Middle Management in Agriculture: Roles, Functions, and Practices[1]

Vera Bitsch [a⊕] and Elaine K. Yakura [b]

[a] *Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics,*
Michigan State University, 306 Agriculture Hall, East Lansing, Michigan, 48824-1039, USA.
[b] *Associate Professor, School of Labor & Industrial Relations,*
Michigan State University, 436 S. Kedzie Hall, East Lansing, Michigan, 48824-1039, USA.

Abstract

The role of middle managers in agriculture and agribusiness has been neglected by applied—as well as disciplinary—research, while gaining increasing importance in practice. This study provides an overview of middle management research and analyzes middle managers' authority in human resource decision-making and human resource management practices based on in-depth interviews analyzed through a grounded theory approach. Results show that these middle managers use both traditional and participative management practices to accomplish organizational goals, but would benefit from training tailored to their industry and specific needs.

Keywords: Case study research method, grounded theory, human resource management (HRM) practices, middle manager, supervisor, supervisory function

⊕Corresponding author: Tel: + 517-353-9192
                             Email: bitsch@msu.edu
Other contact information: Elaine K. Yakura: yakura@msu.edu

Introduction

Middle managers play a key role in organizations. As "active agents at the frontier of control" (Delbridge and Lowe, p. 411), they are responsible for smoothing the workflow, handling exceptions, overcoming unexpected problems, and reaching goals and objectives. They also manage relationships at the workplace and maintain a positive atmosphere. Middle managers are particularly vital to the functioning of agricultural and agribusiness operations, which are often smaller and leaner organizations, with fewer management levels. Middle managers play additional roles in agricultural operations by promoting family business values while fostering employee retention and job satisfaction (Bitsch and Hogberg). Thus, middle managers gain added significance; however, many agricultural and agribusiness organizations have taken middle management's contributions for granted.

In a similar fashion, agribusiness researchers have all but ignored middle management. Except for an ad hoc study on supervisors in the San Joaquin Valley (Billikopf), middle management research is virtually absent from agricultural and agribusiness journals. A recent search for 'supervisor' and 'manager' in the Agricola database turned up no relevant citations. This lack of research is even more notable given the pivotal role of middle managers in agribusiness, since it implies a lack of theoretical insights to support managerial decision-making.

The absence of middle management research in the agricultural sector contrasts with other economic sectors in the U.S. and in Europe. Traditional research focuses on the coordinative and supervisory role of middle managers, as reflected in many human resource management (HRM) textbooks. This role, positioned between senior management and employees, often results in increased stress (Delbridge and Lowe) and role conflict (Hallier and James). Redman, Wilkinson, and Snaper cite one manager as saying, "I find it difficult in some ways because I've seen the management side of things, and what I've got to do as a manager is to keep staff happy, when perhaps I'm not all that happy myself …" (p. 110). Delbridge and Lowe conclude, "Supervisors still hold key, yet contradictory, positions […] and, as with the conflict and resistance they police, their role must be explored rather than assumed or ignored" (p. 424). While there is research on middle management in different sectors, this research lacks a comprehensive model of how middle management functions are accomplished in managers' daily practice. Dopson and Stewart argue that there is "no comprehensive body of theoretical or empirical knowledge on the role, function and responsibilities of the middle manager" (p. 9).

The goal of this paper is to describe the accomplishment of middle management functions through daily practice and to address the gap in research on middle managers in agribusinesses. Drawing on data from case studies of agricultural operations in Michigan, this paper contributes to the theory on the management of agribusiness by highlighting the role of the middle manager in organizations of this

sector. The paper will focus on the practices for managing the key resource in their organizations: people. We will see that while traditional HRM practices—such as discipline and training—are still used by these managers, many of them have developed participative practices—such as accommodation and listening—to cope with the realities of their changing workforce.

The next section provides an overview of the research literature on middle management. After the methods discussion in the third section, the fourth section consists of a summary of findings based on a modified grounded theory approach originally developed by Glaser and Strauss. The final section concludes with a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of these findings.

The Research Literature on Middle Management

Few studies of middle managers are available in the U.S. agricultural literature. Most notably, Billikopf interviewed 42 farm supervisors in the northern San Joaquin Valley in California in 1995, using a convenience sample. Included were 19 first-line supervisors (foreman, assistant barn supervisor, working herdsman, crew leader, and lead cowboy), 14 mid- to upper-level managers (supervisor, manager, herdsman, and barn supervisor), and 9 farm employers (grower, dairy farmer, and farm labor contractor) in agricultural specializations such as vineyards, dairy, fruit, vegetable, livestock, and agronomic operations. Overall, interviewees were highly satisfied with their jobs (4.5 on a 5-point scale). Yet, 88% of interviewees identified job stressors, with 69% of these involving people management issues, such as organizing and assigning jobs, counselling, disciplining, and terminating employees, or defending company policies.

Bitsch (2006) analyzes the job attitudes of supervisors and middle managers in the green industry, based on a set of case studies with 16 supervisors in 13 operations. Interviewees were less likely to emphasize negative aspects of their work than positive ones. Achievement, job security, supervision, and interpersonal relationships emerged as contributing primarily to job satisfaction. Recognition, the work itself, organization and structure, compensation, and personal life were more ambiguous, contributing to both satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The only predominantly dissatisfying factor was the working conditions. This was mainly caused by the number of hours supervisors had to work in their operations and their lack of scheduling flexibility compared to non-supervisory employees (Bitsch and Hogberg).

European Research Literature on Middle Managers

For non-agricultural sectors, the key streams of the middle management literature can be divided into research on European organizations versus U.S. organizations; these research streams are quite different in terms of basic assumptions about the

role of the middle manager in the organization as well as theoretical paradigms. The European research stream is informed by a critical paradigm (Alvesson and Willmott). European researchers are concerned with the plight of middle managers (Hallier and James), arguing that the outlook for their future is "profoundly pessimistic" (Thomas and Linstead, p. 72). A growing body of research analyses the challenges to professional identities of middle managers (Sims; Sveningsson and Alvesson; Thomas and Linstead). Middle managers are seen as being squeezed both by structural or cultural changes, as well as by technological streamlining (Beatty and Lee; Scarbrough and Burrell). Further, recent initiatives in large organizations (e.g., delayering or flattening of organizations, self-directed teams, total quality management, etc.) have resulted in particular problems for middle managers. Hallier and James point out that organizational restructuring has increased the pressure on middle managers, and hence contributed to managerial identity problems, which is supported by Balogun's findings (see also Balogun and Johnson; Redman, Wilkinson, and Snaper).

By contrast, Delbridge and Lowe state that the purported "death of the supervisor" in the research literature has been greatly exaggerated (p. 423). Still others, such as Ogbonna and Wilkinson in their study of U.K. grocery middle managers, argue that the data regarding the changing role of middle managers are ambiguous. Hales concludes after analyzing data on first-line managers in different industries, "Even those contemplating the 'end of management' (Handy; Koch and Godden) envisage the demise of an organizational stratum, not the abandonment of management as a function: a world without *managers* is not a world that is not managed. The key question is *where,* or *with whom,* the functions of management and supervision reside" (Hales, p. 497). Thus, while the functions of middle managers will not disappear from organizations, European researchers view middle managers as squeezed and saddled with added responsibilities.

U.S. Research Literature on Middle Managers

In contrast, the U.S. research literature has taken a descriptive approach, focusing on roles and functions (Mintzberg, 1973), as well as managerial practices (Yukl, 1998). Mintzberg's seminal work describes three sets of managerial roles: interpersonal, informational, and decisional. Each set consists of several roles, the significance of which varies with the organizational level and context. Interpersonal roles include the figure head, the leader, and the liaison role. Informational roles include the monitor, the disseminator, and the spokesperson role. Decisional roles include the entrepreneur, the disturbance handler, the resource allocator, and the negotiator role. According to Mintzberg, the leader role is most important. The leader role involves interpersonal relationships, motivational activities, and an integration of individual and organizational roles.

Much of the research on managerial practices overlaps with the research on leadership practices. The overlap of these two streams is further confounded by the unresolved question of the difference between a manager and a leader. Yukl (1989) and Mintzberg (2004) use both terms interchangeably. Yet, Mintzberg's discussion implies a distinction between them: "Leadership is supposed to be something bigger, more important. I reject this distinction, simply because managers have to lead and leaders have to manage. Management without leadership is sterile; leadership without management is disconnected and encourages hubris" (Mintzberg, 2004, p. 6).

Yukl (1998) points out that a person can be a leader without managing (e.g., an informal leader) and a manager without leading (e.g., a manager of financial accounts may have no subordinates). He also cautions that the overlap and relationship between management and leadership is an empirical question and may be tempered by definition. While an exhaustive review of the leadership literature is beyond the scope of this paper, a subset of this literature providing a typology of managerial leadership practices and skills is discussed. Mintzberg (1973) categorizes a number of managerial activities as concerned primarily with leadership: (1) staffing—hiring, training, judging, remunerating, promoting, and dismissing subordinates; (2) motivational—advise on personal issues, positive feedback, suggesting action; (3) meddling—pointing out gaps and inconsistencies, critique, and negative feedback. Most of these activities would be considered HRM practices in management textbooks.

Many of the managerial tasks Mintzberg (1973) identifies focus on the people aspects, rather than operational aspects, of a manager's work. This aligns with Pfeffer's notion that people management tasks are vital to effective managers. Yukl (1998), in his frequently cited taxonomy, also highlights people management practices. He details 14 managerial practices: planning and organizing, problem solving, clarifying roles and objectives, informing, monitoring, motivating and inspiring, consulting, delegating, supporting, developing and mentoring, managing conflict and team building, networking, recognizing, and rewarding. Other taxonomies include two-factor (see Schriesheim and Kerr for a review; see Shipper and Davy for a recent example), three-factor (e.g., Yukl 1998), four-factor (e.g., Pearce et al.), and six-factor models (e.g., Avolio, Bass, and Jung).

According to Yukl (1998), most studies produce different behavioral categories that are difficult to compare across studies. Also, different terms are sometimes used for the same behavior, and the same term may cover different behaviors. Yukl notes, "Behavior taxonomies are descriptive aids that may help us analyze complex events and understand them better. However, it is important to remember that all behavior taxonomies are arbitrary and have no validity in any absolute sense. Unfortunately, there has been too much preoccupation with finding and using the 'correct' set of behavior categories. In many of the field studies on managerial

behavior, only a few 'correct' behaviors were measured, resulting in numerous missed opportunities to collect rich, descriptive information about the overall pattern of leadership behavior" (1998, p. 63).

Middle Management HRM Practices Models

Van der Weide and Wilderom also note the rarity of rich observational data about managerial behavior. In their study, they videotaped actual behavioral interactions of 30 highly effective managers from 20 Dutch organizations, and analyzed these videotapes. Their model is unique since it is based on in-situ observations of managers deemed highly effective. The model describes four categories of behaviors: steering behaviors; supporting behaviors; self-defending behaviors; and sounding behaviors. These managers used three behaviors most often: providing direction (categorized as a steering behavior); verifying (categorized as a steering behavior); and providing positive feedback (categorized as a supporting behavior). They note that sounding behaviors and self-defending behaviors have rarely been reported in the leadership literature.

Compared to the research described in the prior section, the model that Van der Weide and Wilderom propose includes a wider range of behaviors. They conclude that these effective managers have what they termed a "rich repertoire of behaviors to draw upon" (p. 12), since they do not limit themselves to behaviors of a single category or rely solely on "positive" behaviors.

In another study, Hamlin asserts that there are universally effective managerial behaviors based on case studies of three U.K. public sector organizations using interviews and questionnaires. He also describes a continuum of criteria for managerial effectiveness, which range from positive (effective organization and planning or proactive management; participative and supportive leadership or proactive team leadership; empowerment and delegation; genuine concern for people or looks after the interests and development needs of staff; open and personal management approach or inclusive decision making; communicates and consults widely or keeps people informed) to negative (shows lack of consideration or concern for staff or ineffective autocratic or dictatorial style of management; uncaring, self-serving management or undermining, depriving, and intimidating behavior; tolerance of poor performance and low standards or ignoring and avoidance; abdicating roles and responsibilities; resistant to new ideas and change or negative approach). In contrast to Van der Weide and Wilderom, Hamlin suggests that managers need to exhibit positive criteria to be considered effective and will be considered ineffective if they exhibit negative criteria, implying a more conventional view of effective managerial behaviors.

Both models focus on the behaviors of highly effective managers, as well as the types of skills that should be developed to be effective as a manager. Although not cited in either paper, these models exhibit parallels to McGregor's Theory X and

Theory Y (1960). McGregor argues that a manager's approach to managing subordinates is explained by underlying assumptions about human nature of two different kinds. A Theory X manager assumes that subordinates need to be watched constantly, because they are unwilling to take responsibility and prefer not to work. A Theory Y manager assumes that subordinates are hard working and willing to take responsibility for their work, and need only support and encouragement. Certain HRM practices stem from Theory X assumptions, such as discipline and close monitoring, whereas other practices, such as providing information and goal setting, rely primarily on Theory Y assumptions. McGregor believes Theory X managers are less effective, in part because their traditional HRM practices are based on a set of limited assumptions, whereas Theory Y managers also include participative practices.

The organizations researched in the Hamlin and Van der Weide and Wilderom studies were large UK and Dutch organizations where managerial development and training are a priority, and managerial effectiveness is deemed highly desirable and rewarded. This contrasts rather starkly with managerial training in the organizations that are the focus of this study. Agricultural operations are, on average, smaller and have fewer hierarchical levels. In addition, seasonal variations in the number of employees are common. Furthermore, the dependence on weather, volatile markets, working with living organisms, the specific characteristics of the agricultural workplace, such as long hours and physical hardship, and the unique workforce, with its large proportion of temporary employees, contribute to great uncertainty. Although middle management is becoming more important as farm sizes increase, training and development in agriculture has traditionally focused on technical aspects of production and neglected HRM skills and practices.

This paper, therefore, presents a set of HRM practices based on data from agricultural operations (Table 1).

Table 1: Agricultural Middle Managers' HRM Practices

Participative HRM practices	Traditional HRM practices
Accommodating employees	Reprimanding employees
Managing relationships with employees	Training employees
Providing information and goal setting	Monitoring and controlling employees
Listening to employees	Dealing with conflict
Providing appreciation and feedback	
Rewarding employees	
Modeling work behavior	
Peer control	
Manager-induced team building	
Training by coworkers	

Because the analysis is based on interviews with managers rather than observational data, this set of HRM practices does not include the self-defending behaviors that are part of the Van der Weide and Wilderom model. Furthermore, categories of managerial behaviors of agricultural middle managers were inductively developed to fit the data, as opposed to testing a model using data from agricultural middle managers. However, for categorizing the practices discussed by the interviewees, we borrow McGregor's terms participative versus traditional, although he did not specify HRM practices, accordingly. Before discussing the managers and their practices in the results section, the next section will describe the methods used in collecting and analyzing data.

Research Methods

Given the lack of research on middle management in agriculture, and Yukl's (1998) critique of many leadership studies as failing to collect rich and descriptive information, this study relies on a qualitative approach. In particular Parry et al., and also Hamlin call for more qualitative research into managerial and leadership behaviors and suggest using a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory is an inductive approach to developing theory in the social sciences, first proposed by Glaser and Strauss (see Clarke for recent developments in grounded theory). Grounded theory can be considered the master metaphor of qualitative research (Bitsch, 2005), used by numerous researchers in a variety of fields in many different ways. For this study, its distinctive approach to data analysis, and in particular, the constant comparison method, is most relevant. Differing from the original grounded theory approach, mixed approaches have become common as qualitative research has grown more prominent in a variety of fields (Charmaz).

In the absence of a theory of middle management, research needs to start with empirically based variable development and theorizing based on data (see the discussion among Sutton and Staw; Weick; and DiMaggio in Administrative Science Quarterly on the difference between theory and theorizing). Therefore, a prerequisite to developing a theory of middle management practice is an interpretive description (Geertz) of middle managers' use of HRM practices. This exploratory research focuses on what specific practices they use (and do not use) and how they accomplish their functions. Relating to grounded theory, this study will develop substantive theory rather than formal theory, and should be positioned with "grounded theorizing" approaches (Clarke, p. xxxiii) rather than purist grounded theory (Suddaby).

Many of the middle manager studies described in the literature section use qualitative research approaches. Case studies of one or more organizations, employing in-depth interviews with middle managers as a stand-alone method or in conjunction with other methods, have been used by Balogun; Balogun and Johnson; Delbridge and Lowe; Hallier and James; Huy; and Ogbonna and Wilkinson. Case

studies of one or more middle managers were carried out by Sims; Sveningsson and Alvesson; and Thomas and Linstead. Recent examples using the case study research method for studying HRM practices in agriculture include Mugera and Bitsch; and Bitsch and Hogberg.

The in-depth interviews analyzed in this paper are part of a set of 14 case studies of HRM practices in agricultural operations (four greenhouse operations, four landscape contractors, and six nurseries). The use of qualitative case studies has been advocated to increase methodological pluralism in agribusiness and agricultural economics research in a number of recent publications (Kennedy and Luzar; Sterns, Schweikhardt, and Peterson). The case study method is particularly well-suited for contemporary phenomena focusing on the perspective of the actors involved (Westgren and Zering). Therefore, for the purpose of describing the accomplishment of middle management functions in managers' daily practice and theorizing about agricultural middle management, the case study method seems especially suitable.

All participating agricultural operations were located in Michigan. The size of these organizations varied, ranging from 1 to 400 employees. The wide range includes seasonal adjustments necessary to this industry. Site visits took place between March and May 2003. The sample of interviews analyzed consists of a total of 15 supervisors and middle managers from 12 different operations. In one of the 14 cases the interviewee perceived herself as a supervisor, but her functions were not comparable to those of other interviewees. In another case the interviewee was reclassified as a senior manager after carefully analyzing the interview. Of the 15 interviewees included in this analysis, 12 are male and 3 are female.

Interviews followed an interview schedule with open-ended questions, and lasted between 45 minutes and over 2 hours. After establishing rapport with the interviewees, the interviewer inquired about job tasks, HRM practices, supervisory behaviors, relationships with other employees and managers, input in decision-making, and job satisfaction. Respondents were encouraged to provide in-depth answers through probing. The order of the questions was adapted to the flow of answers. Topics brought up by the interviewees were explored further.

All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Data coding and analysis were based on the transcripts. The purpose of coding is to enable the comparative analysis of each interviewee's comments within each interview and with each other. For this purpose all comments pertinent to a particular topic under analysis were labeled with a specific heading or code. This is necessary when using in-depth interviews for data collection because respondents may address a question multiple times and in different contexts. Therefore, data addressing a specific research question needs to be identified throughout the transcript of each interview.

Coding is iterative. A coder reads a transcript several times and goes back to comments coded earlier and recodes them if appropriate as the analysis develops. The final decision on coding is suspended until all relevant material has been coded and all comments with the same code have been compared to each other. With more than one coder, the final analysis and interpretation will include the discussion and resolution of any coding differences. For this analysis, transcripts were coded by both authors independently before moving to the interpretation phase. This initial round of coding was followed by four additional rounds as the analysis progressed.

Results

As little is known about agricultural middle managers, we first present basic information about them and their decision-making authority. Next, we analyze the practices they use in managing people. These practices are classified into two groups, traditional HRM practices and participative HRM practices. These latter practices have adapted or built on traditional practices, or been developed to cope with workplace demands and a changing workforce.

Basic Characteristics of the Middle Managers

Similar to previous research (explicitly by Delmestri and Walgenbach; Dopson and Neumann; Dopson and Stewart; Ogbonna and Wilkinson; Redman, Wilkinson, and Snaper; implicitly by Hamlin; Osterman), the organizations' designations of their middle managers were used for this study. While many researchers treat the definition of the terms 'middle manager' and 'supervisor' as unproblematic (e.g., Batt; Delbridge, Lowe, and Oliver; Hallier and James; Harrington and Williams; Sims; Van der Wilde and Wilderom; Zaccaro and Banks), in reality the terms can reflect numerous formal positions in an organizational hierarchy (Delbridge and Lowe), job titles notwithstanding. According to Hales, supervision is "the proximal and immediate direction, monitoring and control of operational work" (p. 474). Thus, supervision is integral to any managerial position with subordinates.

In the request for an interview, the researcher asked to talk to "a supervisor, someone who manages others, is in charge of managing employees." In most cases, the designated interviewees did not include first-line supervisors, who were more likely to be included in the group of non-supervisory employees. However, this issue is problematic in seasonal agricultural operations, because the number of employees supervised varies by time of year, as well as by task. Therefore, a middle manager with no subordinates during the winter months might oversee a large department with 30 or more employees during the summer.

Table 2 shows the job titles provided during the interviews by each interviewee. Of these, two interviewees did not specify a title (indicated by parentheses). As noted in the table, the titles vary widely and are not reflective of other indicators of

Table 2: Job Title, Middle Manager Characteristics, and Number Supervised

	Title	Years Employed	Years in Position	Training	Number Supervised
M1	Foreman	36	10	None	1 to 20 employees, with foremen on larger tasks
M2	Crew leader	9	0.5	None	4 to 6 employees
M3	Grower Manager	1.5	1	S	6 departments, over 100 employees seasonally
M4	(Supervisor)	25	15	None	1 to 10 employees
M5	(Supervisor)	4	4	P	15 to 200 employees
M6	Foreman	3	3	S	1 to 6 employees
M7	Manager	4	4	P/S	30 to 50 employees, with 5 foremen
M8	Manager	17	17*	S	10 to 50 employees, with foremen
M9	Coordinator	13	13	None	Up to 35 employees seasonally, with 7 foremen
M10	Manager	8	8*	None	6 to 12 employees, with 2 to 3 foremen
M11	Supervisor	10.5	8.5	None	20 to 30 employees
M12	Manager	30	30*	None	Over 75 employees seasonally, with 3 managers, 4 to 5 foremen
M13	Office Manager	22	20	None	2 to 4 employees, and a varying number of truck drivers
M14	Supervisor	20	1**	None	2 to 30 employees
M15	Supervisor	3	3	P	50 to 80 employees, with 4 crew leaders

*Held same job title, but additional responsibilities were added over the years
**Was a supervisor upon entering the organization, but spent most of time in sales
P = Training provided by previous employer
S = Seminars, workshops provided by current employer

managerial responsibility, such as the number of people supervised. But the job titles roughly indicate the distance of the middle managers from the top level of the hierarchy, i.e., a crew leader ranks below a manager.

Table 2 also provides the number of years each middle manager has been employed with the organization and the number of years in the position designated. Asterisks in Table 2 indicate managers who did not change job title, but nonetheless performed additional responsibilities over the course of their employment. The number of years in the organization and number of years in the job are both proxies

for a manager's experience; however, several of the interviewees noted during their interviews that they had previously been employed in supervisory positions or owned a business themselves, which indicates additional management experience.

The next column in Table 2 indicates the amount of training that each manager has had. Some of the managers received training from a previous employer (typically consisting of training workshops or seminars). These managers have a 'P' in the training column. For example, one such manager had 10 years of managerial experience in a non-agricultural industry. Other interviewees indicated that they had received training in the form of seminars or workshops on supervisory issues from the current employer. These managers are indicated with an 'S' in the training column. The majority of the managers had no formal training, but some mentioned that they had learned from their own experiences on the job. One middle manager, when asked about training, responded "sink or swim" (M14). Furthermore, for those interviewees who indicated any form of training, it was often minimal and neither formalized nor intensive.

The final column of Table 2 shows the range in the number of people supervised by each interviewee. As noted above, the size of the workforce varies widely throughout the course of a year. Some operations retain only key personnel during winter months (typically including the middle managers and an office person). Other operations try to keep a core crew employed, including some team members in lower ranks. Still others employ a larger permanent workforce by investing in machinery and/or buildings to enable a more continuous workflow.

Much of the European research literature highlights alienation and disenchantment on the part of middle managers (e.g., Hales; Hallier and James), yet most of the agricultural middle managers interviewed identified closely with their organizations, their direct managers, and their CEOs. Many spoke about their organizations in terms of "us" or "we," indicating management or their organizations as a whole. In addition, most interviewees could hardly imagine a situation where they might accept a different job offer. Reactions ranged from "I wouldn't" (M12), "If the place closed" (M10), "If something drastically changed" (M3) to "A lot more money" (M8).

Middle Managers' Functions and HRM Practices

Agricultural middle managers are different from middle managers in other industries, and there are several possible reasons for this difference. In some organizations, they have assumed more authority for HRM decisions because their organizations are flatter. Many organizations have never grown elaborate, bureaucratic structures and therefore, have no need for delayering. These issues can be examined by analyzing middle managers' organizational functions and

decision-making authority. Also, middle managers could depend more on informal management practices than formal authority within agricultural organizations. Table 3 shows several indicators of the decision-making authority of middle managers. Their input into HRM decisions (selection, evaluation, discipline, and termination of employees) varies widely. Four out of fifteen managers are not asked by their managers for input regarding selection. At the other end of the spectrum, seven managers make hiring decisions. Four businesses do not evaluate employees and two businesses evaluate rather informally. Where evaluations are done, middle managers are likely to have input, as only one interviewee was not involved. One manager pointed out that her department had never disciplined or terminated an employee. Three additional managers said they had never terminated an employee, but may have moved employees to other departments or divisions. A third of the interviewees made suggestions regarding disciplinary actions to upper management, but their suggestions may or may not be heeded.

Table 3: Middle managers' authority in major HRM decisions

Middle Manager	Selection	Evaluation	Discipline	Termination
M1	No input	Input	Suggests to upper management	No input
M2	No input	No Input	Suggests to upper management	No input
M3	Yes, with input	Yes	Yes	Yes
M4	Input	Not done	Suggests to upper management	Yes, but not done
M5	Input	Not done	Yes	Input
M6	No input	Input	Suggests to upper management	No input
M7	Yes	Input	Yes	Yes, but not done
M8	Input	Input	Suggests to upper management	Input
M9*	Input	Input	Input	Input
M10	Yes	Yes, but informal	Yes	Yes, but not done
M11	Yes	Yes, but informal	Yes	Yes
M12	Yes	Currently not done	Yes	Yes
M13	Yes	Currently not done	Yes, but not done	Yes, but not done
M14	No input	Input	Yes	Input
M15	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

*Member of the management team that makes HRM decisions

Some middle managers have little input into any of these HRM functions (e.g., M1, M2, M6), whereas others (e.g., M3, M10, M11, M12, M15) have full decision-making authority. Based on the managers interviewed, there is no obvious connection between job or management experience (Table 2) and decision-making authority (Table 3). As shown in the following tables, those middle managers with little input have developed informal practices for managing their subordinates effectively. Even more surprisingly, the managers who have full decision-making authority also rely more on informal practices. In addition, input into major HRM decisions does not seem to influence managers' identification with the business, nor their commitment to staying with their current operations.

Given the wide range of HRM decision-making authority across the middle managers interviewed, how do agricultural middle managers keep the work flowing smoothly, overcome problems, and maintain amicable relationships with and between employees? Tables 4 and 5 provide an overview of the HRM practices being used. Each practice is briefly described in the first column, and an example from the interviews is presented in the second column. These excerpts present a glimpse of the reality of the interviewees, as well as the richness of the data.

Since there are many tasks inherent in management jobs it is difficult to identify the full range of possible HRM practices. Further, many of the tasks tend to be points on a continuum, rather than discrete categories that can be readily distinguished one from the other. For example, a manager might communicate with an employee about a deadline for a particular task. However, this type of communication could also be described as feedback, since the manager might mention that this deadline is "more firm" than the deadline for a previous task that the employee had missed. Finally, this communication could also be an opportunity for on-the-job training, as the manager might indicate how the employee's work speed can be improved. Thus, these categories are not meant to be exclusive, but instead present the full range of the practices the middle managers described in their interviews.

Practices have been classified as traditional based on their correspondence with traditional HRM functions as discussed in textbooks. However, these functions were adapted to specific agribusiness contexts, as well as to the middle management level, because the decision-making authority of many of these managers is rather limited (Table 3). For example, the labor relations function typically arises in dealing with conflict, not in formal union contracts. Table 4 outlines the traditional human resource practices used. In contrast, managing relationships with employees is classified as a participative practice (Table 5, *see Appendix A*) because the way it is used has little in common with traditional approaches to labor relations.

Table 4: Description of traditional HRM practices and interview excerpts

Traditional HRM Practices	Interview Excerpt
Reprimanding employees. Activities criticizing employee behavior targeted at changing behaviors including informal approaches, e.g., "giving a talking to," and yelling, as well as formal discipline up to and including termination; reprimanding may include not applying formal discipline in certain cases.	"We worked him very hard that day. If you want to play with fire, you are going get burned. If you want to go out and drink and not be ready to go to work first thing Monday morning when you should be alert. He dug a few holes that day, where he could have done it with a machine … So, I think that's, you know, kind of tough love type thing, so I thought was more than fair" (M6).
Training employees. Activities targeted at familiarizing new employees with their tasks and their work environment and the use of safe work methods, including an initial orientation; showing employees different and/or safer ways to complete tasks on-the-job or arranging for the employee to participate in off-site training; mentoring of employees.	"No, you got to have somebody that can think, training, thinking. It is a teaching job, maybe more so than agricultural. … I kind of like when I get someone new, I always work with them, at least to show them what I expect or so that they have knowledge as to what they are doing. You'd think it is simple, but everyone is different, you know. … But, I work with what I got. Every year it is like spring training in baseball, I'd start all over" (M1).
Monitoring and controlling employees. Activities of assigning tasks, and collecting data on employee work performance, quantity and quality of task completion and outcomes, checking how and when tasks are completed, checking work results against expectations or standards.	"In the morning, I start with small groups. Like this morning, I had about five to six groups, and I direct certain people to go with so and so. And after that I walk around and make sure the work is getting done and also the way they are doing it" (M9).
Dealing with conflict. Activities targeted at moderating or resolving conflict between employees, or between an employee and his or her supervisor.	"You got to be able to get along with your fellow employees whether you like them or not …. I try to explain that to people when they are not getting along, but try to avoid conflict if you can. But other times you got to put people with people that don't like each other and you can explain to them that that's the way it's got to be" (M4).

The classification of practices used by these managers as traditional and participative is not unambiguous. As noted, practice use is a continuum: some traditional practices have been adapted and changed and have, therefore, become more participative, while their original forms are also still used. For example, providing feedback (Table 5, *see Appendix A*) can be interpreted as employee evaluation (a traditional HRM function). However, showing appreciation and providing informal feedback is a conscious choice of many of the middle managers interviewed, often in contrast to upper management. Where a formal evaluation is provided in addition to the informal techniques, this is also included with the participative practices, because formal evaluations are rather uncommon in the industry. In addition to far-reaching modifications of traditional

practices, other participative practices have been developed as a supplement to or replacement of traditional practices by some managers.

Table 5 outlines the participative HRM practices used by the managers interviewed. An example is accommodating employees, where the manager considers opportunities to increase the fit between the requirements of a workplace and an employee. It includes rotating task assignments to decrease boredom or physical strain, allowing flexibility in schedules and work methods, and assigning an employee to a different job than he or she was originally hired to perform. All interviewees were familiar with this practice and used it to some extent.

The HRM practices outlined in Tables 4 and 5 are ordered according to the frequency with which the middle managers interviewed talked about these practices and the number of examples of each practice they provided. The practices with the highest number of comments are accommodating employees, reprimanding employees, managing relationships with employees, training employees, providing information and goal setting, and listening to employees. It is notable that both traditional (reprimanding, training) and participative HRM practices (accommodating, managing relationships, providing information and goal setting, listening) are used with high frequency by these managers. Although we do not have observational data regarding the actual use of these management practices, more frequent comments on a practice and more examples provided are an indication of salience of use.

Each middle manager interviewed described a different combination of practices (traditional practices, as well as participative practices), and talked about some practices more frequently than others. Ranked according to the frequency of their comments on the HRM practices described in Tables 4 and 5, there are three groups of managers: (1) managers who know and are likely to use all or most of these practices and are able to provide many examples of their use, (2) managers who use some practices frequently and can provide examples, but do not or rarely use others, and (3) managers who use practices infrequently and can provide few examples. The third group is likely composed of 'reluctant managers.' Although some managers in this group are inexperienced, there is no obvious correlation with management experience, which could explain the reluctance of some interviewees to employ a broad array of management practices. An example of this group is a manager who thinks of administering discipline as being "mean" to people (M2).

The last three practices in Table 5, although not used by all managers, lead to an interesting observation. Middle managers do at times step back from using their formal authority and relinquish control to their work teams, as predicted by Hales in the context of industry restructuring. Some even go so far as to induce teams to take on more responsibility by using specific team building exercises. While these practices may seem like post-hierarchical approaches, they are mostly used to

relieve the manager of some tasks and free up time during the seasonal peak when organizations are working at capacity.

Conclusions

This study provides a much-needed research contribution to a neglected topic. Middle managers play a vital role in agribusinesses and will not "die out" anytime soon despite the dire predictions of some researchers. These managers occupy the "common ground of middle management responsibility" (Delmestri and Walgenbach, p. 205), which is the capacity and/or responsibility to handle exceptions, solve unexpected problems, reach objectives, and maintain a positive social environment.

HRM Practices

There are two key themes in the findings of this study: one theme related to HRM practices, and another to training. The HRM practices employed by the middle managers in our study range from the more traditional to the participative. Rather than relying chiefly on traditional practices (based on Theory X assumptions) or chiefly on participative practices (based on Theory Y assumptions), middle managers selectively apply practices of both types as appropriate. As a result, the spectrum of HRM practices discussed is wider and more sophisticated than expected based on the dichotomous distinction of McGregor's Theory X versus Theory Y. Thus, while we have categorized the HRM practices as "traditional" and "participative," the middle managers themselves cannot be categorized in this manner. These results correspond with Van der Weide and Wilderom's findings that effective management is not limited to "positive" behaviors, but frequently includes traditional practices such as reprimanding employees.

Delmestri and Walgenbach did expect U.S. middle managers to resemble British managers who avoid getting involved with technical problems and constitute a separate management class. However, many of the participating agricultural middle managers were more like the German and Italian managers in their study, who view themselves as first among equals in work procedures, steeped in technical competency. This greater involvement in technical work issues may be a result of the nature of work in the agribusiness context.

The results reported here also provide an empirical counterpoint to the description of middle managers as resistant to organizational change (Fenton-O'Creevy) or forced by senior management to impose unwanted change on subordinates (Hallier and James). Most interviewees show a remarkable degree of identification with senior management and with their organizations, notably different from previous findings published in the organizational identification literature (e.g., Sims; Sveningsson and Alvesson; Thomas and Linstead). Further, they are also initiators

of change, improving their workplace and the workflow as they see fit. The majority of the interviewees listen to what employees have to say or even actively elicit employee input and suggestions, as part of their HRM repertoire.

Interestingly, these middle managers differ widely with respect to their input into key HRM decisions, such as selection, evaluation, discipline, and termination. Only part of this variation can be explained by the variation in hierarchical levels or in experience. Middle managers' involvement in these decisions also depends on senior management's attitudes toward participation. But this question requires further research. Operations may benefit from involving middle managers in key HRM decisions to a greater extent, since this is likely to increase their effectiveness day-to-day.
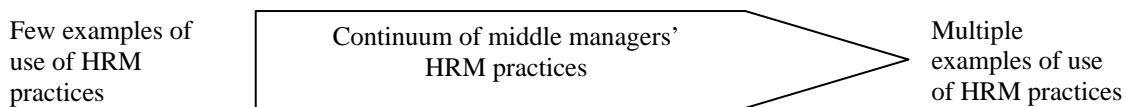
| Few examples of use of HRM practices | Continuum of middle managers' HRM practices | Multiple examples of use of HRM practices |

Figure 1: Middle Managers' Knowledge of HRM Practices

Thus, overall, the participating middle managers are active contributors to their operations and command a rich array of management practices. For particular individuals, however, this is not necessarily the case. Similar to Hamlin's findings in public sector organizations, some agricultural middle managers describe only a limited repertoire of HRM practices as compared to others in this study. In addition, our research revealed a group of managers who fall between these two groups—they do not command the fullest range of practices, but exhibited more than a few practices. Rather than a group of Theory X managers versus Theory Y managers, agricultural middle managers appear to range across a continuum (Figure 1). Some managers described few of any type (either traditional or participative) of HRM practices; this group is located at the left of Figure 1. At the other end of the continuum, other middle managers described a full range of practices. The distinction among the participating middle managers is not based on the type of HRM practice, but rather on the number of any type that they described using. We would argue that the managers exhibiting the widest range, with their superior sets of HRM practices, have more resources at their disposal to cope with a broader range of issues and problems. But all managers interviewed could benefit from further training, as we argue in the next section.

Managerial Training

While most middle managers participating in this study had little or no training, the data show that overall these managers' HRM practices span a rich and broad array of practices. This sophistication is also echoed in a commitment to valuing employees in practice. However, the wide range of practices should not be

interpreted to signify that agricultural managers could not benefit from managerial training. While some managers use the complete set of management practices described, others are less flexible and command only a small subset. Thus far, agricultural operations have not increased their training efforts significantly, although there is a growing awareness of this need by senior managers. Similar to other industries, both novice and experienced agricultural middle managers would benefit from professional development opportunities. For example, after HRM workshops organized for agricultural managers by one of the authors, experienced managers often point out how the discussion of practices they were using (and of alternative practices) helped them to further develop their management approach.

Management training can provide outside validation of HRM practices adopted to accomplish organizational and personal goals. This would relieve some of the anxieties of inexperienced managers, who might otherwise be reluctant to assume a management role. In addition, when first appointed to a supervisory position, future managers often struggle (Bitsch and Hogberg). Focus group discussions with agricultural managers show that managers at all levels can benefit from educational seminars and workshops on HRM functions, including selection, training, legal issues, discipline, and termination (Bitsch 2004, Bitsch and Harsh, Bitsch et al.). For example, when workshops included high-involvement management practices, those with experience were able to share examples with other participants, who were eager to hear about practical applications. Managerial training can reinforce effective practices of experienced managers, further broadening their repertoire, as well as assist them in training assistant managers for succession.

The industry could also benefit from strategic managerial training to better align HRM practices with industry characteristics. Since the organizations studied operate in highly seasonal Midwestern industries, their management differs in many ways from operations with a more continuous workflow. For example, there is less need for terminating employees, because underperforming employees can simply be given fewer work hours and/or not be rehired for the following season. With respect to performance, the same process often replaces formal discipline. Managerial education tailored to the industry could emphasize using feedback to increase performance, while reducing resistance. Hence, managers would be able to use industry characteristics often deemed unfavorable, such as seasonality, to their advantage. In addition, managerial training designed to increase their sophistication and become more efficacious in their jobs would reward these key actors in the agribusiness industry and be beneficial to both the managers and their organizations.

Future Research

Although this study addresses a neglected research area, there are several limitations for future research to overcome. The small sample allowed us to understand the HRM practices these middle managers employ and provided insightful examples. However, future research should move to larger samples, building on the foundation laid here. Representative studies of one or more agricultural sectors, including different states in diverse production regions, would allow more generalizable findings about middle management in agriculture.

The results are specific to this industry with its peculiar characteristics (lean organizations, seasonal workforce, family ownership). To determine the extent to which these findings apply to industries beyond agriculture requires further testing. Within agriculture, very large and less seasonal operations (e.g., pork producers) would allow for testing relationships among performance indicators, business characteristics, hierarchy levels, and managerial practices. In addition, a larger sample representing a cross section of the industry would allow for testing relationships between manager characteristics, such as experience and management training, and their decision-making authority, as well as variety in, frequency of, and preference for HRM practices used.

Middle managers are crucial to agribusiness with its lean organizations—often family-owned and operated—and its seasonal workforce. Considering the key role middle managers play in accomplishing work objectives, it is surprising how little attention middle management has garnered in agribusiness research. Describing middle managers' HRM practices is the first step toward a model of HRM practice use of agricultural middle managers. Moreover, describing the concrete practices middle managers employ contributes to the literature beyond agriculture, since published descriptions of what middle managers do are generally vague and unspecific (Hamlin; Van der Weide and Wilderom). Hence, this study also serves as a foundation for future research on HRM practices in agribusiness, as well as other industries.

References

Alvesson, M., and H. Willmott (eds.). *Studying Management Critically*. London: Sage, 2003.

Avolio, B.J., B.M. Bass, and D.I. Jung. "Re-examining the Components of Transformational and Transactional Leadership Using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire." *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 72 (1999):441-62.

Balogun, J. "From Blaming the Middle to Harnessing its Potential: Creating Change Intermediaries." *British Journal of Management* 14 (2003):69-83.

Balogun, J. and G. Johnson. "Organizational Restructuring and Middle Manager Sensemaking." *Academy of Management Journal* 47 (2004):523-49.

Beatty, C., and G. Lee. "Leadership among Middle Managers: An Exploration in the Context of Technological Change." *Human Relations* 45 (1992):957-89.

Billikopf, G.E. "Interpersonal Communication Tops Concerns of Farm Supervisors." *California Agriculture* 55 (2001, no. 5):40-3.

Bitsch, V. Job Attitudes of Agricultural Middle Managers. *Selected Paper, American Agricultural Economics Association Annual Meeting*, 2006. http://agecon.lib.umn.edu/cgi-bin/pdf_view.pl?paperid=21213&ftype=.pdf (05/19/2006).

—. "Qualitative Research: A Grounded Theory Example and Evaluation Criteria." *Journal of Agribusiness* 23 (2005):75-91.

—. "Focus Group Discussions as a Research and Extension Method: The Case of Personnel Management Issues in Horticultural Businesses." *Acta Horticulturae* 655 (2004):461-9.

Bitsch, V., G. Abate Kassa, S.B. Harsh, and A.W. Mugera. "Human Resource Management Risks: Sources and Control Strategies Based on Dairy Farmer Focus Groups. *Journal of Agricultural and Applied Economics* 38 (2006):123-36.

Bitsch, V. and S.B. Harsh. "Labor Risk Attributes in the Green Industry: Business Owners' and Managers' Perspectives." *Journal of Agricultural and Applied Economics* 36 (2004):731-45.

Bitsch, V. and M. Hogberg. "Exploring Horticultural Employees' Attitudes towards their Jobs: A Qualitative Analysis based on Herzberg's Theory of Job Satisfaction." *Journal of Agricultural and Applied Economics* 37 (2005):659-71.

Charmaz, K. "Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructivist Methods." *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 2nd ed., Denzin, N.K. and Y.S. Lincoln eds., 509-35. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000.

Clarke, A. *Situational Analysis: Grounded Theory after the Postmodern Turn*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2005.

Currie, G. "The Influence of Middle Managers in the Business Planning Process: A Case Study in the UK." *British Journal of Management* 10 (1999):141-55.

Delbridge, R., and J. Lowe. "Manufacturing Control: Supervisory Systems on the 'New' Shopfloor." *Sociology* 31 (1997):409-26.

Delbridge, R., J. Lowe, and N. Oliver. "Shopfloor Responsibilities under Lean Teamworking." *Human Relations* 53 (2000):1459-79.

Delmestri, G., and P. Walgenbach. "Mastering Techniques or Brokering Knowledge? Middle Managers in Germany, Great Britain and Italy." *Organization Studies* 26 (2005):197-220.

DiMaggio, P.J. "Comments on 'What Theory is Not'." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 40 (1995):391-7.

Dopson, S., and J.E. Neumann. "Uncertainty, Contrariness and the Double-bind: Middle Managers' Reactions to Changing Contracts." *British Journal of Management* 9 (1998):53-70.

Dopson, S., and R. Stewart. "What *is* Happening to Middle Management?" *British Journal of Management* 1 (1990):3-16.

Fenton-O-Creevy, Mark. "Employee Involvement and the Middle Manager: Saboteur or Scapegoat?" *Human Resource Management Journal* 11 (2001):24-40.

Geertz, C. "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture." *The Interpretation of Culture*, Geertz, C. ed., 3-30. New York: Basic Books, 1973.

Glaser, B.G., and A.L. Strauss. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New York: Aldine, 1967.

Hales, C. "Rooted in Supervision, Branching into Management: Continuity and Change in the Role of First-Line Manager." *Journal of Management Studies* 42 (2005):471-506.

Hallier, J., and P. James. "Middle Managers and the Employee Psychological Contract: Agency, Protection and Advancement." *Journal of Management Studies* 34 (1997):703-28.

Hamlin, R.G. "In Support of Universalistic Models of Managerial and Leadership Effectiveness: Implications for HRD Research and Practice." *Human Resource Development Quarterly* 15 (2004):189-216.

Handy, C. *Beyond Certainty*. London: Random House, 1995.

Harrington, D., and B. Williams. "Moving the Quality Effort Forward: The Emerging Role of the Middle Manager." *Managing Service Quality* 14 (2004):297-306.

Huy, Q.N. "Emotional Balancing of Organizational Continuity and Radical Change: The Contribution of Middle Managers." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 47 (2002):31-69.

Kennedy, P.L. and E.J. Luzar. "Toward Methodological Inclusivism: The Case for Case Studies." *Review of Agricultural Economics* 21 (1999):579-91.

Koch, R., and I. Godden. *Managing Without Management: A Post-management Manifesto for Business Simplicity*. London: Nicholas Brearley, 1996.

Leavitt, H.J. "Why Hierarchies Thrive." *Harvard Business Review* 81 (2003, no. 3):96-102.

McGregor, D. *The Human Side of Enterprise*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1960.

Mintzberg, H. *The Nature of Managerial Work*. New York: Harper & Row, 1973.

Mintzberg, H. *Managers, Not MBAs: A Hard Look at the Soft Practice of Managing and Management Development*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2004.

Mugera, A.W. and V. Bitsch. "Labor on Dairy Farms: A Resource-based Perspective with Evidence from Case Studies." *International Food and Agribusiness Management Review* 8 (2005, no. 3):79-98.

Ogbonna, E., and B. Wilkinson. "The False Promise of Organizational Culture Change: A Case Study of Middle Managers in Grocery Retailing." *Journal of Management Studies* 40 (2003):1151-78.

Osterman, P. "Supervision, Discretion, and Work Organization." *American Economic Association Papers & Proceedings* 84 (1994):380-384.

Parry, J., R. Taylor, L. Pettinger, and M. Glucksmann. "Confronting the Challenges of Work Today: New Horizons and Perspectives." *Sociological Review* 53, (2005, supplement no. 2):1-18.

Pavett, C.M., and A.W. Lau. "Managerial Work: The Influence of Hierarchical Level and Functional Specialty." *Academy of Management Journal* 26 (1983):170-7.

Pearce, C.L., H.P. Sims Jr., J.F. Cox, G. Ball, E. Schnell, K.A. Smith, and L. Trevino. "Transactors, Transformers and Beyond: A Multi-method Development of a Theoretical Typology of Leadership." *Journal of Management Development* 22 (2003):273-307.

Pfeffer, J. *The Human Equation: Building Profits by Putting People First.* Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 1998.

Quinn, R., S. Faerman, M. Thompson, and M. McGrath. *Becoming a Master Manager: A Competency Framework*, 3rd ed. New York: Wiley, 2003.

Redman, T., A. Wilkinson, and E. Snaper. "Stuck in the Middle? Managers in Building Societies." *Work, Employment, and Society* 11 (1997):101-14.

Scarbrough, H., and G. Burrell. "The Axeman Cometh: The Changing Roles and Knowledges of Middle Managers." *The politics of management knowledge*, Clegg, S. and G. Palmer eds., 173-189. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996.

Schriesheim, C.A., and S. Kerr. "Theories and Measures of Leadership: A Critical Appraisal of Current and Future Directions." *Leadership: the Cutting Edge*, Hunt, J.G. and L.L. Larson eds., 9-45. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977.

Shipper, F., and J. Davy. "A Model and Investigation of Managerial Skills, Employees' Attitudes and Managerial Performance." *Leadership Quarterly* 13 (2002):95-120.

Sims, D. "Between the Millstones: A Narrative Account of Vulnerability of Middle Managers' Storying." *Human Relations* 56 (2003):1195-211.

Sterns, J.A., D.B. Schweikhardt and H.C. Peterson. "Using Case Studies as an Approach for Conducting Agribusiness Research." *International Food and Agribusiness Management Review* 1 (1998):311-27.

Suddaby, R. "From the Editors: What Grounded Theory is Not." *Academy of Management Journal* 49 (2006):633-42.

Sutton, R.I. and B.M. Staw. "What Theory is Not." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 40 (1995):371-84.

Sveningsson, S., and M. Alvesson. "Managing Managerial Identities: Organizational Fragmentation, Discourse and Identity Struggle." *Human Relations* 56 (2003):1163-93.

Thomas, R., and A. Linstead. "Losing the Plot? Middle Managers and Identity." *Organization* 9 (2002):71-94.

Van der Weide, J., and C. Wilderom. "Deromancing Leadership: What are the Behaviours of Highly Effective Managers? *International Journal of Management Practice* 1 (2004):3-20.

Weick, K.E. "What Theory is Not, Theorizing Is." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 40 (1995):385-90.

Westgren, R. and K. Zering. "Case Study Research Methods for Firm and Market Research." *Agribusiness* 14 (1998):415-24.

Yukl, G. "Managerial Leadership: A Review of Theory and Research." Journal of Management 15 (1989):251-89.

Yukl, G. *Leadership in Organizations*, 4th ed. Upper Saddle River/N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1998.

Zaccaro, S., and D. Banks. "Leader Visioning and Adaptability: Bridging the Gap between Research and Practice on Developing the Ability to Manage Change." *Human Resource Management* 43 (2004):367-90.

Appendix: A

Table 5: Description of Participative HRM Practices and Interview Excerpts

Participative HRM Practices	Interview Excerpt
Accommodating employees. Allowing for flexibility in employees' schedules, work assignments, and work methods; rotating work assignments to make work more interesting or fitting work assignments to employees' skills and preferences; accommodating health problems or unwillingness to work in teams, in a specific team, or with a specific person.	"We look at who works good with certain people. Some people don't like to work with certain people and ah, so we try to get them to, that they like to work together. So that when at the end of the day, they are not, a lot of times we have two or three people working together, some crews we have like 12 on a crew. But, when we have two or three people working together, we try to get the people that like each other or get along with each, it don't happen all the time, but we try to do that so that their daily routine is, they get along" (M12).
Managing relationships with employees. Managers frequently perceive tension between being a supervisor and being a friend and work on striking the right balance, including showing respect to employees and being respected, caring about them, showing or losing patience, or limiting or welcoming joint activities outside of the workplace.	"I would say our relationship … is very formal to be honest. Everybody was wonderful and friendly to me when started and I felt very comfortable with them, but as I became a supervisor and then manager, I think … it was very easier for me because I didn't have long steady relationships with people here. … I continued to keep that separation and you know, just for example, certainly if somebody has a member of their family pass away, I will always go to the funeral home. I would do, what I would normally do as a person. But extended invitations to go to somebody's home or something like that it's something that I shy away from" (M3).

Table 5: (Continued)

Providing information and goal setting. Sharing information about the business and the work plan, communicating work goals and overall goals, letting employees know exactly what is expected, changing work processes to improve safety or make work easier.	"I try to always keep them informed.… Like if we have a special order that needs to get out in the beginning of the week, I tell them, you know this is an important order we need to get out, let's work together to try to accomplish this and get things done so that we can all prosper and get ahead of this. But as far as we are talking about goals, usually at the end of the year, I will sit down and write down the goals for the employees. You know, every employee is different. So, I will write down different goals for each employee" (M15).
Listening to employees. Activities targeted at collecting information and input from employees, ranging from observing whether they are comfortable with their work or showing any health problems, through encouraging questions, taking suggestions and criticisms from employees, and being open to being approached with any problems.	"I walk around 3 or 4 times a day. I often come in on the weekends as well and what I would do is simply go to people and say, is there anything in your mind that you would like to share with me? On an informal basis I probably get the majority of the information that way. People will not speak out in a group no matter how good a team they have. Some people are just too shy. A small portion comes up in a team environment; a lot of it comes up in those informal walks around. There have been times when people just stop and say, I have got an idea, why don't we try this kind of thing?" (M3).
Providing appreciation and feedback. Thanking employees for their job in general or a specific task completed; specific feedback addressing job performance, up to and including informal and formal evaluation, but not in a training context.	"I try to tell them if they are doing a good job. You know, I will say something to them. And … like with [the CEO], he's you know, he is way up here, you know, so I'm in here telling them, … 'cause they do do a good job, … people do 138 percent of what they were supposed to do. I mean that's a good job. And it shows, that's why it is up there, they did 130, … they did a good job and it is showing everybody else who takes a break in here, they are doing a good job and who is doing it" (M14).
Rewarding employees. Providing employees with unexpected breaks or early time off, or rewards for their performance, e.g., food or drink, presents for a special occasion; but not including wage increases, which are beyond the decision-making authority of a typical middle manager.	"I like to treat them. I bring in candy and some biscuits and they love that. So, in here, you do things to motivate them. What they like is, motivate them and lets them do some better work and they get to like you and they wanna do good for you. To make you look good" (M2).
Modeling work behavior. Manager functions as a role model of desired work behavior, works along with employees, and is knowledgeable about each task.	"I try to set the pace myself. I'm not one of the guys that, I don't stand there and just tell everybody what to do, I work right along with them, you know. So, I work faster to try to get them to work faster" (M4).

Table 5: (Continued)

Peer control. Manager's use of peer pressure to coerce an employee to adapt to desired behavior and work speed, or to exit the work unit or organization, if the desired fit or behavior is not accomplished.	"I can think of a few cases where people come and they'll work maybe a couple weeks and they just don't fit in. You can tell and I think some of them, maybe the workers that do work here made them feel uncomfortable enough where they just quit. I mean they could tell that they weren't fitting in or whatever" (M4).
Manager-induced team building. Activities targeted at integrating employees into productive teams and work processes; fitting employees within the organizational culture and transmitting unspoken norms; socialization in so far as it is a conscious effort by the manager, but not reliance on other employees to do so (peer control, training by coworkers).	"I usually try about once a month to do, we have weekly staff meetings, but usually in one of those staff meetings, once a month involve some kind of teamwork building exercise. So, it's really my goal to continue doing that. We do everything from the yoga, to here is some stuff and see who can build the tallest structure, to things that are a little bit more involved. So, I would like to continue to do that for some time. It seems in terms of the people that we have here I have noticed that people are staying longer. For some period of time we had a little bit more turnover but that has really decreased" (M3).
Training by coworkers. In addition to or instead of training through the supervisor, coworkers are put in charge of training a new employee, mostly through modeling the appropriate work behavior and basically completing the task in the presence of the new employee.	"When they come in to punch in, in the morning, they are introduced to all the foremen and as they come out, you know, we'll tell them, you know, you go out with the rest of the guys; they'll find something for you to do. … They'll start sweeping, they'll start greasing machines, getting the day rolling, so-to-speak. And most people that we've had in here follow along very well. So that is the type of training they get. If they can see it and see other people doing it, then they follow along for the most part" (M6).