a product of conversations with Barry Jentz and Donald Schon.
3. See note #3, Chapter 3.

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