

**C**

**E**



**Center for  
Effective  
Organizations**

---

**Social Structural Levers For Workplace  
Empowerment**

**CEO Publication  
T 93-22 (242)**

Gretchen M. Spreitzer

University of Southern California

November 1993

**Social Structural Levers For Workplace  
Empowerment**

**CEO Publication  
T 93-22 (242)**

Gretchen M. Spreitzer

University of Southern California

November 1993

## **SOCIAL STRUCTURAL LEVERS FOR WORKPLACE EMPOWERMENT**

### **Abstract**

This paper addresses the workunit design characteristics associated with individual feelings of empowerment in the workplace. Empowerment is defined as the "gestalt" of four psychological dimensions: a sense of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Five hypotheses describe expected relationships between workunit design characteristics (including an organic structure, sociopolitical support, access to information, access to resources, and the culture of the workunit) and a psychological sense of empowerment. The hypotheses are examined on a sample of middle managers from diverse units of a Fortune 50 organization. The findings suggest that a workunit which provides a wide supervisory span of control, sociopolitical support, access to information, and a culture that values human capital is facilitative to individual feelings of empowerment in the workplace. Contrary to expectations, an organic structure was found to inhibit empowerment, and access to resources was not found to be related to empowerment. Implications for research and practice are discussed, and directions for future research are provided.

-----

I would like to acknowledge the University of Southern California and the University of Michigan for financial support of this research. This paper is drawn from my dissertation work at the University of Michigan where my committee members included Robert Quinn, Susan Ashford, Karl Weick, Richard Bagozzi, and Marc Zimmerman. I would also like to thank Susan Ashford, Aneil Mishra, and Gerry Ledford for helpful comments and Neil Sendelbach for facilitating data collection.



## **Social Structural Levers for Workplace Empowerment**

In the past decade, organizations have begun to embrace notions of empowerment in the workplace (Kanter, 1983; Block, 1987). For example, McDonald's restaurants have "*empowered*" crew members to better respond to customer needs (Gibson, 1991). IBM has "*empowered*" its sales force with greater discretion in offering discounts and incentives without consulting the home office. In the Gulf War, the U.S. Armed Forces, long considered the epitome of command and control management, "*empowered*" units behind the Iraqi line to call in their own air support (Reibstein, 1991). Yet, what does it mean for an organization to be empowering? In spite of growing interest in issues of workplace empowerment by both researchers and practitioners, little theory or research exists regarding the characteristics of an empowering organization (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Thomas and Velthouse, 1990). While organizational researchers have begun to achieve consensus on a conceptualization what it means for an individual to feel empowered (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990; Spreitzer, 1992), little research has focused on the broader nomological network of empowerment in the workplace.

In this vein, the purpose of this paper is examine the workunit design characteristics of an empowering organization. First, a basic definition of empowerment is described. Second, a set of hypotheses articulates the workunit design characteristics associated with feelings of empowerment. Third, the research design to examine the hypotheses is described, and results are presented and discussed. Finally, implications for research and practice are provided, and directions for future research are noted.

### **A Definition of Empowerment**

Empowerment builds on a long history of research on alienation (e.g., Blauner, 1964; Marx, 1961; Seeman, 1959), participative management (e.g., Hackman and Oldham, 1980; McGregor, 1960), and motivation (e.g., Staw, 1976). Until recently, the construct of empowerment had not received adequate conceptualization or operationalization in the organizational studies literature. It had been subsumed within definitions of power (Mainiero,

1986) or self-efficacy (Conger and Kanungo, 1988). Recently, however, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) provided a breakthrough in conceptualizing empowerment by identifying four psychological dimensions of empowerment. In an independent analysis, Spreitzer (1992) identified and empirically validated a similar four dimensional psychological conceptualization of empowerment using a thematic analysis of the broader interdisciplinary literature on empowerment and a series of interviews with individuals about their personal experiences of empowerment in the workplace. The four dimensions identified by both Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and Spreitzer (1992) include a sense of meaning, a sense of competence, a sense of self-determination, and a sense of impact. Each dimension is described briefly below.

A sense of *meaning* is a fit between a person's job and his or her beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors (Brief and Nord, 1990). Meaningful activities create a sense of purpose, passion, and energy; they provide a personal connection to work. A sense of *competence* refers to a belief in one's capability to perform a job or task well (Gist and Mitchell, 1992). Competence refers to a sense of personal mastery over one's job. A sense of *self-determination* means to experience a sense of choice regarding how to execute a job or task (Deci, Connell, and Ryan, 1989). Self-determination involves having a sense of freedom and autonomy to make choices concerning work behavior (e.g., making decisions about work methods, pace, and effort). Finally, a sense of *impact* is a belief that one can influence strategic, administrative, and operating decisions in the organization (Ashforth, 1989). While self-determination is consistent with *job involvement* (i.e., a sense of control over one's job) in the participative management literature, impact is consistent with *organization or high involvement* (i.e., a sense of control over organizational outcomes) (Lawler, 1988). Impact involves having a sense of "voice" in the organization.

Though each of the four dimensions had been examined individually in previous research, little research has examined these dimensions simultaneously. Together the four dimensions of empowerment reflect a proactive, rather than passive, self-orientation with respect to the larger organizational context. Through these four dimensions, individuals

experience a sense of psychological ownership of their work and their organization. These four dimensions suggest that empowered individuals see themselves as able and competent to actively mold and influence their job and work environment in personally meaningful ways. In an empirical construct validation of empowerment, Spreitzer (1992) found that the four dimensions combined to form an overall "gestalt" of the experience of empowerment in the workplace. In sum then, empowerment is a constellation of the four dimensions described above which reflects a proactive mindset regarding the role of the self in the larger organizational context. For purposes of parsimony, the remainder of the paper will refer to this overall "gestalt" of psychological empowerment rather than the individual dimensions separately.

### **Workunit Design and Psychological Empowerment**

In this section of the paper, the nomological network of empowerment is expanded to examine the workunit design characteristics associated with individual empowerment. The study of the relationship between workunit design and empowerment is necessary to further understand the macro-micro linkages inherent in organizational life. Rousseau (1985) claims that there is a dearth of substantive, theory-driven research on macro-micro linkages regarding how individuals are influenced by the organization context in which they function.

Some theorists have portrayed the organizational social structure in terms of the *opportunities and constraints* it presents to individual behavior (Mowday and Sutton, 1993; Blau, 1987; Huber, 1990). *The basic proposition underlying the hypotheses described below is that an empowering design is one that provides opportunities for rather than constraints on individual behavior.* Traditional bureaucratic social structures, characterized by hierarchy, formalization, and centralization, constrain rather than provide opportunities for individual behavior. The rigidity of bureaucratic social structures has been argued to result in high social costs through alienation, reduced labor productivity, and decreased work satisfaction. For example, Marx saw bureaucracy as "inevitably engendering massive worker alienation through

large-scale capitalistic productions, factory discipline, propertyless labor uprooted from the land, and the workers' divorce from ownership" (Alexander, 1981: 43). In contrast, a design that liberates, rather than controls or constrains, individual behavior is believed to facilitate empowerment (Torbert, 1991; Walton, 1985).

In this study, five social structural characteristics are argued to create an empowering work context for individuals. The five characteristics include (1) an organic department structure where decision making is decentralized, goals are flexible, and tasks are not highly formalized, (2) sociopolitical support from key organizational constituencies, (3) information about organization and workunit strategy and performance, (4) resources that enable employees to take action in the organization, and (5) a workunit culture that emphasizes a focus on the importance of human capital in the future success of the organization. In contrast to bureaucratic social structures which aim to constrain individual behavior, these five characteristics are purported to have the contrasting purpose of liberating individual behavior by providing opportunities for individual behavior. Specific hypotheses regarding the manner in which these five design characteristics provide opportunities rather than constraints on individual behavior are described below.

### **Theoretical Rationale for Workunit Level Social Structure**

The design characteristics considered in the hypotheses below are those in the immediate vicinity of the individual, those of the workunit or department in which the individual is a member. The workunit was chosen as the appropriate design referent for examining the social-structural context for two reasons. First, departments across an organization, especially a large and complex organization, are not homogeneous; rather, they are highly differentiated.

Most research rests on an implicit assumption of homogeneity (Scott, *et al.*, 1972), positing uniformity of work and structural forms across participants and departments, although we know that differentiation is characteristic of complex organizations. Large variations in units within organizations have been documented by Hall (1962) and Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) [Comstock and Scott, 1977: 178].



A focus on organizational level social structural variables would average out those differences across workunits. Second, because the intent of the study is to understand empowerment within a work role, and because individual work roles tend to be specific to a particular context, the workunit rather than the total organization is the more appropriate context to examine (House, 1990). Thus, for these theoretical reasons, this paper focuses on the social-structural context at the department or workunit level of analysis, rather than a total organization level of analysis.

### **Social Structure Hypotheses**

**Organic Structure.** Structure is defined as the distribution of roles, positions, and responsibilities within a department and their systematic relationships to each other (James and Jones, 1976). Structure may be differentiated according to its tendencies toward mechanistic or organic characteristics (Burns and Stalker, 1961). Though published more than 30 years ago, the distinction between mechanistic and organic structures has proved highly durable because it captures fundamental properties of organizations (Courtright, Fairhurst, and Rogers, 1989). A mechanistic structure emphasizes rigid lines of authority, high formalization and specialization, and narrow spans of control. In contrast, an organic structure emphasizes flexible lines of authority, low formalization and specialization, and wide spans of control. Where mechanistic systems are thought to be more appropriate for stable, predictable organizational conditions, organic systems are believed to be more appropriate for conditions requiring high levels of adaptiveness (Mintzberg, 1983).

Because mechanistic systems have many mechanisms for system control and conformity, they encourage passive individual mindsets and behaviors (Pennings and Woiceshyn, 1987). In mechanistic structures, decision making is centralized, and individuals have limited opportunity for personal discretion (Kerr and Slocum, 1981). Previous research has found mechanistic systems to be related to higher levels of alienation (Berger and Cummings, 1979). Block (1987) argues that mechanistic systems inhibit empowerment by

fostering dependency, the denial of self-expression, negative forms of manipulation, and less meaningful organization goals. In contrast, organic systems because of their inherent flexibility exert few pressures for conformity. They facilitate a more active individual orientation and allow a range of employee responses to work requirements. Those who perceive their work environment as organic will be more likely to see themselves as active "sculptors" of the organization rather than as passive "sculpture" in the organization (Bell and Staw, 1989). Thus,

**Hypothesis 1:** Individuals who perceive their workunits to have a more *organic* structure will experience a higher sense of empowerment than individuals who perceive their departments to have a more *mechanistic* structure.

**Sociopolitical Support.** Sociopolitical support is defined as endorsement, approval, and legitimacy from various organizational constituencies and is typically gained from membership in organizational political networks (Kanter, 1983). Social networks define the social fabric of an organization and provide members with key channels for getting things done in the organization (Brass and Burkhardt, 1993; Ibarra, 1993). Support networks of particular importance include the individual's superior as well as his or her peers, subordinates, work group, cross-functional teams, and key senior managers.

Membership in support networks increases an individual's task interdependence with key organizational constituencies and thus enhances a sense of personal power (Crozier, 1964). In contrast, a lack of interdependence within sociopolitical networks may lead to feelings of alienation and powerlessness. Walton (1985) suggests the importance of organizational support, specifically mutual trust between superior and subordinate as well as cross-functional interaction, as a means for breaking down forces of domination in organizations. Westley (1990) argues that in order for managers to feel empowered, they must experience inclusion in strategic conversations with co-workers and superiors. Vogt and Murrell (1990) posit that interdependence and collaboration facilitate individual empowerment, and Gutierrez (1990)

advocates the importance of helping networks for empowerment within an organization context. Thus,

**Hypothesis 2:** Individuals who perceive that they have greater *sociopolitical support* from key organizational constituencies will experience a stronger sense of empowerment than individuals who perceive that they have less support.

**Access to Strategic Information.** Kanter suggests that in order to be empowering, those at the top of organizations "must make more information more available to more people at more levels through more devices" (1986: 5). Such information might include data about work flow, productivity, the external environment, the competition, and top management strategy regarding the future direction of the organization. Top management must emphasize immediate, direct communication in real time to give people the information they need to act (Lawler, 1988).

The basic logic underlying the relationship between strategic information and empowerment is that greater access to strategic organizational information allows individuals to see the "big picture" and to develop alternative frames of reference for understanding their role in the operations of the organization. Critical contingency and resource dependence (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978) theories suggest that greater access to information facilitates greater personal power in the system and enables work to be done. Greater access to information facilitates individual sense-making, especially during times of high uncertainty and complexity (Weick, 1979). As a result, an individual's confidence in his or her ability to perform and to have impact on the system is enhanced.

Daft and Lengel (1984) argued that information can be conceptualized along two dimensions: amount of information and richness of information. While too much information can create overload, many organizations withhold much more information than they provide (Frey, 1993). Thus with respect to empowerment, more information is preferred to less. Furthermore, rich information is preferable to less rich information. Rich information "can overcome different frames of reference or clarify ambiguous issues to change understanding in

a timely manner" (Daft and Lengel, 1986: 560). Rich information is particularly helpful in reducing uncertainty and equivocality thereby increasing a sense of control through greater understanding. Thus, more information, of a richer nature, is argued to be associated with greater feelings of empowerment.

"Until people feel informed about where they are headed overall (in terms of company vision), they don't feel capable of taking the initiative to solve a problem" (Kanter, 1986: 5). Nonaka (1988) considers the sharing of strategic information freely across levels and functions to be critical to an individual sense of control. Kouzes and Posner suggest that "without information, you can be certain that people will not extend themselves to take responsibility or vent their creative energies" (1987: 157). Block argues that in order to create an empowering environment, information should be cascaded throughout the organization:

*Sharing as much information as possible is the opposite of the military notion that only those that "need to know" should be informed. Our goal is to let people know of our plans, ideas, and changes as soon as possible. When we are reorganizing, we tell our people right away instead of waiting until the plan is fully formulated. When we shield our people we are acting as their parents and treating them like children. If we are trying to create the mindset that everyone is responsible for the success of this business, then our people need our complete information. We need to think of our subordinates and bosses as partners rather than as children or parents (1986: 90).*

Thus,

**Hypothesis 3:** Individuals who perceive that they have greater access to *strategic organizational information* will experience a stronger sense of empowerment than those who perceive they have less access.

**Access to Organizational Resources.** In Kanter's terms,

*[Access to organizational resources] means more general managers working through smaller business units; more project teams that have budgets; special resource pools of unallocated funds that people can tap to solve problems. In short, they make it easier for people to tap locally what they need to get things done [1986: 6].*

Examples of resources include funds, material, space, and time. Resources are critical for empowerment because they allow individuals to take initiative to get their work done.

The basic logic underlying the relationship between access to resources and empowerment is that resources enhance an individual's sense of control over environmental contingencies. At an individual level of analysis, resource dependence theory suggests that a lack of access to critical organizational resources contributes to feelings of powerlessness and dependency (Homans, 1958). Access to such resources enhances an individual's sense of control over environmental contingencies. Because resources play a critical role in power relationships in organizations, the lack of access to resources creates a strong sense of powerlessness (Hodson, 1991). Walton (1985) described an empowering system as one where individuals have appropriate authority to allocate spending and approve budgets. The outcomes of such systems are highly energized individuals who assume responsibility and ownership for their roles. In Nonaka's (1988) system of information creation, time, people, and capital are the critical resources. Top management is responsible for determining the overall direction of the company and vision. Beyond that, each individual and group has the authority to determine internal time lines and other resource allocations such as funding and staffing, thereby enhancing their sense of personal control and empowerment.

Thus,

**Hypothesis 4:** Individuals who perceive they have greater access to *workunit resources* will experience a stronger sense of empowerment than individuals who perceive they have less access.

**Workunit Culture.** Culture is the values and beliefs that produce cognitions and norms of behavior in organizations (Smircich, 1983). Culture provides a frame of reference through which individuals make sense of organization life (Weick, 1979). As a result, culture shapes behaviors, orders perceptions, and molds attitudes (Wiener and Vardi, 1990). Where organizational control is externalized through structure, it is internalized through culture (Ganster and Fusilier, 1989; Ray, 1977).

Empowering cultures value the acknowledgment, creation, and liberation of employees whereas disempowering cultures value control, order, and predictability (Evered and Selman, 1989). Manz and Sims (1989) suggest that empowering cultures develop a set of values around individual contribution and initiative rather than top down command and control. Consequently, an empowering culture embodies an "our employees are our most important resource" philosophy. Such a culture recognizes the critical value of human capital in the success of the organization. An empowering culture recognizes the importance of employees' creativity and initiative in maintaining organizational responsiveness to an ever more competitive external environment. Pascale (1990) describes the organizational values at Honda that facilitate a sense of empowerment:

*[Top management] believed that the enduring source of Honda's success was its employees. The task of top management was to release and channel their ideas. [Top management] rarely issued orders or gave directions. This approach was akin to Michelangelo's view of sculpting. Traditional sculptors approach their block of granite believing that a shape does not exist until the chisel creates it. Michelangelo believed the figure was already in the stone before he touched it. His task was to peel away the enshrouding marble and set it free. Honda regards the [organization's] primary role as 'freeing employees from the block of granite.' Whereas traditional managers might seek to engineer output from employees, Honda's approach is to discover latent ideas and initiatives and give them full rein [Pascale, 1990: 250].*

Thus,

**Hypothesis 5:** Individuals who work in departments which emphasize the *critical value of human capital for the success of the organization* will experience a stronger sense of empowerment than individuals who work in departments which emphasize other values.

These five hypotheses describe the basic elements of an empowering social structure. It should be noted that the relationship between social structure and empowerment may not be unidirectional. Over time, empowered individuals may have a reciprocal effect on their environment through proactive and innovative behavior. Because of their active perspective with regard to their work environment, empowered individuals are likely to create a more empowering environment through innovative and upward influencing behaviors; thus, the association between an empowering organizational environment and a psychological sense of empowerment may be mutually reinforcing through a feedback loop between behavior and context. These ideas are consistent with Bandura's (1978) three-way reciprocal determinism where (1) the external environment, (2) cognitive factors, and (3) behavior are perceived to be mutually reinforcing. Because of the bi-directionality of influence, people are both producers and products of their environment.

However, reciprocity does not mean that different sources of influence are of equal strength (Brief and Aldag, 1987). Nor do the reciprocal influences occur simultaneously. "It takes time for a causal factor to influence and to activate reciprocal influence" (Wood and Bandura, 1989: 262). In this study, it is assumed that, on average, the environment will have a more powerful effect on the individual than the converse. This assertion is supported by such theories as learned helplessness (Martinko and Gardner, 1982; Seligman, 1975) and organizationally induced powerlessness (Ashforth, 1989). Though outside the scope of this study, longitudinal studies will be necessary ultimately to clarify the direction of these linkages between organizational context and individual empowerment.

## **Research Design**

### **Sample and Procedures**

The hypotheses were examined with survey data collected from a sample of 393 middle managers representing diverse units of a Fortune 50 organization. This sample is interesting for studying empowerment because the traditional role of middle managers is undergoing

radical change as today's organizations struggle to become more efficient and responsive (Dopson and Stewart, 1990). These changes only exacerbate issues of empowerment for middle managers:

We hear over and over again that [middle] managers are feeling increasingly disenfranchised. Decision-making is moving higher and higher. Companies talk a good game about employee empowerment, but as times get tough, top management calls the shots (O'Reilly, 1992: 46).

Middle managers are also interesting theoretically because their work varies from relatively structured to relatively unstructured, and they work in a variety of different contexts (Johnson and Frohman, 1989). Moreover, middle managers have access to more resources and information than lower level management but less control over resources and information than upper level management (e.g., Izraeli, 1975).

Because of missing data on some variables, the final sample size used in the analyses was 372. The middle managers in the sample were approximately 93 percent male and over 85 percent white. Their mean age was 45.9 years. Seventy percent of the middle managers had at least a college education with many having some graduate training. Their mean tenure in the company was approximately 13 years, and their mean position tenure was just over three years. Though fairly homogenous from a demographic standpoint, this sample seems to be generally representative of the national population of middle managers (Torrington and Weightman, 1987; Johnson and Frohman, 1989).

The middle managers completing the survey were assured of complete confidentiality. Questionnaires were returned directly to the author's university for processing and only aggregate results were reported back to the organization. The data was collected at the beginning of a managerial development program. In one week intervals over a three year period, all middle managers in the company participated in the program. The middle managers who attended the program in a given week were randomly selected across all functions, locations, and divisions of the organization. The data for this study were collected from managers who participated in the program during the last four months of 1991 .



This mode of data collection had a number of advantages. First, because all middle managers participated in the program at some point in time over the three year period and because the date of their participation was selected randomly, there was little chance of selection bias. Selection bias can be a problem with data collected in conjunction with a managerial development program because participants are usually selected for a reason (e.g., high potential or poor performance). As a check for selection bias (i.e., that the managers who participated during this three month period might differ significantly from the other middle managers in the company), mean difference tests on performance and demographic variables were conducted. The middle managers included in the study were not found to be significantly different from the rest of the population of middle managers on variables including performance, gender, race, education, or tenure. Second, because the data were collected at the beginning of the managerial development program, a 100 percent response rate was obtained, further reducing the potential for selection bias. Third, multiple assessments of unit culture were collected from a set of the middle manager's subordinates, reducing potential problems of "same source" data bias.

### **Measures**

The four dimensions of empowerment were measured with self-assessments: three meaning items were adapted from Tymon's (1988) measure of meaningfulness; three competence items were adapted from Jones's (1986) self-efficacy measure; three self-determination items were adapted from Hackman and Oldham's (1980) autonomy scale; and three impact items were adapted from Ashforth's (1989) helplessness scale. Because empowerment is defined as a set of feelings, self-assessments are the appropriate mode of measurement. See the appendix for the actual items. All items used a seven-point Likert response format. To create an overall measure of empowerment, the items from each of the four dimensions were aggregated based on the results of the confirmatory factor analysis below.

The social-structural variables were measured with multiple items at the department or workunit level of analysis. The appendix contains the actual items. Five items regarding the middle manager's perception of the extent of the rigidity of authority relationships and goal and task formalization in his or her work unit were adapted from Zanzi's (1987) measure of organic structure. Less rigid lines of authority and less goal and task formalization were indicative of a more organic structure. The items use a five-point Likert response format. Based on the results of the confirmatory factor analysis described below, these items were aggregated to create a scale of perceived organic structure for use in the analyses which test the hypotheses. Two objective measures of organic structure, elements of organic structure not captured in Zanzi's measure, were also collected: a measure of the size of the middle manager's unit and his or her superior's span of control. A smaller unit size and wider superior span of control were indicative of a more organic structure. In addition to the perceptual organic structure scale described above, unit size and span of control are also included in the tests of the hypotheses as complementary, more objective measures of organic structure.

Because no suitable previous measures of sociopolitical support, access to strategic information, and access to information were available in the literature, items for these constructs were developed for use in this study. Five items measuring individual perceptions of the level of sociopolitical support received from various organizational constituencies (ranging from subordinates to peers to top management) were created. Three items assessing middle manager perceptions of the extent of access to strategic information and three items assessing the extent of access to organizational resources were also created. Based on the results of the confirmatory factor analysis described below, these items were aggregated to create separate scales for sociopolitical support, access to information, and access to resources which were then used in the analyses to test the hypotheses.

Five items from the Competing Values Model of Organization Culture (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1991) were used to assess unit culture. Because culture was defined as the *common*

values and assumptions espoused in the work unit, aggregated perceptions of the culture across a number of individuals were a more valid measure than a self-perception (Denison and Spreitzer, 1991). To gain a more valid measure of culture, the culture items were assessed by a group of the middle manager's subordinates. Subordinates perceptions, rather than peer or superior perceptions of the culture of the workunit, were used because subordinates were members of the same work unit as the middle managers and thus could more accurately describe its culture. The data supports the use of the subordinate responses. The middle managers own perceptions of their work culture were more strongly correlated with their subordinates' perceptions than with either their peers' or superiors' perceptions. Subordinate scores on the items were then aggregated to create a workunit measure of culture. To reflect this aggregation, this variable will be referred to as an *integrative* culture.

To collect the subordinate assessments of unit culture, each middle manager was provided with a package of surveys. The middle managers were instructed to distribute the surveys to a set of their subordinates with whom they interacted frequently on job related-matters and who knew them well. Complete questionnaires were returned by mail to the author's university for processing. All subordinates were assured of confidentiality as only aggregate data would be provided as feedback to the middle manager. Good cooperation was obtained; an average of four subordinates per middle manager responded to the questionnaire.

### **Analytical Procedures**

To assess the relationships between social structure and psychological empowerment, a two-step approach was employed: (1) confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were used to estimate the measurement models of the both the social structural and empowerment constructs in the model, and (2) regression analysis was used to estimate the structural relationships among the constructs in the model (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1989). Given that many of the measures in the study had not been validated in the previous research, the confirmatory factor analyses provides an initial assessment of the construct validity of the measures, an important

step before substantive analyses can be performed. Confirmatory and discriminant validity of the measures is particularly important to assure that the measures are distinct from one another empirically.

## Results

**Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Social Structural Variables.** Figure 1 illustrates the confirmatory factor analysis of the items measuring the five perceptual measures of the social structural constructs: organic structure, sociopolitical support, access to strategic information, access to resources, and an integrative culture. Because unit size and span of control were not perceptual measures and had single indicators, they were not included in the confirmatory factor analysis of the measurement model. Because they have low correlations with all of the other social structure variables, we can be confident that they are distinct from all other measures in the model.

After two items measuring perceptions of organic structure and one item measuring sociopolitical support were dropped due to low reliabilities, the model was found to be a good fit to the data: each item had a positive and significant loading on the construct it was purported to measure, adequate composite reliabilities were found for the items forming each factor, and the overall fit statistics were indicative of a good fit. See Table 1 for the actual results. One significant correlated error term between items measuring sociopolitical support was found; however, because the four items represent distinct support referents described in the theory, all four items were retained in the analysis. Each of the items loaded strongly on the appropriate factor with loadings ranging from .50 to .92. Composite reliabilities of each scale met or exceeded acceptable standards of .60 as set by Bagozzi & Yi (1988).<sup>1</sup> The overall fit statistics were indicative of a good fit of the data to the hypothesized measurement model. The adjusted goodness of fit (AGFI) met the .90 standard for acceptance, and the root

---

<sup>1</sup> Note: composite reliabilities which require a .60 standard of acceptability are different from Cronbach Alpha reliabilities which require a .70 standard of acceptability.

mean square residual (RMSR) was within the .05 cut off. The confirmatory factor analysis provides support for the convergent and discriminant validity of the five social structural constructs in the hypothesized measurement model (Bagozzi, 1981). Consequently, scales can be calculated for each construct and used in the regression analysis conducted below. The scales are computed using the mean of the construct's multiple measures.

-----  
 Figure 1 and Table 1 about here  
 -----

**Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Empowerment Variables.** Figure 2 illustrates the confirmatory factor analysis of the items measuring the four dimensions of empowerment: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. The model estimated was actually a second order confirmatory factor analysis. A second order model examines whether a second order factor represents the shared variance among a set of first order factors (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1989). In this case, the four dimensions of empowerment, or first order factors, are argued to together reflect a second order construct, a "gestalt" of empowerment. A second order CFA was conducted to provide empirical justification for creating an overall scale of empowerment from the four dimensions which could then be used in the analyses to test the hypotheses.

-----  
 Figure 2 about here  
 -----

The results suggest that the data were a good fit with the four factor model of empowerment (see Table 2): each item had a positive and significant loading on the first order dimension it was purported to measure, adequate composite reliabilities were found for the items forming each first order factor, each first order factor had positive and significant loadings on the second order empowerment factor, and the overall fit statistics were indicative of a good fit. Each of the items loaded strongly on the appropriate factor with loadings ranging from .66 to .90. Composite reliabilities for each scale were good ranging from .79 for competence to .88 for impact. Overall fit statistics indicated a good fit: the adjusted

goodness of fit (AGFI) achieved a value of .93, well above the .90 rule of thumb for a good fit, and the root mean square residual (RMSR) achieves a value of .044, below the .05 threshold value. This second order confirmatory factor analysis provides support for the convergent and discriminant validity of the four dimensions of empowerment as well as an overall construct of empowerment. Consequently, an index of empowerment can be constructed by aggregating the items from the four dimensions of empowerment.

-----  
 Table 2 about here  
 -----

In sum, the measurement models of both the independent and dependent variables indicate adequate construct validity of the measures, particularly their convergent and discriminant validity.

**Regression Analysis: Workunit Social Structure and Empowerment.** See Table 3 for descriptive statistics and correlations among all of the constructs in the model. A regression analysis was conducted with the index of empowerment as the dependent variable and the social structural characteristics as the independent variables. Three demographic variables which may be related to the social structural variables and empowerment (gender, age, and education) were controlled for in the regression analysis. Gender was controlled for because previous research has found that women in managerial positions may receive less sociopolitical support than male managers (Kanter, 1977). Age was controlled for because older middle managers may be perceived as plateaued and thus receive less sociopolitical support, information, and resources (Ettington, 1992). Education was also controlled for because more educated workers may feel a higher sense of competence, one of the four dimensions of empowerment.

-----  
 Table 3 about here  
 -----

Table 4 provides a summary of the regression results. Support for the hypotheses was mixed. With respect to hypothesis one, the relationship between organic structure and

empowerment received mixed support. The relationship between a wide supervisory span of control and empowerment was positive and significant as expected ( $B = .12$ ;  $p < .05$ ). The relationship between unit size and empowerment was negative, as expected, but failed to achieve significance ( $B = -.07$ ;  $p < .15$ ). However, the relationship between the measure of perceived organic structure, as measured by perceived low levels of centralization and low levels of goal/task formalization, and empowerment was highly significant and *negative* ( $B = -.20$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Support for hypothesis 2 was found as the relationship between sociopolitical support and empowerment was significant and positive ( $B = .15$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Support for hypothesis 3 was also found as the relationship between access to information and empowerment was significant and positive ( $B = .19$ ;  $p < .01$ ). Support for hypothesis four was not found; the relationship between access to resources and empowerment was not significant. Finally, support for hypothesis five was found as the relationship between an integrative culture and empowerment was significant and positive ( $B = .10$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Only one of the control variables, education ( $B = .13$ ;  $p < .05$ ) was significantly related to empowerment. In sum, support for most of the hypotheses was found in the regression analysis. The findings suggest that the relationship between social structure and empowerment may be more complex than commonly believed.

-----  
 Table 4 about here  
 -----

### Discussion

As hypothesized, sociopolitical support from key organizational constituencies was found to be an important predictor of empowerment. These results suggest that in order to feel empowered, employees must be integrated into the key political channels for getting work done in organizations. Many contemporary management practices are likely to fuel employee perceptions of strong sociopolitical support, and indirectly enhance empowerment. For example, collaborative rather than competitive work processes are likely to contribute to feelings of social support. Furthermore, self-managing and cross-functions teams broaden the

employee's membership in organizational networks and hence their sense of empowerment (Manz, 1990). Thus, organizations have many potential levers for enhancing sociopolitical support to affect feelings of empowerment.

Also, as hypothesized, access to information was found to be a key predictor of empowerment. Only through knowledge about the organization and its environment, can individuals feel a sense of psychological ownership of the company and begin to understand how their work role and behavior affect the organization's success. Information helps reduce uncertainty and equivocality by providing individuals with a great understanding of and control over their work environment (Sutton and Kahn, 1987). For example, the top manager at a small manufacturing company found that providing access to confidential company information through weekly state-of-the-business meetings was critical to employee's sense of empowerment (Frey, 1993). Thus, these findings suggest that strategic information is a useful lever for organizations working to become empowering to their workforce.

Further, as hypothesized, the culture of the workunit was an important predictor of empowerment. The culture of the workunit defines what is valued, what should be cared about. A culture that recognizes the critical value of human capital in the success of the organization helps employees to believe that they are important assets in the organization and that they can make a difference. Mission or vision statements which emphasize employees as critical organization assets send an important signal to employees about what is valued in the company (Howard, 1990). But the most critical display of values occurs during times of crisis. How are employees treated when the organization faces serious business problems? (Keichel, 1992). When the values of the organization emphasize the needs of the employees even during times of crisis, that culture will be experienced by employees as empowering.

The hypothesis linking a wide superior span of control and empowerment was also supported. Employees feel a greater sense of personal control when they don't have a superior looking over their shoulder whenever a decision needs to be made. A wide span of control, by definition, reduces the possibility of micro-management from those at the top of the



organization hierarchy. As contemporary organizations work to create flatter structures, wider spans of control are a natural outcome and hence these findings suggest that employees will tend to feel more empowered.

Thus, support for the hypotheses regarding sociopolitical support, access to information, workunit culture, and wide spans of control provide a clear understanding of some of the organizational levers which can be used to enhance employee feelings of empowerment. Nevertheless, the findings which were contrary to expectations also provide useful knowledge about the elements of an empowering or disempowering social structure.

The lack of support for hypothesis four suggests that having access to resources may not be necessary for individuals to feel empowered. This finding is intriguing. In non-business contexts, enhanced resources are rarely emphasized in empowerment interventions. For example, Gutierrez (1990) described a process of empowerment where social workers developed helping networks for women of color who had few resources on which to draw. Freire (1970) described a process of social class empowerment in a third world developing country where people had access to minimal resources. Hoffman (1978) described an empowerment intervention that focused on giving United Farm Workers greater power in spite of marginal physical and financial resources. These examples have a common theme; they suggest that empowerment is a process of building greater individual control for groups who traditionally have been *denied* access to organizational resources. These studies suggest that access to resources is not necessary for people to feel empowered.

The lack of a significant relationship between resources and empowerment may also be due to the context of the study. In the highly competitive and recessionary times facing this organization, it was being forced to "do more with less" and "become leaner," as evidenced in the widespread emphases on cost reductions and downsizing underway. In such a context, resources were quite scarce. Because the lack of access to resources was likely perceived as common across the middle managers and as the result of external constraints rather than personal limitations, having access to resources did not seem to enter into these manager's

psychological equation of empowerment. Under these circumstances, it appears that having to strategic information may substitute for access to resources. Further research, in more financially healthy organizations, is necessary to further understand the relationship between access to resources and empowerment.

The second unexpected result was the negative relationship between individual perceptions of an organic structure and empowerment. One reason for this unexpected negative relationship may be that individuals perceive flexible authority relationships and minimal goal/task formalization as chaotic rather than liberating. This may be particularly true in large organizations with traditional, hierarchical, bureaucratic structures. A highly flexible goal and/or task may inject uncertainty and ambiguity. For example, little goal definition may diminish a sense of empowerment as individuals may encounter goal conflict across various stakeholders. Similarly, imprecise lines of authority may create uncertainty as individuals attempt to fulfill the expectations of numerous stakeholders in the organization. Research has shown that role ambiguity and conflict threaten personal control and create stress (Katz and Kahn, 1978). Conversely, clarity in goal setting has been found to be an important determinant of effectiveness (Locke, Shaw, Saari, and Latham, 1981). Thus, the perceptual measure of organic structure may be unintentionally picking up the effects of role ambiguity or uncertainty rather than organic structure.

The negative relationship between perceived organic structure and empowerment may also be due to the socialization of these middle managers in an organization that as a whole may be considered a machine bureaucracy, in Mintzberg's terms (1979). In a machine bureaucracy, a mechanistic structure would be favored over an organic structure. In such a system, goals that are not well defined, lines of authority that are not precise, and tasks that are not rigidly designed would be looked up with disdain. Thus, this negative finding between organic structure and empowerment may be partially due to fact that middle managers were socialized to see a system with organic characteristics as inefficient.

In sum, following the general proposition posited in the theoretical development, these results suggest that a wider span of superior control, greater sociopolitical support, more access to information, and a stronger employee-oriented culture do provide *opportunities* for individual behavior and are thus empowering to employees. On the other hand, perceptions of an organic structure, seen as chaotic due to too much ambiguity and uncertainty, provide more of a *constraint* on individual behavior.

## Conclusion

### Research Implications

An important contribution to the research literature is the examination of macro-micro linkages in organizational studies. Though intuitively logical, there has been a dearth of theory-driven meso-level research which has examined the relationship between organizational social structure and individual mindset (Rousseau, 1985). The social-structural characteristics examined in this research reflect the conditions Aktouf (1992) argues are necessary for "vital work." As Aktouf describes,

[In today's organizations], all employees must be active and intelligent participants. But traditional management is not at all prepared for this change. And, what is more serious, management lacks the conceptual and theoretical means to grasp the magnitude of coming upheavals. Straightjacketed in traditional theory, solidly anchored in functionalism and the ideology of consensus, many management theorists cannot see that such dramatic shifts in the factors of success require an equally dramatic shift in management philosophy and in the conception of work and the worker (1992: 410).

This research responds to Aktouf's plea.

To my knowledge, this paper is one of few *data-driven* studies which examines the nomological network of individual empowerment in the workplace. This study examines a set of workunit design characteristics that contrast with the traditional assumptions of bureaucratic, hierarchical design. The findings suggest implications for developing enhanced

theories of organization design that may be appropriate for post-industrial organizational forms.

From a methodological perspective, this research also contributes to the literature by developing and validating instrumentation for assessing both individual empowerment and elements of an empowering social structure. Validation of measures is a critical step before substantive research can be conducted. These validated measures can be used in future research examining the dynamics of empowerment in the workplace.

### **Practical Implications**

The research findings suggest some practical implications as well. This paper articulates the organization design levers that are likely to facilitate empowerment in the workplace. The findings suggest that empowering organizations have wide spans of control, develop open communication channels, create extensive sociopolitical networks, and nurture a culture which values human capital for organizational success. Furthermore, an empowering structure is one that encourages autonomy yet holds ambiguity in check with clear vision and direction from top management. The results seem congruent with the type of organization articulated in Nonaka's (1988) middle-up-down management. In his management system, "top management creates a vision or dream, and middle management creates and implements concrete concepts to solve and transcend the contradictions arising from gaps between what exists at the moment and what management hopes to create" (1988: 9). In Nonaka's model, middle managerial freedom and autonomy are encouraged while ambiguity is kept within tolerable limits. The findings of this study suggest that the process of creating an empowering organization system is more complex than commonly believed.

### **Directions for Future Research**

Though this paper takes some important steps in understanding the relationship between organizational social structure and psychological empowerment, questions have emerged and

suggest some directions for future research. First, only a limited set of social structural variables were discussed in this paper. The effects of leadership, training, and rewards as well as other contemporary human resource management practices (such as self-managing team structures) on empowerment should be examined in future research. The relationship between social-structural variables and empowerment must also be examined across levels of the organization hierarchy and in more demographically diverse samples to assess the generalizability of the findings. Further research across organizational contexts, particularly with respect to service and global perspectives, is also warranted.

Future research should also examine the behavioral and organizational outcomes of psychological empowerment. There are many claims in the popular business press about the benefits of empowerment, most unsubstantiated except for anecdotal evidence. Such benefits are believed to include increased productivity, innovation and risk-taking, employee commitment and satisfaction, quality, and customer satisfaction. The potential costs of empowerment must also be addressed in future research. Potential costs might include among other things greater labor costs in terms of training and development of both management and employees, poor decision making by employees, and higher potential for employee stress. As Bowen and Lawler suggest "there is still precious little research on the consequences of empowerment ... more systematic research must examine whether this array of benefits and costs fully captures the "whys" (and "why nots") of empowerment" (1992: 35). The behavioral and organizational outcomes of empowerment must be studied in systematic, rigorous research.

Future research should also examine the joint effects of organization design and dispositional characteristics. House (1988) argues that motivational personality traits such as dominance, need for power, and Machiavellianism may be associated with individual empowerment. An understanding of the interactions between social structure and dispositional characteristics will further extend our knowledge of macro-micro linkages in organizations.

Clearly, the empirical study of empowerment in the workplace is in its infancy. This research takes some insightful steps into the relationship between social structure and empowerment. The hope is that by clarifying these relationships, more organizational scholars will embark on substantive research addressing the dynamics of empowerment in the workplace. Further, the hope is that these research findings will provide guidance to business practitioners as they endeavor to create organizational social structures which are empowering to enable greater organizational responsiveness.

## REFERENCES

- Aktouf, Omar. 1992. Management and theories of organizations in the 1990s: Toward a critical radical humanism. Academy of Management Review, 17(3): 407-431.
- Alexander, Kenneth O. 1981. On work and authority: Issues in job enlargement, job enrichment, worker participation, and shared authority. American Journal of Economics and Sociology, 43-54.
- Ashforth, Blake E. 1989. The experience of powerlessness in organizations. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 43: 207-242.
- Bagozzi, R.P., and Yi, Y. 1988. On the evaluation of structural equation models. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 16: 74-94.
- Bagozzi, Richard P. 1981. An examination of the validity of two models of attitude. Multivariate Behavioral Research, 16: 323-359.
- Bandura, Albert. 1978. The self system in reciprocal determinism. American Psychologist. 33: 345-369.
- Bell, Nancy E., & Staw, Barry M. 1989. People as sculptors versus sculpture: The roles of personality and personal control in organizations. In M.B. Arthur, D.T. Hall, and B.S. Lawrence (eds.) Handbook of Career Theory. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Berger, Chris J., and Cummings, L.L. 1979. Organizational structure, attitudes, and behavior. In Staw (ed.) Research in Organizational Behavior. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Block, Peter. 1987. The empowered manager: Positive political skills at work. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Blau, Peter, 1987. Contrasting theoretical perspectives. In J. Alexander, B. Giesen, R. Muench, and N. Smelser's (eds.) The Macro-micro link. University of California Press.
- Blauner, Robert. 1964. Alienation and freedom: The factory worker and his industry. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Bowen, David E., & Lawler, Edward E. 1992. The empowerment of service workers: What, why, how, and when. Sloan Management Review, Spring 1992: 31-39.
- Brass, Daniel J., and Burkhardt, Marlene E. 1993. Potential power and power use: An investigation of structure and behavior. Academy of Management Journal, 36: 441-470.
- Brief, Arthur P., & Nord, Walter R. 1990. Meanings of Occupational Work. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
- Brief, Arthur, and Aldag, Ramon J. 1981. The "self" in work organizations: A conceptual review. Academy of Management Review, 6(1): 75-88.
- Burns, T., & Stalker, GM. 1961. The management of innovation. London: Tavistock.
- Comstock, Donald E., and Scott, W. Richard. 1977. Technology and the structure of subunits: Distinguishing individual and workgroup effects. Administrative Science Quarterly, 22: 177-202.

- Conger, Jay A. & Kanungo, Rabindra N. 1988 The empowerment process: Integrating theory and practice. Academy of Management Review, 13(3): 471-482.
- Courtright, John A., Fairhurst, Gail T., and Rogers, L. Edna. 1989. Interaction patterns in organic and mechanistic systems. Academy of Management Journal, 32: 773-802.
- Crozier, Michael. 1964. The bureaucratic phenomenon. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Daft, Richard L., and Lengel, Robert H. 1986. Organizational information requirements, media richness, and structural design. Management Science, 32(5); 554-571.
- Daft, Richard L., and Lengel, Robert H. 1984. Information richness: A new approach to managerial behavior and organization design. Research in Organizational Behavior, 6: 191-233.
- Deci, Edward L., Connell, James P., & Ryan, Richard M. 1989. Self-determination in a work organization. Journal of Applied Psychology, 74: 580-590.
- Denison, Daniel R., and Spreitzer, Gretchen M. 1991. Organizational culture and organization development: A competing values approach. In R.W. Woodman and W.A. Pasmore (eds.) Research in Organization Change and Development. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- de Tocqueville, Alexis. 1945. Democracy in America. New York: Vintage Books.
- Dopson, Sue and Stewart, Rosemary. 1990. What is happening to middle management? British Journal of Management, 1: 3-16.
- Ettington, Deborah. 1993. Successfully plateaued middle managers. Presentation at the National Academy of Management Meetings, Atlanta, Georgia.
- Evered, Roger D. & Selman, James C. 1989. Coaching and the art of management. Organizational Dynamics.
- Freire, Paulo 1970. Pedagogy of the oppressed. New York: The Seabury Press.
- Frey, Robert. 1993. Empowerment or else. Harvard Business Review, September-October: 80-94.
- Ganster, Daniel C., and Fusilier, Marcelline, R. 1989. Control in the workplace. In C.I. Cooper, and I. Robertson (eds.) International Review of Industrial and Organizational Psychology.
- Gibson, Richard. 1991. McDonald's says 'value pricing' helping business. Wall Street Journal, September 29.
- Gist, Marilyn, & Mitchell, Terrence N. 1992. Self-efficacy: A theoretical analysis of its determinants and malleability. Academy of Management Review, 17: 183-211.
- Gutierrez, Lorraine. 1990. Working with women of color: An empowerment perspective. Social Work, March: 149-153.



- Hackman, J. Richard, & Oldham, Greg R. 1980. Work redesign. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley
- Hodson, Randy. 1991. The active worker: Compliance and autonomy in the workplace. Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 20: 27-78.
- Hoffman, Cecil. 1978. Empowerment movements and mental health: Locus of Control and commitment to the United Farm Workers. Journal of Community Psychology, 6: 216-221.
- Homans, G.C. 1958. Social behavior as exchange. American Journal of Sociology, 63: 597-606.
- House, Robert. 1990. The distribution and exercise of power in mechanistic and organic organizations. Working paper. The Wharton School of Management. The University of Pennsylvania.
- Howard, Robert. 1990. Values make the company: An interview with Robert Haas. Harvard Business Review, September-October: 133-144.
- Huber, J. 1990. Macro-micro links in gender stratification. American Sociological Review, 55: 1-10.
- Ibarra, Herminia. 1993. Network centrality, power, and innovation involvement: Determinants of technical and administrative roles. Academy of Management Review, 36: 471-501.
- Izraeli, E. 1975. The middle manager and the tactics of power expansion: A case study. Sloan Management Review, 16(2): 57-70.
- James, L.R., & Jones, A.P. 1976. Organizational structure: A review of structural dimensions and their conceptual relationships with individual behavior. Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, 16: 74-113.
- Johnson, Leonard W., and Frohman, Alan L. 1989. Identifying and closing the gap in the middle of organizations. Academy of Management Executive, 3: 107-114.
- Jones, Gareth R. 1986. Socialization tactics, self-efficacy, and newcomer's adjustments to organizations. Academy of Management Journal, 29: 262-279.
- Joreskog, Karl G., and Sorbom, Dag. 1989. Lisrel 7: A Guide to Program and Applications, 2nd Edition. Chicago: Spss Inc.
- Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. 1986. Empowering people to act on ideas. Executive Excellence, February: 5-6.
- Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. 1983. The change masters. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. 1977. Men and women of the corporation. New York: Basic Books.
- Katz, Donald., & Kahn, Robert L. 1978. The social psychology of organizations. New York: Wiley.
- Keichel, Walter. 1992. When management regresses. Fortune, March 9: 157-159.

- Kerr, Steven, & Slocum, John W., Jr. 1981. Controlling the performances of people in organizations. In P. Nystrum and W. Starbuck (eds.) Handbook of organizational design (vol. 2). New York: Oxford University Press: 116-134.
- Kouzes, James M, & Posner, Barry Z. 1987. The leadership challenge: How to get extraordinary things done in organizations. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Lawler, Edward E. 1988. Strategies for Involvement. Academy of Management Executive.
- Locke, Edwin A., Shaw, K.N., Saari, L.M., & Latham, Gary P. 1981. Goal setting and task performance." 1969-1980. Psychological Bulletin, 129.
- Mainiero, Lisa A. 1986. Coping with powerlessness: The relationship of gender and job dependency to empowerment-strategy usage. Administrative Science Quarterly, 31: 633-653.
- Manz, Charles C. 1990. Beyond self-managing work teams: Toward self-leading teams in the workplace. Research in Organizational Change and Development, 4: 273-299.
- Manz, Charles C., and Sims, Henry. 1989. Superleadership: Teaching others to lead themselves. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Martinko, Mark J., and Gardner, William L. 1982. Learned helplessness: An alternative explanation for performance deficits. Academy of Management Review, 7: 195-204.
- Marx, Karl. 1961. Economic and philosophical manuscripts of 1844. Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House.
- McGregor, Douglas. 1960. The human side of enterprise. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Mishra, Aneil. 1992. Organizational responses to crisis: The role of mutual trust and top management teams. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. The University of Michigan.
- Mintzberg, Henry. 1983. Structure in fives: Designing effective organizations. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Mintzberg, Henry. 1979. The structuring of organizations: A synthesis of research. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Mowday, Richard T., and Sutton, Robert I. 1993. Organization behavior: Linking individuals and groups to organization context. Annual Review of Psychology, 44: 195-229.
- Niehoff, Brian P., and Moorman, Robert H. 1993. Justice as a mediator of the relationship between methods of monitoring and organizational citizenship behavior. Academy of Management Journal, 36: 527-556.
- Nonaka, Ikujiro. 1988. Toward middle-up-down management: Accelerating information creation. Sloan Management Review, Spring: 9-18.
- O'Reilly, Brian. 1992. Preparing for leaner times. Fortune, January 28: 40-47.
- Pascale, Richard T. 1990 Managing on the edge: How the smartest companies use conflict to stay ahead. New York: Simon and Schuster.

- Pennings, Johannes M., & Woiceshyn, Jaana. 1987. A typology of organizational control and its metaphors. Research in the Sociology of Organizations, 5: 73-104.
- Pfeffer, Jeffrey, and Salancik, Gerald. 1978. The external control of organizations. New York: Harper and Row.
- Quinn, Robert E., and Spreitzer, Gretchen M. 1991. The psychometrics of the competing values culture instrument and an analysis of the impact of organization culture on quality of life. In R.W. Woodman and W.A. Pasmore (eds.) Research in Organization Change and Development. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Ray, Carol A. 1986. Corporate culture: The last frontier of control. Journal of Management Studies, 23: 287-297.
- Reibstein, Larry. 1991. The gulf school of management. Newsweek, April 1: 34-38.
- Rousseau, Denise. 1985. Issue of level in organizational research: Multi-level and cross-level perspectives. Research in Organization Behavior, 7: 1-37.
- Seeman, Melvin. 1959. On the meaning of alienation. American Sociological Review, 24: 783-791.
- Seligman, Martin. 1975. Helplessness: On depression, development, and death. San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Co.
- Smircich, Linda. 1983. Concepts of culture and organizational analysis. Administrative Science Quarterly, 28: 339-358.
- Spreitzer, Gretchen M. 1992. When organizations dare: The dynamics of empowerment in the workplace. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. The University of Michigan School of Business.
- Staw, Barry M. 1976. Motivation in organizations: Toward synthesis and redirection. In B.M. Staw and G.R. Salancik (eds.) New Directions in Organizational Behavior. Malabar, FL: Robert Krieger Publishing
- Sutton, Robert and Kahn, Robert. 1987. Prediction, understanding, and control as antidotes to stress. In J. Lorsch (ed.) Handbook of Organizational Behavior.
- Thomas, Kenneth W. & Velthouse, Betty A. 1990. Cognitive elements of empowerment: An "interpretive" model of intrinsic task motivation. Academy of Management Review, 15: 666-681.
- Torbert, William R. 1991. The power of balance: Transforming self, society, and scientific inquiry. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Torrington, Derek, and Weightman, Jane. 1987. Middle managerial work. Journal of General Management, 13: 74-89.
- Tymon, Walter. 1988. An empirical investigation of a cognitive model of empowerment. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Temple University.
- Vogt, Judith F., and Murrell, Kenneth L. 1990. Empowerment in organizations. San Diego: University Associates.

Walton, Richard. 1985. From control to commitment in the workplace. Harvard Business Review, March-April, 77-84.

Weick, Karl E. 1979. The social psychology of organizing. New York: Random House.

Westley, Frances. 1990. Middle managers and strategy: Microdynamics of inclusion. Strategic Management Journal, 11.

Wiener, Yoash, & Vardi, Yoav. 1990. Relationships between organizational culture and individual motivation -- A conceptual integration. Psychological Reports, 67: 295-306.

Wood, Robert, and Bandura, Albert. 1989. Social cognitive theory of organizational management. Academy of Management Review, 14: 361-284.

Zanzi, Alberto. 1987. How organic is your organization? Determinants of organic/mechanistic tendencies in a public accounting firm. Journal of Management Studies, 24(2): 125-142.

**Table 1**  
**Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Social Structural Variables**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Lambda's</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>
<b>Perceived Organic Structure</b>		.60
Goals are well defined for the total unit.	.60	
Lines of authority are precisely defined.	.63	
Most tasks performed at the lower levels of the total unit are well defined.	.50	
<b>Sociopolitical Support</b>		.76
I have the support I need from my peers to do my job well.	.71	
I have the support I need from my subordinates to do my job well.	.64	
I have the support I need from my workgroup or team to do my job well.	.69	
I have the support I need from my immediate superior to do my job well.	.63	
<b>Access to Strategic Information</b>		.85
I have access to the strategic information I need to do my job well.	.68	
I understand top management's vision of the organization.	.85	
I understand the strategies and goals of the organization	.90	
<b>Access to Resources</b>		.87
I have access to the resources I need to do my job well.	.80	
I can obtain the resources necessary to support new ideas and improvements in my unit.	.92	
When I need additional resources to do my job, I can usually get them.	.85	
<b>Unit Culture</b>		.86
Participation and open discussion	.82	
Flexibility and decentralization	.61	
Assessing employee concerns and ideas	.83	
Creative problem solving processes	.56	
Human relations, teamwork, cohesion	.85	

**Overall Fit Statistics:**

**AGFI=.90**

**RMSR=.05**

**Table 2**  
**Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis for the Empowerment Items**

<b>Items</b>	<b>Lambda's</b>	<b>Composite Reliability</b>
<b>Meaning</b>		<b>.87</b>
The work I do is meaningful.	.75	
The work I do is very important to me.	.86	
My job activities are personally meaningful to me.	.88	
<b>Competence</b>		<b>.79</b>
I am confident about my ability to do my job.	.66	
I am self-assured about my capability to perform my work.	.90	
I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.	.76	
<b>Self-Determination</b>		<b>.81</b>
I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job.	.74	
I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work.	.70	
I have considerable opportunity for independent and freedom in how I do my job.	.68	
<b>Impact</b>		<b>.88</b>
My impact on what happens in my department is large.	.89	
I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department.	.90	
I have significant influence over what happens in my department.	.73	
<b>Empowerment (Second Order Loadings)</b>		
Meaning	.64	
Competence	.54	
Self-determination	.80	
Impact	.78	

**Overall Fit Statistics:**

**AGFI = .925**

**RMSR = .044**

**Table 3**  
**Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Scales in the Model<sup>a,b</sup>**

Scale	Mean	Std Dev	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
<b>1. Perceived Organic Structure</b>	2.28	.74	.60										
<b>2. Span of Control</b>	5.36	5.92	.04	n/a									
<b>3. Size</b>	67.61	154.29	-.01	.01	n/a								
<b>4. Support</b>	5.14	.84	-.21	-.07	-.17	.76							
<b>5. Resource</b>	4.19	1.16	-.15	.00	-.08	.50	.87						
<b>6. Information</b>	4.78	.97	-.20	-.02	.00	.57	.53	.85					
<b>7. Culture</b>	5.09	.77	.02	-.04	-.04	.11	.04	-.01	.86				
<b>8. Meaning</b>	5.89	.78	-.18	.07	.12	.15	.09	.18	.06	.87			
<b>9. Competence</b>	5.69	.84	-.20	.12	-.08	.26	.18	.24	.14	.32	.79		
<b>10. Self-Determination</b>	5.51	.83	-.14	.08	.10	.20	.18	.23	.08	.38	.36	.81	
<b>11. Impact</b>	5.53	.90	-.21	.03	-.01	.20	.15	.23	.07	.46	.29	.54	.88

<sup>a</sup> Composite reliabilities are reported along the diagonal.

<sup>b</sup> Correlations above .10 are significant at  $p < .05$ ; correlations above .13 are significant at  $p < .01$ .

All variables are measured on a 7-point scale with the exception of perceived organic structure which is measured on a 5-point scale.

**Table 4**  
**Multiple Regression Results**

<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>Overall Empowerment</b>
<i>Control Variables</i>	
<b>Gender</b>	-.01
<b>Age</b>	.04
<b>Education</b>	.13*
<i>Predictor Variables</i>	
<b>Organic Structure</b>	
<b>Perceived Organic Structure</b>	-.20*
<b>Unit Size</b>	-.07
<b>Span of Control</b>	.12*
<b>Sociopolitical Support</b>	.15*
<b>Access to Information</b>	.19**
<b>Access to Resources</b>	.00
<b>Integrative Culture</b>	.10*
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	.19
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	.16
<b>F</b>	7.57***

\* p < .05      \*\* p < .01      \*\*\* p < .001



## Appendix

### Empowerment Items

#### **Meaning**

- The work I do is meaningful.
- The work I do is very important to me.
- My job activities are personally meaningful to me.

#### **Competence**

- I am confident about my ability to do my job.
- I am self-assured about my capability to perform my work.
- I have mastered the skills necessary for my job.

#### **Self-Determination**

- I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job.
- I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work.
- I have considerable opportunity for independent and freedom in how I do my job.

#### **Impact**

- My impact on what happens in my department is large.
- I have a great deal of control over what happens in my department.
- I have significant influence over what happens in my department.

### Social Structural Items

#### **Sociopolitical Support**

- I have the support I need from my superior to do my job well.
- I have the support I need from my peers to do my job well.
- I have the support I need from my subordinates to do my job well.
- I have the support I need from my workgroup or team to do my job well.
- I have the support I need from top management to do my job well.

#### **Access to Strategic Information**

- I have access to the strategic information I need to do my job well.
- I understand top management's vision of the organization
- I understand the goals of the organization

#### **Access to Resources**

- I have access to the resources I need to do my job well.
- I can obtain the resources necessary to support new ideas and improvements in my unit.
- When I need additional resources to do my job, I can usually get them.

#### **Unit Culture: Describe the operating values of the unit in which the manager works**

- Participation and open discussion
- Flexibility and decentralization
- Assessing employee concerns and ideas
- Creative problem solving processes
- Innovation and change
- Human relations, teamwork, cohesion

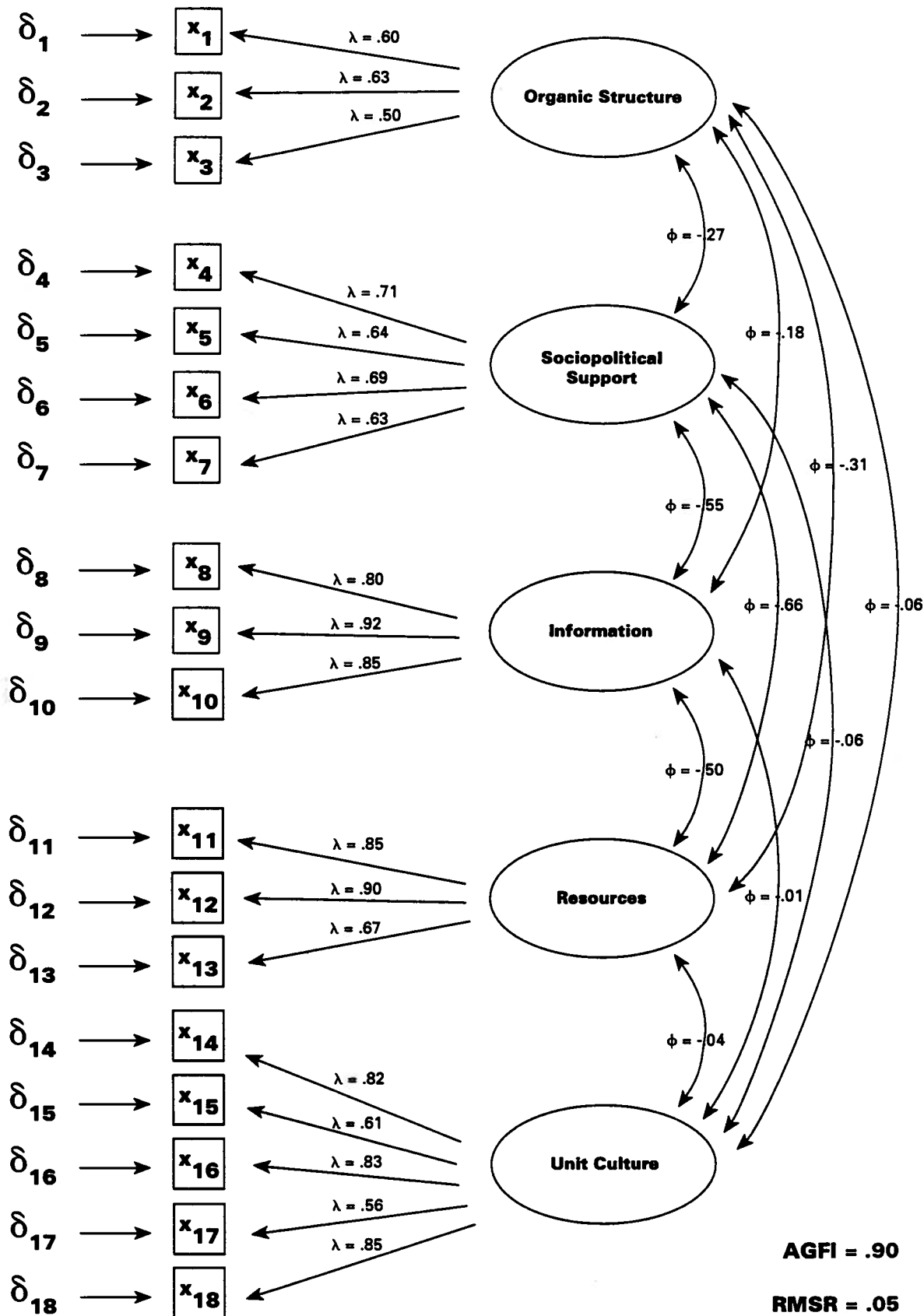
### Appendix (continued)

#### Perceived Organic Structure

Goals are well defined for the total unit.	1 2 3 4 5	Goals are not well defined for the total unit.
Lines of authority are precisely defined.	1 2 3 4 5	Lines of authority are not precisely defined.
Most tasks performed at the lower levels of the total unit are well defined	1 2 3 4 5	Most tasks performed at the lower levels of the are not well defined
Routine solutions exist to perform many tasks	1 2 3 4 5	New solutions must be continuously found for each job
It is relatively easy to predict in advance how each job is to be	1 2 3 4 5	It is difficult to predict in advance how each job is to be performed

How many individuals, besides yourself, report directly to your immediate superior?

Figure 1  
**Confirmatory Factor Analysis**  
**Social Structural Analysis**



**Figure 2**  
**Second Order Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

