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PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION METHODOLOGY FOR THE
ORGANIZATIONAL CONSULTANT

by

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B.S., Central Connecticut State College, 1973

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Organizational leaders have become increasingly concerned with problems associated with communication behavior. This recent development has prompted the need for organizational consultants who are experts in human communication processes at the dyadic, small group, and complex organizational levels.

Assuming that organizations are syntheses of people and on-going processes between them, the organizational consultant needs to implement a research methodology which leads to better understanding of these on-going human processes. Accurate diagnosis of the processes can assist the consultant in developing meaningful intervention strategies to solve organizational problems. According to Schein (1969, 9) ..."the better understood and better diagnosed these processes are, the greater will be the chances of finding solutions to technical problems which will be accepted and used by members of the organization."

A form of qualitative research known as participant observation is a methodology which can aid the organizational consultant in developing an understanding of processes particular to an organization before instituting change strategies.

The rationale for the first portion of this paper is that participant observation methodology, a naturalistic approach, should be used more often by the organizational consultant before initiating any processes of change within an organization. In an attempt to explain how this qualitative approach to research works and how the consultant can use this approach for pinpointing problem areas in an organization, an overview of participant observation methodology will be presented and examples from a set of participant observation data derived from a county government agency will be cited.

Rationale for Employing Participant Observation Methods

Organizational practitioners or consultants usually enter an organization with an underlying assumption that no organization is problem-free. This is probably an accurate assumption for no organization is flawless; however, too many times, consultants make other assumptions extending beyond this point.

Consultants who enter an organization with a clear-cut mission before taking the time to do a thorough diagnosis and assessment of the organization's strengths and weaknesses do not really know what change strategies would be effective for their particular organization (Schein, 1969).

Consultants who arrive at organizations with prepackaged planned workshops or preplanned change strategies assume a priori conditions

similar to those assumed by traditional social scientists. Hawes (1972, 2) describes one of the key weaknesses of the a priori approach:

Traditional social scientists, and the people they study, take the everyday social world for granted. Rather than asking how people do the communicative work they do to accomplish their everyday lives, a society is assumed a priori and why questions are asked about it. Rather than asking how people make sense of their activities in their own terms, social scientists interpret their society for them in social science terms.

How people within an organization communicate when accomplishing organizational goals forms a study which should become a preliminary focus for the consultant. Participant observation allows the consultant to begin at this level of analysis by seeking to determine how people make sense of their activities in their own terms. Nofsinger (1971, 1) supports this target area of "how people do" instead of why people do, for according to him, "people's everyday communication and mechanisms or logics which they employ in accomplishing it would seem to be the fundamental level of analysis for generating a social science."

In essence, assumptions about these problems should not be made by the consultant prior to taking a firsthand look at an organization. In other words, the consultant should infer or deduce assumptions about a particular organization instead of

entering with assumptions about its "particular sets of traditions, styles and personalities" (Schein, 1969, 6).

The next section of this paper will define and describe this naturalistic approach to research. In order to facilitate an explanation of how participant observation works and how the consultant interprets communicative behavior within the context of an organization, participant observation methodology will be discussed in three phases. The discussion of each of the three phases will provide the reader with several data gathering techniques available to the organizational consultant.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Participant observation is a type of field study which comprises several methods of data gathering. The participant observer strives to obtain firsthand information of a social system through involvement in and observation of a particular situation. Kluckhohn's (1940, 33) generally accepted definition of the method has been cited by several other more recent participant observation researchers (Nofsinger, 1975; Rushing, 1974; Babchuk, 1962; Bruyn, 1963, Hawes, 1975). She defines participant observations as,

...conscious and systematic sharing, in so far as circumstances permit, in the life-activities and, on occasion, in the interests and affects of a group of persons. Its purpose is to obtain data about behavior through direct contact in terms of specific situations in which the distortion that results from the investigators being an outside agent is reduced to a minimum. (Kluckhohn, 1940, 33).

Since the role of the participant observer involves perceiving the sentiments of people in social situations, the observer experiences some change and in turn, somewhat changes the situation in which s/he is participating in. Although the literature indicates that the participant observer becomes changed through participation,

it is necessary that the researcher not become totally consumed by the situation. That is, "the role of the participant observer requires both detachment and personal involvement" (Bruyn, 1963, 224). Thus, in seeking to perceive something of the experiences of the participants, the consultant must acquire a role which permits him/her to function within the culture of the participants. This role is determined by the framework of the culture within the organization and the needs of the organization.

Participant observation methodology offers the consultant more than one role to choose from: "complete observer; observer-as-participant; participant-as-observer; or complete participant" (McCall and Simmons, 1969, 30). The consultant may choose to remain in one of these roles throughout the data gathering process or may change roles during this process.

If the consultant takes on the complete observer role, s/he would in a sense, be concealed from the organizational members. For example, complete observers have been known to take on "relatively invisible roles such as, janitor, cleaning woman, elevator operator, and other ubiquitous but unnoticed occupational types" (Pearsall, 1965, 34).

Like complete observer, the complete participant's true identity and purpose are concealed from the participants. For a look at a study employing the role of complete participant, see Sullivan,

et al. (1965). Pearsall (1965, 343) argues that these two methods are "difficult to defend morally and are only dubiously defensible scientifically."

The roles of complete observer and complete participant should not be completely omitted under all circumstances from participant observation methodology. However, it is suggested that the researcher pose the following question before taking on either one of these roles: In a given situation, is deception necessary and justifiable? By asking this question, the researcher can become actively involved in trying to balance the value of a study that implements deception against its questionable or potentially harmful effects (Kelman, 1965).

Another limitation of the role of complete observer is that the consultant collects data from only one level of behavior--observation. This role does not permit the consultant to engage in verbal behavior. Therefore, validity can be lost, as the consultant cannot probe participants and gain information from their point of view. This loss of information seems to contradict the naturalistic qualities of participant observation methodology since it is confined to the perspective of the researcher only.

On the opposite end of the continuum, the role of complete participant has potential problems. First, the complete participant runs the risk of "going native" (i.e., the consultant can become totally consumed by the situation) by violating his/her role and finding that it is almost impossible to record findings. This violation can occur after the complete participant incorporates the role into his/her self-conceptions and achieves self-expression in the role (McCall and Simmons, 1969). Consequently, information can be lost and/or data can become stilted. McCall and Simmons (1969, 34) suggest a remedy for this, "the field worker needs cooling-off periods during and after complete participation, at which times he can 'be himself' and look back on his field behavior dispassionately and sociologically."

Another potential problem with this role is that the complete participant may inhibit performance in the pretended role by growing overly self-conscious about revealing his/her true identity. Thus, the complete observer needs to establish a balance between the demands of the role and the self, while continuously being cognizant of his/her primary role: observer (McCall and Simmons, 1969).

The participant-as-observer role is closely related to the complete observer role; however, the participant-as-observer role

is defined to members of the social situation. In this role, the consultant spends more time participating rather than observing and collecting data (Pearsall, 1965; McCall and Simmons, 1969; Lofland, 1971). Hence, this method can result in the consultant developing over-rapport which in turn, can threaten the data by stiling both the consultant's perceptions and later diagnosis of the situation.

The observer-as-participant role is employed in situations where the consultant conducts one-visit interviews. In this role, the consultant implements more formal observation rather than informal observation or participation (McCall and Simmons, 1969). This role seems to involve less risk of "going native" than either the complete participant role or the participant-as-observer role since the consultant's role is clearly defined to the participants and more time is spent observing and collecting data rather than participating. Also, the observer-as-participant role eliminates the potential problem of establishing over-rapport with certain participants since there is little opportunity for involvement with one particular individual or group. Pearsall (1965, 334) asserts that "in this version of the role it is possible to collect minutely detailed data on a wide range of topics and verify them by careful cross-checking from multiple sources."

In support of Pearsall's assertion, it is contended that the observer-as-participant role can assist the organizational consultant in diagnosing the strengths and weaknesses of an organization. The following reasons are support for this contention: First, this role allows the consultant to gain information from a multitude of sources; Second, this role affords an access to multiple sources, permitting the consultant to cross-check information; Finally, when operating in this role, the consultant makes sense of two levels of behavior--verbal and actual doing.

In summation, the participant observer has the option of either operating in one of the roles throughout the data gathering process or changing roles. This decision is contingent upon the needs and requirements of the research design and ability to develop relationships in various roles and situations. In other words, the consultant can maximize information gathering by selecting a field role which permits adjustment of his/her own role-repertoires to research objectives.

Objectively, once the consultant chooses a role, that role functions as a device for gathering a certain level of information. That is, a complete observer would develop relationships and frames of references which yield a somewhat different perspective of the subject matter than that which any of the other field work roles would yield. More explicitly, the way in which the consultant

gathers data influences the type of data that will be derived.

Legitimizing the Researcher's Role

If the consultant selects a field study role other than the role of complete observer or complete participant, s/he should clearly define that role to the participants in order to safeguard against arising suspicion and misconceptions on the part of the participants. A general explanation about the purpose of the study and how the study will be conducted (i.e., how the consultant will collect data) is necessary to legitimize the researcher's work and assist in opening the doors to information. It is essential, however to keep the explanation about the purpose of the study both general and somewhat vague so that subjects' behaviors do not become biased and utilized as evidence for confirmation or rejection of hypotheses about the organization under study.

In the author's study of the Rocky Mountain County Government, the over-all purpose of the study was first explained to the top-level hierarchial members and then, deciphered throughout the organization via a "letter of introduction" written by the county administrative official (one of the four top-level hierarchial members). Because other members of this organization initially received information about the study from the top hierarchial members and not directly from the consultant, several members identified the consultant as a "spy, working for the commissioners."

Even though the consultant attempted to clearly define her role and purpose of the study during initial stages of interviewing early in the study, organizational members were suspicious of her intentions and indicated misconceptions of her role. In an attempt to overcome these suspicions, the consultant continuously defined her role and the purpose of her study during times of formal (i.e., interviewing situations) and informal (chats in the hall) interaction.

Phases in Participant Observation Methodology

In order to facilitate an explanation of how participant observation works and how the consultant interprets human meanings (messages) communicated to him/her by organizational members, the process of participant observation methodology will be discussed in three phases (McCall and Simmons, 1969).

As illustrated in the chart on the following page (Figure 1), participant observation methodology can be separated into three phases of data gathering with each phase having a different objective. By viewing the chart, it should be understood that even though we can discuss the three phases and their purposes independently of each other, a great amount of interdependency exists between the different phases (i.e., Phase II is contingent upon Phase I; Phase III is contingent upon both Phase I and Phase II).

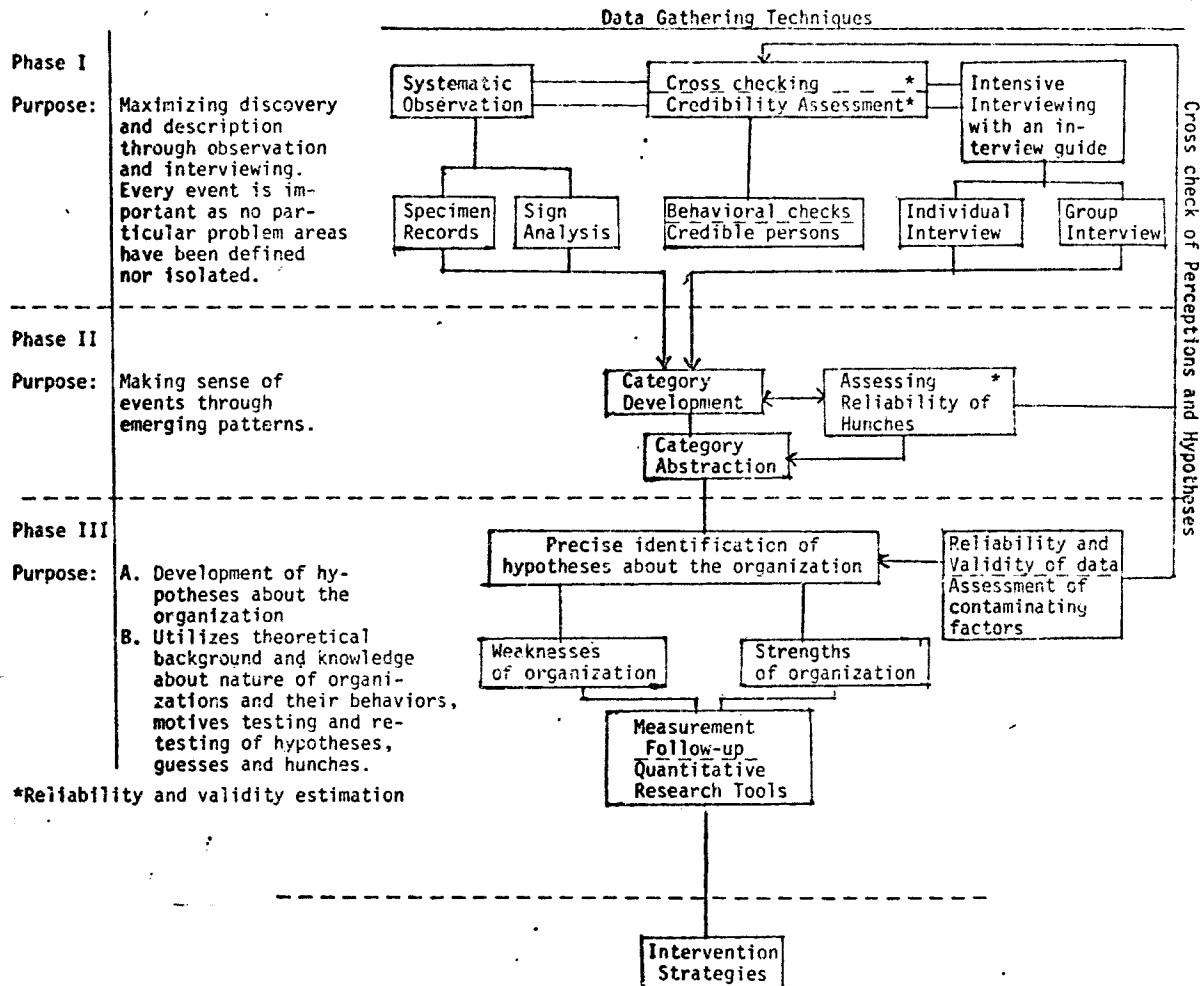


Figure 1.

Phase I: Maximizing Discovery and Description:

Intentionally unstructured in its research design, the purpose of participant observation methodology is to maximize discovery and description (McCall and Simmons, 1969). In the first phase of the research, maximizing discovery and description is accomplished through observation and/or interviewing. Again, choice of data gathering techniques is determined by the consultant and the design of the study.

During the process of observation and interviewing, the consultant's task is an "interpretation of some everyday aspects known by all at least implicitly. It is a discovery of that which is concealed behind the apparently familiar" (Strasser, 1963, 232). In other words, what the consultant is attempting to do is make the implicit more explicit. Thus, the consultant seeks to understand and make sense of human behavior through observation and interviewing by seeking to discover the specific human behavior and the mode of existence within the organization. The mode of existence or the environment of the organization (i.e., organizational climate) gives rise to the human behavior taking place in the organization. Hence, the organizational climate is an important variable in the consultant's study.

Coupled with the principle of maximizing discovery and description, the consultant must work from a solid foundation of theory related

to organizational processes and human behavior. An adequate theoretical foundation assists the consultant in making the implicit more explicit. In support of this, Nofsinger (1975, 5) states that descriptive qualitative methodology must be "guided by some theoretical paradigm (explicit or tactic)."

This principle of maximizing discovery and description when implemented within the context of an organization, permits the consultant to later make sense of on-going events which cannot be readily counted, defined, or classified. Important and relevant on-going events inside and outside of an organization are often qualitative and not capable of instant quantification (Drucker, 1967).

Events are not facts until they have been categorized and classified by people. According to Drucker (1967, 16), "A fact is an event which somebody has defined, has classified and, above all, has endowed with relevance." Participant observation methodology allows the consultant to discover, describe, classify and later make sense of events. Since instant quantification of organizational events cannot be accurately assessed when the goal of the study is more complete understanding and the discovery of human possibilities, qualitative methodology can function as a stepping stone for quantification of events. That is, qualitative studies can set the groundwork for the consultant's later use of quantitative measuring devices.

Developing a more complete understanding and discovery of human possibilities, (e.g., the aim of participant observation methodology), it seems logical that every event is important to the consultant during the initial phase of the research process. When conforming to this aim, the consultant must not hastily define or isolate particular problem areas during Phase I of the research. On-the-spot classifications can produce expected results, but the results often do not correspond to the actual behavior. Thus, before the organizational consultant can determine significant factors affecting the human processes in organizations, that person must seek to make the implicit more explicit through systematic observation and/or interviewing.

Data Gathering Techniques in Phase I

As illustrated in Figure I (page 13), the two data gathering techniques that can be utilized by the consultant in the first phase of participant observation are systematic observation and intensive interviewing with an interview guide. At this point, it should be understood that participant observation comprises several methods of data gathering techniques which might include: systematic observation (i.e., impressionistic analysis, motion picture film analysis, specimen records and sign analysis), informant interviewing, respondent interviewing, intensive interviewing, document analysis,

participation with self-analysis. Since not all of these techniques are used in any one study, we will be concerned with the data techniques which the consultant employed in the Rocky Mountain County Government: Two types of systematic observation (i.e., specimen records and sign analysis), and two levels of intensive interviewing with an interview guide (i.e., the individual and group interview).

Systematic Observation

Systematic observational methods entail "planned, methodological watching that involve constraints to improve accuracy" (Weick, 1968, 358). Controls present in observational studies relate to the observer and the manner in which s/he records data, rather than to the setting, task, or subject population (Weick, 1968).

The traditional view of observation is limited by its effectiveness because it is based on passivity and unobtrusive observation:

The traditional view of observation is built on the model of the passive observer, an unobtrusive bystander in natural surroundings who obtains records or data with minimal intervention. The adoption of this model has meant that observers have spent more time worrying about issues of categorizing and training than about issues of the setting for observation or response measures.

(Weick, 1968, 359)

Hence, some observational methods based on the model of the passive observer have resulted in incomplete data records, ambiguous measures, complex settings which in turn, have led to equivocal studies (Weick, 1968).

Passivity is not inherent in observational methodology. According to Weick (1968, 359), "concern with categories and unconcern with the content of events has meant that excessive demands are made on category systems and on the observer." Therefore, if fewer demands are placed on the observer and category systems and greater demands are placed on the content of events, control and precision will probably increase. According to Weick (1968, 359), "The principal means by which these demands can be reduced and careful choice and modification of the setting and use of more explicit behavioral measures that make fewer inferential demands on the observer." In support of this assertion and the earlier critique of the four participant observational roles (see pp. 6-10), the consultant utilized a form of systematic observation called specimen records while taking on the role of observer-as-participant.

Specimen records. A specimen record as nonselective approach to observation (i.e., every event is significant). Wright (1960, 80) defines a specimen record as "a sequential, unselective, plain, narrative description of behavior with some of its conditions." The following dialogue was extracted from a specimen record describing a weekly meeting of Department Z:

9:30 am. Steve directed the meeting by introducing issue two and asking, "Do you feel you have enough information to make a decision of vehicles, gentlemen?"

The members looked up at Steve and answered unanimously, "okay."

Peering into one corner of the room, asked, "Do you know what zero-based budgeting is?"

Ben looked at Steve while puffing on a cigarette and answered, "I don't understand it."

Tom smiled and said, "It starts with zero."

John looked up from his notes and said, "I'm for it."

Weick (1968, 416) posits several advantages when using specimen records as an observational methodology: "face validity, permanence (see Barker, et al., 1961, for an example of a specimen record archive), theoretically neutral data, extensive detail, isomorphism with behavior, language, and continuity." In addition, Wright (1960, 89) states that "specimen records can be quantified." Finally, Heyns and Lippitt (1954) assert that specimen records can be collected by unsophisticated observers.

Two major weaknesses of specimen records are:

- (1) Complex human communicative interaction is difficult to record.
- (2) Language meanings are influenced by past experiences of the observer.

Therefore, the observer's choice of words used to describe events can impose other meanings on the behaviors occurring in the organization.

Sign analysis. Even though sign analysis was not employed in the Rocky Mountain County Government Study, this systematic observational method could be used by the consultant since it is concerned with "the demography of events" (Weick, 1968, 417). According to Medley and Mitzel (1963, 298-299), the method of sign analysis "is to list beforehand a number of specific acts or incidents of behavior which may or may not occur during a period of observation. The record will show which of these incidents occurred during a period of observation and, in some cases, how frequently each occurred." Such a procedure would allow the consultant to later assess predictive validity of his/her categories in Phase II of participant observation methodology. For example of Medley and Mitzel's OScAR-R (Observational Schedule and Record-Reading) see D. M. Medley and H. E. Mitzel (1963), "Measuring classroom behavior by systematic observation", in N. L. Gage (ed.), Handbook of Research on Teaching. Chicago: Rand McNally, 247-328.

Intensive Interviewing

Since participant observers are concerned with discovering the social reality of individuals, they do not impose a rigid set of questions on the respondent during the interviewing process. For this reason, a strategy of interviewing referred to by Lofland (1971, 76) as an "unstructured interview" or "intensive interviewing

with an interview guide" was employed in the Rocky Mountain County Government Study.

Its object is not to elicit choices between alternative answers to pre-formed questions but, rather, to elicit from the interviewee what he considers to be important questions relative to a given topic, his descriptions of some situation being explored. Its object is to carry on a guided conversation and to elicit rich, detailed materials that can be used in qualitative analysis. Its object is to find out what kinds of things are happening, rather than to determine the frequency of predetermined kinds of things that the researcher already knows can happen.

(Lofland, 1971, 76)

In support of these objectives posed by Lofland, intensive interviewing with an interview guide was utilized as a means for finding out what kinds of things were happening in the Rocky Mountain County Government.

Interviews focused on the functions of Department Z and how these functions related to those of other major departments. Included in these functions were interpersonal communicative behavior, as well as organizational processes. In order to tap these areas, the consultant employed both group and individual intensive interviewing.

According to Chandler (1954, 26), "In a study of labor-management relations in the garment industry in a Midwestern community, the group interview was found to be a valuable supplement to the individual interview". An interesting aspect of the Rocky

Mountain County Government Study involved a comparison of the group interview data with the reports of organizational members when they were interviewed individually. A rather close correspondence between the two sets of data was revealed; however, some group opinions perceived by the interviewer during the group discussion did not accurately reflect the private feelings of the various individuals. At times, verbal behavior seemed to be modified or suppressed in the presence of a group. For example, during a group interview with the members of Department Z, group opinion reflected that disagreement among the members was not taken personally, while individual interviewing reflected the contrary to this (i.e., disagreement among the members was taken personally). An example of suppressed behavior in the presence of a group occurred when two members disagreed openly about the judgment of a newspaper reporter and another member suppressed his opinion until the individual interview.

To summarize, the group interview can be a useful tool for cross-checking and comparing behaviors with individual interviewing. As Chandler (1954, 28) points out, "The group interview is suggested as a valuable supplement to individual interviewing in field studies of various organizations." The cited examples of the group interviews seem to indicate a relationship between individual and group opinions. This can function as a valuable source of data for the

consultant, especially when supplemented with observational data. However, the individual interview seems to be the best method for learning about an organizational member's private version of an episode, issue, or person.

Intensive interviewing incorporates the consultant's rapport building technique and assurance of confidentiality. Developing rapport with organizational members is an important criterion in the consultant's work. The consultant should be concerned with the kind and quality of rapport required to maximize information. At the same time, the consultant must beware of developing over-rapport as this can limit investigations and stilt perceptions. In essence, the consultant can make his/her work more productive and efficient by being "friendly and interested in people, without forcing himself upon them. He must avoid taking sides in arguments and must be very careful not to subordinate people in word or manner" in order to establish relationships in which the organizational members can talk freely and the consultant can respond to them (Gardner and Whyte, 1946, 508-509).

Assurance of confidentiality can be combined with rapport building. Assuring the organizational members that all individual confidences will be respected should increase the probability of getting an accurate picture of what is really going on (from the view point of the participants) and decrease the probability of

creating anxiety and threatening behaviors in the members of the organization. As Gardner and Whyte (1946, 509) point out, the consultant "cannot expect that promises as to the confidential nature of the work will suffice." Organizational members will gain confidence in the consultant only after getting to know that s/he can be trusted and this is usually validated by messages emitted through the organization's grapevine (i.e., the informal organizational communication network), as well as through a duration of time spent in getting to know the consultant.

In the case of the Rocky Mountain County Government study, the respondents (department heads) were told that the consultant was studying the functions of Department Z and how these functions related to those of other major departments. The interviews were structured to encourage the respondent to talk about things which s/he considered significant when given a certain topical area. An interview guide was employed to direct the conversation and to develop some consistency in the types of questions asked (i.e., making sure that the department heads addressed similar questions). This was also an effort to seek an estimate of reliability.

The interviews began by first, legitimizing the consultant's role (see page 11); second, assuring maintenance of confidentiality; and finally, by generating a few general questions which would put the organizational members at ease. Such questions included:

Would you tell me about your primary job responsibilities?

How did you get into this type of work?

Where did you work before working here?

Sometimes, at this stage, the interview drifted into the member's life history and it was necessary for the consultant to take control of the interview by gracefully guiding the informant into areas of her interest and then, as quickly as possible, pass the reins back to the informant for the purpose of allowing the informant to assume the direction of the interview and guide the conversation in areas of his/her interests.

In summary, the direction of the intensive interview is a shared responsibility between the consultant and the organizational members. That is, the consultant seeks information about the organizational structure and patterns of human communicative behavior within the organization. While, the organizational members, through their perceptions and awareness (i.e., their social realities) assist the consultant in making sense of on-going events, as well as aiding him/her in diagnosing organizational strengths and weaknesses.

Once the consultant established rapport with the organizational members, she probed in the direction of how the various departments in this county government organization functioned in relation to Department Z. The purpose of probing in this direction was to

determine the channels of interdependency within this organization.

During one of the consultant's early interviews with a department head, the response to the following question stimulated further probing in this area:

Question: What is your function in relation to Department Z?

Response: They can't tell me how to do my job. Wages, salaries, etc., come here first. If they don't want to pay something, they have the authority to not have it paid, but I can take it to the District Court.

The consultant perceived this department head to be acting quite defensively and unwilling to acknowledge upper level hierarchial power because he would not admit lines of authority in the organization. Perceptions of this person's hostile behavior influenced the consultant to probe further in this direction:

Question: Would you tell me about your communication patterns with Department Z?

Response: They're good because if I have anything to say to them, I go directly to them and speak my mind.

Nonverbal behavior: extreme facial tension, rigid posture.

At this point, the consultant's hunch about the respondent's feelings of hostility toward the upper-level hierarchial members was reinforced by her perceptions of the respondent's nonverbal behavior. This is a clear example of the interview functioning as a valuable source of data especially, when supplement with observational data.

The intensive interviewing process allows the consultant to "pick up" different informational levels (Birdwhistell, 1952). Observation plays an important role in the interview process for it assists the consultant in extracting meaning from the organizational members' messages. Millar and Millar (1976, 32) concur,

In terms of interpersonal focus considered here, 'meaning' emerges in conversation when words (symbols) are placed in relational framework that makes the behavior, thought, or feeling mentioned, understandable to the listener.... Meaning involves placing those symbols in a relational framework, making the information functional, understandable, or self-evident to the other.

Since verbal and nonverbal messages operate together to produce a total message, it is necessary for the consultant to observe and make sense of nonverbal behaviors emitted during the interview process.

Cross-checking and Assessing Credibility of Information Sources

Some participant observers are concerned with deriving statistical inferences from qualitative data by using quantitative measurement instruments after the data have been collected. Hence, internal checks present in the analytic framework of participant observation are extremely important to the consultant in that they can guide him/her in establishing a foundation for further measurement (i.e., quantitative methodology) and theory testing. This section of the paper will be concerned with the method in which the consultant utilizes these internal checks

to substantiate information gathered from the organizational members.

As illustrated in Figure 1, cross-checking human behavior and assessing the credibility of information sources link together the observational and interviewing processes. In an attempt to secure valid and reliable information, the consultant cross-checks information through a variety of techniques available to him/her in a given situation.

Observing the nonverbal behavior can serve as method for cross-checking the meanings of verbal messages. For example, when nonverbal behaviors are inconsistent with verbal messages, Mehrabian (1971) suggests that the consultant resolve the inconsistency by believing the nonverbal sector of the complete message.

Comparison of what individuals say they do to what they actually do (i.e., comparing the verbal level of behavior) is another method of cross-checking meanings and assisting the consultant in estimating reliability of human communicative behaviors within the context of an organization. For example, if a person talks about intended efforts in initiating a change in policy, but never makes that change, we can surmise that that person's verbal behavior is inconsistent with his/her actual doing behavior, in this situation. Hence, we can soon form some idea of how much we can rely on that person's verbalized intentions.

The consultant employs cross-checking to detect distortions in data "by comparing an informant's account with the accounts given by other informants" (McCall and Simmons, 1969, 111). A courtroom direct cross-examination could resemble this situation, since the consultant must

weigh and balance the testimony of different witnesses, evaluate the validity of eye-witness data, compare the reliability of witnesses, take circumstantial evidence into account, appraise the motives of key persons, and consider the admissibility of hearsay information.

(McCall and Simmons, 1969, 111)

Realistically speaking, participant observation methodology does not allow a direct courtroom cross-examination; however, it does allow the consultant to cross-check the information derived from different sources for discrepancies and attempt to clarify these by probing further.

Assessing the credibility (i.e., believability) of the organizational members is an important step for the consultant as it can assist him/her in distinguishing reliable from unreliable informants. During first interviews, it is difficult for the consultant to determine the credibility of respondents unless s/he tests the respondent with an organizational matter already known. Thus, repeated interviews can assist the consultant in supporting and cross-checking what the organizational member says. Observing

the member in various situations can also help the consultant in assessing credibility.

In summary, the consultant learns to distinguish reliable members from unreliable members and credible members from uncredible members through time and experience in the organization. However, the consultant should be careful not to impose rigid labels of "reliable" or "unreliable" and/or "credible" or "uncredible," on respondents since time and situational variables can change behavior. In addition, cross-checking assists the consultant in detecting distortions in data, comparing different levels of behavior, and interpreting the meanings of messages.

Phase II: Making Sense of Events Through Emerging Patterns

In order to develop an understanding of human behavior so that the implicit is made more explicit, the consultant organizes the raw data derived from observational methods and the interviewing processes characterized by Phase I of participant observation methodology. In essence, the consultant creates his/her own classification system for the material under study. This classification system, referred to as category development in participant observation research is derived from patterns of attributes which provide the basis for distinctions made. Below is an example of how the consultant developed a category from emerging patterns of leadership and facilitative behaviors.

From observations of Department Z's meetings, a category of facilitative and leadership behavior emerged. That is, it was clear from the consultant's observations of several meetings that Member A accepted the role of facilitator and leader during meetings even though he was working in a lower-level position in terms of the other members of this department. Member A seemed to keep the other members on track: When other members of Department Z diverged from the issue of discussion, Member A was recorded as saying, "Let's get back to the issue, gentlemen."

Furthermore, Member A was observed as usually leading the meetings by stating the purpose of the meeting, verbally transitioning the other members from one issue to another and finally, closing the meeting with a final summary of events.

In an effort to cross-check and assess the reliability of this hunch (i.e., Member A's behavioral pattern), the consultant observed Member A's behavior in meetings with members from other departments present. She found that Member B, Department Z's acting chairperson, opened these meetings by stating the purpose of the meeting. However, this seemed to function only as a responsibility inherent in the role as chairperson--a ritual stemming from this role--for immediately after the chairperson's introduction, Member A was observed to give a more detailed introduction (i.e., making references to issues covered in previous meetings in an attempt to bring participants up-to-date). Again, Member A was observed as both

facilitator and leader during meetings involving participants from other departments. For example, when passing an issue concerning job criteria, the department head responsible for establishing an estimate for salary range, verbalized the estimate to members of Department Z and agreement from Department Z members advanced as follows: First, Member A agreed, then, Member B, followed by Member C and Member D.

In a further effort to assess the reliability and validity of her hunch and to begin constructing a systematic typology of behavior, the consultant cross-checked her observations of Member A's patterns of behavior with his own perceptions of this behavior during an interview.

The consultant can implement participant observation to begin developing a systematic typology with a good preliminary set of categories. Critical examination of the categories helps the consultant derive attributes which afford the basis for distinctions made, and arranges these attributes in a multidimensional system. Participant observers refer to this multidimensional system as "attribute-space" (McCall and Simmons, 1969, 179). According to McCall and Simmons, "This operation has been termed the 'substruction' of an attribute space to a typology. One can then examine all of the logically possible combinations of the basic attributes" (179). Hence, further critical examination (i.e., observation and interviewing) led to the disclosure of possible attributes influencing Member A's

behavior during meetings and out of meetings. Finally, these attributes contributed to the development of relationships between Member A's work capacities and his work, between his work and personality, and between his work and the work of the other members of Department Z. Some of these attributes included: considerable knowledge about county government systems, intellectual ability, astute insights into human behavior, responsible aggressiveness, critical ability, ambition, etc.)

For a look at a more elaborate substruction, see Landecker's (1951) discussion of "Types of Integration and Their Measurement." In this discussion, Landecker presents an argument about the undifferentiated concept of "social integration." When studying the relation of integration to other attributes, it is necessary to break down the product of this process:

Early in the exploration of a type of phenomena it seems advisable to break it up into as many subtypes as one can distinguish and to use each subdivision as a variable for research. This appears to be a more fruitful procedure than to attempt immediately to generalize about the generic type as a whole. The main advantage of subclassification in an initial phase of research is that it leads to problems of relationship among subtypes which would evade the attention of the investigator if he were to deal with the broader type from the very beginning. Generalizations on the higher level of abstraction will suggest themselves as a matter of course once regularities common to several subtypes are discovered. (Landecker, 1951, 334).

To summarize, in Phase II of participant observation research, the consultant makes sense of events through emerging patterns or categories of regularities. Then, the consultant employs a good preliminary set of categories to begin constructing a systematic typology of behavior. Critical examination (i.e., using different techniques to cross-check data and hunches) of the categories helps the consultant derive attributes which afford the basis for distinctions made, and arranges these attributes into a multidimensional system. Substruction of this multidimensional system, allows the consultant to analyze the logical possible combinations of the attributes and this establishes the groundwork for later development of generalizations, (i.e., hypothesis generation).

Phase III: Generation of Hypotheses About the Organization

In this final phase of participant observational methodology, the consultant is concerned with precise identification of various hypotheses about the organization's strengths and weaknesses. Hypothesis generation is derived from the consultant's ability to apply a theoretical perspective to the data. Theoretical background and knowledge about the nature of organizations and their behaviors motivates testing and retesting of insights, hunches, and hypotheses.

During hypothesis generation the consultant must continuously assess the quality of the data. That is, s/he must look for possible contaminating factors which threaten the validity of the data. In participant observation, discovery of and adjustment for contaminating factors is done during the study. According to McCall and Simmons (1969, 127), "...the flexible design of participant observation--the perpetual reflexive cycle of conceptualization, sampling, data collection, data analysis, and write-up--allows the researcher to assess the nature and magnitude of possible contamination at every point in the study and to compensate for it immediately."

On the other hand, it should be understood that potential threats to data are not indigenous only to participant observation methodology. In support of this assertion, Kahn and Cannell (1957, 189) denote, "No data, no matter how they are obtained, are entirely free of contamination, as the various studies of survey interviewer bias, of demand characteristics of an experiment, and of the effects of testing situations indicate." See also, Rosenthal (1966); Friedman (1967); Orne (1962); Masling (1960); and Wohl (1963) for further information in this area.

Based on the findings of the Rocky Mountain County Government Study, some of the hypotheses generated from the data gathered during Phase I and Phase II of participant observational

methodology will now be presented. In an effort to substantiate these hypotheses, the major categories from which these hypotheses were generated will be indicated.

HYPOTHESIS ONE: If Department Z members made a concerted effort to visit other departments within the Rocky Mountain County Government on both a formal and informal basis, then Department Z members would know more about what is going on in the various departments and at the same time, they would improve their communication and interpersonal relationships with members of other departments by confronting each other on a face-to-face basis and discussing problems openly.

Major Categories of Data:

They're not aware of how much time and manpower required to complete a task.

We (Department Z members) don't move around in the courthouse because the workers will think we're spying on them.

The communication is poor. Most of the time, I find out what's going on through the newspaper. Sometimes, this even involves me and my office help.

We (Department Z members) would like to have better communication with the other departments.

It helps to be on their (Department Z members) good side around budget time.

HYPOTHESES TWO: If monthly department-head meetings involved more informal sharing between the various departments, apathy would decrease and attendance would increase.

Major Categories:

I don't know what goes on in the other departments.

I would like to find out what's going on in the other departments.

I would like to share hassels with other department heads and find out about their methods of solving similar problems.

Monthly department head meetings are a waste of time.

They're too formal. I don't want to listen to someone give a speech during these meetings.

I usually attend.

I get out of going to them whenever I can.

I usually try to schedule something else, like a conference with someone, at the same time one of those meetings are scheduled.

HYPOTHESIS THREE: If meetings are more organized and goal-directed, then meetings are more productive in terms of the number of issues discussed and members would experience a feeling of accomplishment.

Major categories:

I usually walk away from a meeting without knowing what took place. (This message was indicated by several members).

Decisions are made prior to meetings 90% of the time; they (Department Z members) don't need us there.

Goals change during meetings (i.e., members diverse from topical issues).

They spend lots of time in meetings and sometimes never really get to the issue.

They (Department Z) don't need us there.

HYPOTHESIS FOUR: If an organization is in a state of transition, then the organizational climate will depict anxious behavior and widespread interpersonal conflict.

Major categories:

I'm having a personal conflict with him and therefore, we can't see eye-to-eye on any issue. If I go one way, he'll go the other way.

There is a good deal of conflict between Department Z and Department J. The conflict is there because there is a power relationship which is unclear.

There is animosity between Department F and Department T due to anticipated consolidation of the departments.

They can't tell me how to do my job, I'm an elected official.

You can't possibly have enough information about my job, yet; let me tell you more.

We don't get along (referring to Department head A and Department Z members).

Member C won't talk to me unless I have a specific question because we've had several run-ins.

My people are unhappy with the policy change. If my men work on a holiday, they should be paid and not given more accrued vacation time.

I don't know whether I'll have a job when consolidation takes place.

I wish I knew for sure who was going to hire for this position after consolidation.

There is a lack of coordination for team projects.

Why are you asking that? (said defensively)

We have no working relationship with Department Z, if something goes wrong, we try to persuade them.

After generating hypotheses from the data, the consultant's next task is to diagnose organizational strengths and weaknesses. These diagnosed areas direct the consultant's final stages of research: measurement follow-up (i.e., seeking out more rigorous and relevant measurement instruments) in an effort to increase reliability and validity of the data.

Based on the hypotheses generated from the Rocky Mountain County Government study (see pp.36-38), the following organizational strengths and weaknesses were diagnosed:

Organizational Strengths: (1) Organizational members are aware of the existing internal conflict; (2) members expressed a desire to change department head meetings by making them more relevant to their needs; (3) channels of communication seem to be open to outsiders; (4) members expressed the need and desire for effective change within this organization; (5) members indicated the need for increased communication between their department and Department Z.

Organizational Weaknesses: (1) Communication patterns between Department Z and other departments are not open; (2) department heads do not perceive the need for their input during meetings with Department Z; (3) Department Z's meetings do not begin with a clear contract and oftentimes, significant issues are subverted; (4) overall organizational climate is that of anxious behavior and interpersonal conflict.

In summary, based on the data, one would predict that there is a strong need to communicate effectively within the Rocky Mountain County Government, but the unfavorable (i.e., laden with anxiety and conflict) organizational climate is obstructing effective communication. According to Bochner and Kelly (1974, 282), ..."interpersonal relationships are always mediated by the nature of the social environment. The social climate must be favorable to the enrichment of the self before one can expect to relate effectively to others." For a more detailed explanation of the relationship between individual behavior and environmental variables, see Lewin (1951) and Maslow (1951).

In addition, the meetings involving Department Z and other department heads seem to be annihilating department heads' self-esteem (i.e., Department heads feel that their input is not wanted), and thus, restraining their desires to communicate during meetings. The literature on self-esteem suggests that an unwillingness-to-communicate syndrome is associated with low self-esteem (Burgoon, 1976). According to Hillson and Worchel (1957, 84), "People with low self-esteem tend to be maladjusted and to display defensive behaviors." Furthermore, Burgoon (1976, 61) points out that "communication apprehension is anxiety that is directly related to the communication situation." Phillips (1968, 40) defines the individual who is not inclined to speak as "a person for whom anxiety about participation

in oral communication outweighs his projection of gain from the situation." Hence, in support of Phillips' definition, the consultant predicts that the costs of verbally participating during meetings with Department Z outweigh the rewards for the other department heads. Also, since the meetings do not begin with a clear agenda (i.e., established criteria) known to all group members, systematic problem-solving does not take place and meetings are perceived as boring and unproductive.

The data gathering techniques presented in this paper thus far, are extensive and systematic; however, they are inclined to limitations, many of which have been mentioned. In order to strive for increased validity and reliability of the data, the consultant's final step in Phase III of participant observational research should involve even more rigorous measurement of the above predictions summarized from the generated hypotheses. Therefore, it is suggested that the consultant employ quantitative research tools as a means for follow-up measurement. This is the consultant's rationale for incorporating quantitative methodology into Phase III (see Figure 1) of participant observation, a form of qualitative research.

Measurement Follow-up: Quantitative Research Tools

Two measures of communication anxiety which would be appropriate to the Rocky Mountain County Government Study are: "McCroskey's

Personal Report of Communicative Apprehension" (PRCA), see McCroskey (1970) and Izard and Chappel's Social Emotion Scale (SES), reported in Izard (1971). According to Bochner and Kelly (1974, 298),

Both instruments were carefully developed through factor analysis, have high internal reliability, and have reasonable face validity. However, each deals with a slightly different aspect of anxiety. PRCA is one unidimensional scale SES is multi-dimensional and has a different form for males and females. We have tended to favor SES because it provides a measure of subjective emotional response across a variety of social situations.

In order to validate the unwillingness-to-communicate syndrome predicted to be present in the Rocky Mountain County Government, the consultant suggests that Burgoon's "Unwillingness-to-Communicate Scale" be employed. This scale was developed by Judee Burgoon (1976, 60), "to create and validate a direct measure of unwillingness to communicate that could introduce greater precision in prediction than the sociological and psychological measures."

Finally, in order to derive more valid data about group problem-solving during meetings involving Department Z and other department heads, the consultant could employ Carl Larson's "Forms of Analysis and Small Group Problem-Solving". This instrument attempts to measure "reasoning characteristics of successful and unsuccessful problem-solvers" (Larson, 1969, 453).

CHAPTER III

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION APPLIED TO ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT: INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

The assumption that employment of participant observational methodology leads to better understanding of on-going human processes within an organization and more accurate diagnosis of these processes should assist the consultant in developing meaningful intervention strategies to solve organizational problems. The majority of concepts and techniques associated with participant observation described in this paper find contemporary expression in the rapidly expanding field of organization development (OD). (For an overview of OD concepts, methodology, and application, see Baker, 1973). The purpose of this section of the paper is to illustrate how the results of a participant observation study may be utilized by the consultant in designing planned organizational change through employment of various OD intervention techniques.

OD is a strategy which seeks to bring about planned organizational change (Bennis, 1969). OD change strategies differ greatly since they are contingent upon the demands of the organization and the consultant (e.g., person initiating the change). According to Bennis (1969, 12), "Changes sought for are coupled

directly with the exigency or demand the organization is trying to cope with." Three categories of exigencies as proposed by Bennis (1969, 12) are:

- (1) problems of destiny-growth, identity, and revitalization;
- (2) problems of human satisfaction and development;
- (3) problems of organizational effectiveness.

Hence, in order to determine these organizational exigencies, data must be generated about them and must be relevant to the individuals in the organization. Thus, a planned course of action is contingent upon two events: exigencies and organizational members.

In Chapter II of this paper, organizational exigencies of the Rocky Mountain County Government were discussed according to hypotheses generated about organizational strengths and weaknesses. Participant observation, a naturalistic approach to research, allowed the consultant to take a firsthand look at this organization and gather data relevant to its particular exigencies and individuals. This meets Bennis' criteria for a planned course of action (i.e., generating data about exigencies and organizational members), intervention techniques can now be discussed. Four types of intervention techniques will be presented as examples of change strategies which could be employed in the Rocky Mountain County Government: cathartic, catalytic, confrontation, and prescriptive.

Blake and Mouton (1972) developed a matrix typology (The D/D Matrix) of intervention techniques designed to improve human performance. This typology offers a variety of intervening techniques capable of being employed within different organizational change settings. Blake and Mouton chose an appropriate name for their matrix--Diagnosis/Development--since it reinforces the concept of interdependence in planned change efforts.

The D/D Matrix contains 25 cells. Each cell represents the intervention or what the consultant does when s/he intervenes. The rows of the matrix represent five types of intervention techniques: (1) cathartic, (2) catalytic, (3) confrontation, (4) prescriptive, and (5) principles, models, theories. The consultant can employ any one of these five techniques in the following five different units of change: (1) individual, (2) team, (3) intergroup, (4) organizational, (5) society. These units of change are depicted in the columns of the matrix. For an illustration of the D/D Matrix, see Blake and Mouton (1972, 5).

Based on the diagnosed strengths and weaknesses in the Rocky Mountain County Government discussed earlier, it seems appropriate that the consultant plan activities which would enhance individual functioning, as well as interpersonal and group processes. Therefore, Blake and Mouton's intervention techniques could be employed by the consultant since they focus on individual and group methods

of change. More specifically, for purposes of the Rocky Mountain County Government, the consultant could employ cathartic, catalytic, confrontation, and prescriptive intervention techniques within individual, team, intergroup and organizational settings.

Cathartic Intervention at the Individual Level. When a consultant employs catharsis, s/he restates or mirrors the problem-- or listens in a manner that offers empathic support (Blake and Mouton, 1969). Cathartic intervention could be employed in the Rocky Mountain County Government as an action plan for Hypothesis Three which depicted ineffective meetings. During the consultant's participant observation data gathering process, some organizational members expressed feelings of dissatisfaction and unhappiness with meetings. Based on these findings, it is recommended that the consultant employ cathartic intervention to assist the organizational members in clarifying their feelings of dissatisfaction and unhappiness. According to Blake and Mouton (1969, 6),

What a 'cathartic' intervention does is to enter into contact with the feelings, tensions, and subjective attitudes that often block a person and make it difficult for him to function as effectively as he otherwise might. The developmental objectives is to enable him to express, work through and resolve these feelings so that he can then return to a more objective and work related orientation.

The following hypothetical situation operationalizes cathartic intervention at the individual level:

Harry works as a groundsperson in Department X. Presently, he is unhappy with the new four membered crew he has been transferred to. After initial remarks with the consultant, Harry says, "Those guys I'm working with are all bossy and push me around all the time!"

The consultant responds, "You mean you can't get along with you new crew members?"

Harry answers, "Get along? No! They don't like me. They never help me out with the heavy work."

The consultant replies, "You mean the members from the other crew used to help you out?"

Harry replies, "Yes, they never made me move those boulders by myself!"

As pointed out in this brief situation, Harry is expressing his feelings of dissatisfaction and unhappiness with his co-workers. The consultant is mirroring Harry's verbal behavior. That is, the consultant is trying to help Harry clarify his feelings by feeding him back a summary of his feelings so that Harry will get a better understanding of what they really are, rather than just feeling hurt, dissatisfied, and angry. Notice that the consultant does not try to solve Harry's new transfer problem. Instead, the consultant is making an effort to promote personal growth through cathartic intervention. Finally, the underlying principle of

catharsis mirrors that of participant observation in that the consultant focuses on the organizational member's viewpoint of the situation. This acts as a starting point for both participant observation methodology and OD intervention.

Catalytic Intervention at the Team Level. Catalytic intervention is different from catharsis in that the consultant suggests different ways of looking at and dealing with problems. According to Blake and Mouton (1969, 11), "Catalytic intervention means entering a situation and adding something that has the effect of transforming the situation in some degree from what it was at an earlier time."

The consultant could utilize catalytic intervention at the team level in the Rocky Mountain County Government as an action plan for Hypothesis Two which depicted the need for reorganization of monthly department-head meetings. That is, during participant observation research, the consultant found that department heads felt that their monthly meetings were too formal. They expressed the desire for more informal sharing during monthly meetings so that they could find out what is going on in the various departments. Through catalytic intervention, the consultant could meet with the department heads as a team and suggest some different ways of dealing with this problem. The following hypothetical situation operationalizes catalytic intervention at the team level.

While sitting in on the weekly Monday morning meeting, the consultant listened to Ian and some of the other members of Department Y verbalize their feelings of discontentment to the foreman.

"How come I rarely get any over-time calls?" Ian asked.

The foreman replied, "I try to distribute the over-time fairly."

Tom exclaimed, "I want more overtime!" Finally, when the consultant perceived the conversation as getting lost, he intervened and established a set of criteria for receiving over-time opportunities.

This example illustrates catalytic intervention at the team level. The consultant facilitates the interaction process so that the team comes to a better understanding of the occurring problems.

Confrontation Intervention at the Intergroup Level. Confrontation intervention is very different from cathartic and catalytic intervention. Confrontation is a more active form of intervention since it challenges the status quo and rejects the existing situation. In other words, during confrontation, the consultant assists the organizational members in redesigning the situations in which they live and work (Blake and Mouton, 1969).

Confrontation at the intergroup level could be employed by the consultant in the Rocky Mountain County Government as an action plan for Hypothesis One which depicted a substantive amount of

conflict between Department Z and other departments. During participant observation, data feedback indicated that some department heads felt that Department Z is not aware of how much time and manpower is required to complete a task. Also, department heads indicated that communication between their department and Department Z was poor. Department Z expressed the desire to improve their communication with other departments. Some departments perceived Department Z as an "enemy" and data feedback indicated that these negative feelings existing between departments was causing conflicting interpersonal relationships, cutting off communication between the groups and smothering the interdependent concept of an organization. In this situation, the consultant could employ Beckhard's (1969, 34-35) Team Building Intervention. The procedures go like this:

Task I: Leaders of both groups or the total membership meet with the practitioner. The consultant asks them if they think the relations between the two groups can be improved and if they are willing to search out procedures that may improve intergroup relations. If they express willingness and commit themselves to it the following activities take place.

Task II: The two groups meet separately and both compose two lists. One list describes their feelings and attitudes, and perceptions of the other group--how it functions, what it's like and what it does to interfere with their work. The second list contains

predictions of what they anticipate the other group is saying about them in its list.

Task III: The two groups join together and share their lists. The consultant imposes a rule that no discussion of the items in the lists will be allowed at this time. However, questions concerning clarification are allowed.

Task IV: A. Both groups meet separately again and are given two tasks: (1) they react to and discuss what they have learned about themselves and the other group, and (2) information sharing of lists allows for disagreement and friction due to misperceptions, and misfiring in communications to be resolved. At this point, it is recognized that differences between the groups are not as great as was expected.

B. Each group makes a list of priorities (from the original list) which they feel still need to be resolved. (This list is usually smaller than the original list.)

Task V: A. The two groups join together again and share their lists with each other. After comparing their lists, together they make one list consisting of issues and problems that still need to be resolved. Priorities are established on the items regarding importance and immediacy.

B. Together they create action steps for resolving the issues and assigning these responsibilities to the members.

Task VI: As a method of follow-up to this intergroup team building activity, both groups or their leaders meet to discuss the progress of the action-steps and if in fact, the work has been done. This keeps the process of intervention going.

According to Beckhard (1969, 35),

It has been found that in a relatively short period of time, an activity of this kind makes it possible for two groups in an organization to move toward considerable change in their relationship and their work effectiveness. Typically, they produce an action plan which continues over time and assures reduction of inappropriate competition.

I am convinced that the Intergroup Team Building Intervention technique is a viable and suitable planned change action method if used appropriately by the consultant since this method requires active participation (i.e., confrontation) from both parties involved.

Prescriptive Intervention at the Organizational Level. Prescriptive interventions are "the most forceful types of interventions" (Blake and Mouton, 1969, 20). During prescriptive intervention the status quo is challenged more forcefully than during confrontation intervention. Prescriptive intervention is a form of doctor-patient intervention since the consultant tells the organizational members what to do.

Prescriptive intervention at the organizational level could be employed by the consultant in the Rocky Mountain County Government

as an action plan for Hypothesis Four which depicted an organizational climate of anxious behavior and widespread interpersonal conflict when an organization is in a state of transition. That is, participant observation data feedback indicated that organizational members were fearful of losing their jobs when consolidation takes place. Also, there is animosity between some departments due to the anticipated consolidation of departments. The following hypothetical situation operationalizes prescriptive intervention at the organizational level.

Company X has hired a consultant to devise a new personnel plan. The consultant has described his model for planned change within the personnel department in step-by-step terms. His approach is prescriptive in nature, as represented by his sample set of recommendations for improvement to be made in personnel practices in Company X. He recommends that the company draw up a set of job descriptions for all positions, including job objectives and standards. Also, he tells the company that progress reports and evaluations are needed in order to keep an up-to-date view of its employees.

In this example, the consultant is telling the company what to do in concrete and operational terms. This is prescriptive intervention at the organizational level.

In summary, employment of participant observation within the context of an organization allows the consultant to diagnose organizational strengths and weaknesses. Based on this diagnosis, the consultant can implement meaningful intervention techniques to solve organizational problems.

The majority of concepts and techniques associated with participant observation find contemporary expression in the rapidly expanding field of organization development (OD). Four types of OD intervention techniques were suggested as appropriate change strategies which could be utilized by the consultant in the Rocky Mountain County Government: cathartic, catalytic, confrontation, and prescriptive intervention. These intervention techniques were linked to the hypotheses about organizational strengths and weaknesses generated in Phase III of participant observation methodology.

Finally, there are several types of intervention techniques available to the consultant. Selection of an intervention program is contingent upon the consultant's diagnosis of the organization and must be relevant to the organizational members.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

Based on the assumption that organizations are syntheses of people and on-going processes between them, the organizational consultant needs to implement a research methodology which leads to better understanding of these on-going processes before instituting change strategies.

A form of qualitative research known as participant observation is a methodology which can aid the organizational consultant in developing an understanding of processes particular to an organization, as well as assisting him/her in accurately diagnosing organizational strengths and weaknesses prior to initiating any process of change within an organization.

In an attempt to explain how this qualitative approach to research works and how the consultant can use this approach for pinpointing problem areas in an organization, an overview of participant observation methodology was presented and examples from a set of participant observation data derived from a county government agency were cited.

To facilitate an explanation of how participant observation works, the approach was discussed in three phases. Each phase was characterized by a different objective and several data gathering techniques which the consultant chooses from.

In Phase I of participant observation, the consultant maximized discovery and description through observation and interviewing. Two types of systematic observational methods were discussed in this phase: (1) specimen records, and (2) sign analysis. Also, intensive interviewing with an interview guide was discussed at both the individual and group level. The group interview was suggested to be a valuable supplement to individual interviewing as it can serve as a useful tool for cross-checking and comparing behaviors.

The consultant made sense of events through emergent patterns in Phase II of participant observation. That is, in order to develop an understanding of human processes, the consultant organized the data derived from observational methods and interviewing processes accomplished in Phase I of data gathering. Essentially, a classification system for the population under study was created by the consultant. This classification system, referred to as category development in participant observation research was deduced from patterns of attributes which provided the basis for distinctions made. In an effort to assess the reliability and validity of emergent

patterns, a systematic typology of behavior was constructed (i.e., observations were cross-checked with members' perceptions of their behavioral patterns, during individual interviews and behaviors of members were observed in different situations). Critical examination of the categories assisted the consultant in distinguishing the attributes which afforded the basis for distinctions made and arranged these attributes into a multidimensional system. Finally, subtraction of this multidimensional system, allowed the consultant to analyze the logical possible combinations of the attributes and this established the groundwork for development of hypotheses.

In Phase III, the final phase of participant observation, the consultant was concerned with precise identification of various hypotheses about the organization and its strengths and weaknesses. Hypothesis generation was derived from the consultant's ability to apply a theoretical perspective to the data. Theoretical background and knowledge about the nature of organizations and their behaviors motivated testing and retesting of insights, hunches, and hypotheses.

In order to strive for increased validity and reliability of the data, it was suggested that the consultant's final step in Phase III should involve more rigorous measurement follow-up through quantitative research tools.

Finally, four types of organization development intervention techniques were suggested as appropriate change strategies which

could be employed by the consultant in the Rocky Mountain County Government: cathartic, catalytic, confrontation and prescriptive intervention. These intervention techniques were linked to the hypotheses about organizational strengths and weaknesses generated in Phase III of participant observation methodology.

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