SEEING THROUGH ORGANIZATION: THE EXPERIENCE OF SOCIAL RELATIONS AS CONSTITUTIVE

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(ABSTRACT)

This study reframes the relationship between people and organization to reveal the constitutive quality of social relations. While agreeing with Karl Weick that organization emerges in the process of interaction, the study goes beyond Weick to examine in greater depth the quality of that interaction. A systemic perspective is adopted, according to which people exist in relationship to one another and are made different by their interdependence; people like organizations are constituted by their social relations. The quality of their interaction thus determines the consciousness they bring to the organizing process and the nature of organization itself. The study explores how people are shaped by their interactions with others and considers the implications for both individual and organization.

The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in the work of Mary Parker Follett and family systems theorists. While Follett's ideas prove useful in elucidating the process of organization generally, family systems theory speaks to the psychology of that process. In this study, the two are theoretically integrated to capture the human dynamic that fuels the patterns of relating that constitute organization.

The resulting framework is used in the analysis of encounters between supervisors, the people who report to them, and the people to whom they report.

Field research for this study was conducted at a federal agency through interviews with supervisors regarding their experiences interacting with others in the workplace. The interview was designed to address two broad research concerns: (1) how individuals see themselves and their actions shaped through interaction; and (2) how individuals experience interaction as enabling them to act. In the presentation of findings, different patterns of interaction are identified and illustrated with accounts from the interviews, highlighting the factors that contribute to each pattern's underlying dynamic. The implications of these patterns for how we think about organization are then addressed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The topic of this dissertation is very much a product of my more than ten years of work experience in government. Throughout my career I have been troubled by the extent to which people working in public organizations seem to become alienated. At first I attributed this phenomenon to bureaucratic structure. I began to suspect, however, that the roots of the problem were more elemental, that the problem of alienation, or conversely the release of human potential, derives from the social relations that constitute organization. This prompted me to think about the fundamental nature of organization from a different perspective. The dissertation is a first effort at exploring the ramifications of this perspective for how we think about organization.

When I refer to the "fundamental nature" of organization the reference is not simply to what characterizes organization but to what constitutes it, what makes it what it is. This is important because how we think about organization influences how we experience and come to know it. For this reason, the topic of my dissertation often has been the source of confusion for people. In the course of conversation most will assume that I am addressing myself to organization behavior, that in the dissertation I am examining human behavior <u>in</u> the

context of organization. These people typically make sense of the dissertation topic in terms of their existing frame of reference regarding organization. While I have been disheartened by these encounters, I have found the response understandable. During the process of researching and writing this dissertation I have had to be ever-vigilant in order to prevent a return to previous habits of mind. Metaphorically, the squinting of eyes captures the shift in perception, with its attending clarity, that I have employed to sustain through the dissertation process a new and different perspective regarding organization.

How We Think About Organization

Organizations are populated by people. But our understanding of them, and our sense of the people who occupy them, often is shaped by assumptions that fail to account adequately for the essential humanness of organization. In part this is because we tend to think and talk about organizations as if they enjoy a concrete existence independent of the people who constitute them. Indeed, the language I have used here suggests that people merely inhabit organizations rather than create and sustain them.

The structure of the study of organizations reflects and reinforces this perception. The distinction made between organization theory and organization behavior is telling. While organization theory is defined as the study of so-called

"formal organizations" (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), organization behavior is described as the study of the actions and attitudes of people within organizations (Robbins, 1988). This distinction is an artificial one because the study of each necessarily makes assumptions about, and has implications for, the study of the other. An organization does not exist without the people who constitute it, and people in their interaction are always in some way organized, existing in relationship to one another.

This dissertation is grounded in the idea that organization emerges in the process of human interaction, that social relations are constitutive of organization. The dynamic that fuels interaction determines the nature of organization, whether the organization functions in a progressive or regressive fashion. To function in a progressive fashion entails effectively meeting the ever-changing circumstances of its existence, and in so doing contributing to its future capacity to do so. To function regressively entails undermining such capacity. Importantly, the dynamic that fuels interaction is a product of the consciousness people bring to the organizing process. And this consciousness itself emerges in the process of interaction. People's experience of organization thus influences their capacity to participate in a process that is either progressive or regressive, contribut-

ing to or detracting from the growth and development of individual as well as organization.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation is to better understand the phenomenon of organization by examining the quality of the social relations that constitute it. While agreeing with Karl Weick that organization emerges in the process of human interaction, in this dissertation I go beyond Weick to examine in greater depth the dynamic that animates people's interaction. My work in this regard is informed by a systemic perspective, according to which people are seen to exist in relationship to one another and are made different by their interdependence; people like organizations are constituted in the process of interaction. As part of this process, human potential either is released or frustrated, fueling or undermining the capacity for progressive experience.

Because people in the process of interaction constitute organization, the focus of my research and analysis has been on how they themselves experience this process and to what effect. Their experience is important because it is their consciousness that emerges in the process of interaction and makes an organization what it is. The dissertation is designed to give voice to that experience by documenting the impressions and insights of the people interviewed regarding the constitutive quality of their social relations.

My goal in undertaking this research is to contribute to the discourse regarding organization by reframing the relationship of individual and organization to reveal the constitutive quality of social relations. This is significant because the energy that animates organization is generated in the process of interaction, energy that is either positively or negatively charged, resulting in progressive or regressive experiences. It is significant as well because in the process of interaction human potential is realized or frustrated, contributing to the consciousness that people will bring to the process of interaction in the future. As I indicated at the outset of this chapter, how we think about organization influences how we experience and come to know it. Ultimately, then, a new perspective regarding organization can do much more than influence academic discourse; it can facilitate a shift in how people think about organization, and in so doing effect a change in the consciousness they bring to the organizing process.

Approach to the Research

I designed the field research component of the dissertation to be exploratory, to identify and describe different patterns of interaction as they are manifested in organization. For this purpose, the face-to-face encounter is employed as the unit of analysis. Although the notion of social relations extends beyond the interaction that occurs

between two people, the face-to-face encounter is employed here as the prototypical case from which all other social interaction derives (Berger and Luckman, 1966). As such, the experience of relation can be most directly apprehended through it.

The face-to-face encounter is more than a methodological device. As is suggested by the thesis advanced in this dissertation, that people are constituted in the process of interacting with one another, the face-to-face encounter is ontologically significant. Although we may "exist" in some pure sense, existence of the self resides in consciousness. Consciousness, in turn, entails the assignment of meaning to the objects and events that we encounter. And these meanings are social in origin, created and sustained or altered through interaction. Because meaning is a product of human consciousness, we can gain access to it only through a person's experience of it. In this respect, epistemology -- what passes for valid knowledge -- derives from ontology. For if "being" resides in consciousness, and consciousness is a matter of meaning creation, then it is only the person involved in the experience who can validly portray it.

I therefore collected the data for this dissertation through interviews in which I discussed with supervisors their experience of interacting with others in the workplace. The interview was designed to address two broad research concerns:

(1) social relations as constitutive, or how people see themselves and their actions shaped through interaction; and (2) social relations as empowering, or how people experience interaction as enabling them to act. As part of the interview I asked the supervisor to describe two encounters, one they had experienced with a subordinate, the other with a superior. For each encounter, I then asked the same set of questions, exploring the nature of their experience as well as what they thought the experience of the other person might have been.

In the analysis of the interview data I sought to identify the patterns of interaction that either evoked or denied the subjectivity of those participating in the encounter. Patterns of interaction that evoke subjectivity are those that release human potential. Patterns of interaction that deny subjectivity are those that block such a release. Indicators examined in this analysis included: (1) the degree to which people in the encounter exhibited a sense of self-awareness and corresponding respect for the identity of the other; (2) the specific actions and attitudes that were associated with different patterns of interaction; and (3) how participants in these encounters conceived of power. In chapters five and six of the dissertation each pattern of interaction is illustrated with accounts from the interviews, highlighting the factors that contribute to the pattern's underlying dynamic as well as the outcomes that result. In

each case the outcome of the encounter is considered in terms of whether or not it results in the release or blockage of the creative potential of those participating in the process.

Organization of the Dissertation

The first four chapters of the dissertation (Part I) are designed to provide a theoretical framework within which to understand the field research undertaken for this dissertation. While the purpose of that research is to examine how people experience their interactions with others in the workplace, in the dissertation itself I am exploring the implications of these experiences for how we think about organization. Therefore, I begin in chapter two with an investigation of how organization is typically conceived. This takes the form of critique, a critical analysis of scholarly works representative of the mainstream in organization theory. In chapter two I also review several books that challenge the mainstream, identifying their contributions as well as their shortcomings in order to demonstrate the gap in the literature to which this dissertation is directed.

In chapter three, I outline an alternative conception of organization. This perspective on organization is grounded in the writings of Mary Parker Follett. First, I review the key concepts in her work that are relevant to an understanding of organization. In the process of research, however, I discovered that while she acknowledges the constitutive quality of

social relations, Follett does not adequately address the dynamic that fuels such interaction. Family systems theory nicely supplements Follett in this regard, and so in the second section of chapter three I describe how family systems concepts can extend our understanding of the organizing process as conceived by Follett. I conclude the chapter by considering how these theoretical works can account for the emergence of progressive as well as regressive experience.

Chapter four serves as a transition from the theoretical to the field research component of this dissertation. In that chapter I first present the methodological perspective from which the research was undertaken. My intention there is to explain how the research approach is consistent with the purpose and conceptual frame being advanced in the dissertation. In the subsequent sections of that chapter I describe the methods used to collect and analyze data. In the process, I reflect as well on the experience of doing the research.

The following three chapters of the dissertation (Part II) contain a discussion of my research findings. I begin Part II with an explanation of the framework and format within which the findings are presented. Chapters five and six contain accounts of fifteen different encounters, each including a description of what happened, an explanation of the dynamic fueling the encounter, and a consideration of outcomes. These are intended to be illustrative of the

different patterns of interaction that can emerge given varying circumstances. In chapter seven I provide a summary of the findings contained in chapters five and six, highlighting the patterns of interaction that appear across encounters. In that chapter I entertain as well the implications of these findings for how we think about organization and their significance for the practice of public administration.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical research in organizational behavior typically treats people as dependent variables; research done in this tradition is designed to investigate if changes in organizational conditions cause changes in people's behavior. This approach reflects more than just methodology, more than the mere structuring of a research question. It reveals the assumptions implicit in mainstream organization theory, the theory in which such research is grounded. While different theories contain different conceptions of human nature (eg. rational, social, self-actualizing), underlying these theories is the belief that organizations can manipulate people -- by altering conditions -- to behave in ways that support the organization.

There are at least three hidden assumptions associated with this belief, three assumptions that are implicit throughout mainstream organization theory despite the apparent diversity in the field. The first assumption is that the organization is presupposed to have an existence; it is seen as existing in some concrete sense prior to people entering into it. Sometimes this is expressed by attributing purposes or objectives to the organization rather than explicitly granting the organization an ontological status. Second,

people are assumed to have little or no identity independent of the organization and thus are determined by it. Typically, this is expressed in terms of an organization's ability to determine or direct human behavior. Finally, it is assumed that the causal relationship between organization and individual is linear, so that organizational conditions produce individual behaviors consistent with organizational objectives. This last assumption is commonly expressed in cause and effect terms; it assumes that certain organizational causes have specific behavioral effects and that the latter thus can be predicted and controlled. Although most organization theory is not wholly deterministic, where it does recognize the possibility of autonomous human action it treats it simply as another force with which to contend.

In this chapter I will examine representative works of different theorists within the mainstream of organization theory to illustrate how these assumptions are manifested in their work. My purpose is to demonstrate the pervasiveness of these assumptions, assumptions that influence how we think about and experience organization. I also will review several anomalies to the mainstream in order to highlight existing challenges and alternatives to that substantial body of work. Of course, this dissertation is grounded in a set of assumptions that, like those underpinning the anomalous works, are contrary to those associated with mainstream theory. Although

the perspective I assume in the dissertation is not inconsistent with that of the works presented here as anomalies, I do go beyond them. Specifically, whereas Robert Denhardt and Frederick Thayer remain at the level of organization, I focus on the patterns of interaction that constitute organization. While Karl Weick does address this question of what constitutes organization, he works at the level of behaviors. I look behind those behaviors to the patterns of relating that fuel them. In the next chapter, I present this alternative conception of organization, which serves as the centerpiece of the dissertation and the basis for the research undertaken in support of it.

Chester Barnard

Nowhere are the assumptions associated with mainstream organization theory more apparent than in Chester Barnard's *The Functions of the Executive* (1938). The first American attempt at a comprehensive theory of organization, Barnard's work is especially important because it represents the culmination of the early human relations movement (Harmon and Mayer, 1986). Prior to this movement, the individual was conceived as just another moving part in the organizational machine. The hallmark of the human relations movement was its recognition that the individual worker has a social as well as a functional character. Significantly, however, this discovery was made and then used in terms of the opportunities it

created for influencing individual behavior in the service of organizational goals.

The image of a person as having both a functional and a social character in his or her relationship to the organization is embedded in Barnard's theory. Indeed, the way in which Barnard conceives of the organization, the individual, and how the organization acts upon the individual, all contain the distinction between functional and social. What is most notable about the distinction as made by Barnard is that the social is always presented as being in service to the functional, a means that can be managed toward an end.

Barnard (1938) defines "formal" organization as "a system of consciously coordinated activities or forces of two or more persons" (p. 81). Implicit in this definition are three elements of formal organization: (1) purpose; (2) willingness to cooperate; and (3) communication. **Purpose**, as the "coordinating and unifying principle" (p. 95), is what makes the organization functional; for Barnard, "the deliberate adoption of means to ends is the essence of formal organization" (p. 186). **Willingness to cooperate** entails the subordination of self to such purpose; it involves "self-abnegation, the surrender of control of personal conduct, the depersonalization of personal action" (p. 84). Thus, while the person is the agent of action, the action itself is determined by the demands of the system; the person yields to the organization.

Barnard sees common purpose and the willingness to cooperate only as potentialities, however. **Communication**, then, is "the process by which these potentialities become dynamic" (p. 89), in other words, the process by which a person becomes oriented toward organizational purpose.

Barnard's conception of organization includes an "informal" complement to the formal organization described above; formal organization emerges out of, but also contributes to, informal organization. Where formal organization is the realm of conscious decision and action, informal organization is the realm of the unconscious, of attitudes, habits, and customs. It enables formal organization by facilitating communication, maintaining cohesiveness, and ensuring personal integrity. The informal organization thus attends to people's social character, securing their functional commitment (willingness to cooperate) to the formal organization.

As with organization itself, Barnard conceives of people in terms of their "alternative aspects." As a part of the organization, he sees people in purely functional terms, as "phases of cooperation." Apart from the organization, he sees a person as "a unique individualization of physical, biological, and social factors" (p. 16). Importantly, he sees the individual in this latter capacity as the "object" of the organization. When not a part of the organization in a

functional sense, then, the individual becomes an object outside of it to be acted upon and brought within.

Indeed, for Barnard "the characteristic fact of [the bringing of persons into cooperative relationship with the organization] is that *the organization is acting upon persons who are in every sense outside it*" (p. 227, emphasis added). And this "fact" necessarily extends beyond recruitment, the literal act of bringing the individual into the organization. In order to sustain the "willingness to cooperate" over time, the organization must repeatedly bring the individual into a cooperative relationship with it. In this very significant respect, the organization is granted an ontological status that is prior to any and all individual action.

Barnard also makes a distinction between a person's "powers" and his or her "determination," the first a reference to the individual's ability to perform the work, the second a matter of his or her willingness to do so. Here, his treatment of the individual as a dependent variable is most blatant, asserting that in the first regard people are "*objects* to be *manipulated*," and in the second "*subjects* to be *satisfied*." Whether object or subject, the assumption is that a person is acted upon, that the organization can influence individual behavior.

Since a person must be satisfied as a subject before they can be manipulated as an object, Barnard addresses in some

detail the conditions surrounding their willingness to cooperate. Implicit in this notion of "willingness to cooperate" is the assumption that a person may choose not to. Although this accords the individual a degree of autonomy, Barnard treats it simply as a force with which to contend, identifying two methods by which the organization can induce cooperation. One, the "method of incentives," entails an appeal to personal motives and is contingent on the organization's ability to satisfy individual needs and interests. It is grounded in the idea of exchange, the assumption that a person will do work in exchange for material and social rewards. When the organization is unable to offer satisfactory incentives, however, it must resort to the "method of persuasion." The use of this method is intended to "change the state of mind" of a person "so that available incentives can become effective." Again, the individual is being induced to contribute, only first the organization must make him or her available to such inducement.

Whether secured by incentives or persuasion, Barnard's concept of cooperation assumes the individual as dependent variable; the organization acts upon a person in order that he or she will act on behalf of the organization. While causation is implied, the question remains as to what end cooperation is sought. Barnard discusses organizational ends in terms of two dimensions, effectiveness and efficiency. For

him, effectiveness entails the accomplishment of common purposes and efficiency the satisfaction of individual interests. Efficiency is the more encompassing of the two, however, because the satisfaction of individual motives induces the cooperation upon which the organization depends for the accomplishment of common purposes (effectiveness). While organization depends for its existence on both effectiveness and efficiency, without efficiency there can be no effectiveness. The relationship between individual and organization in Barnard's theory, then, is very clearly governed by a linear concept of causation; organizational conditions (e.g. incentives; persuasion) produce individual behaviors (cooperation), which yield organizational outcomes, indeed, organization itself.

Herbert Simon and Decision-Making

Herbert Simon acknowledges an intellectual debt to Barnard, stating in a 1986 interview that "of course I built squarely on Barnard" (Golembiewski, 1988). Indeed, Simon uses two of Barnard's ideas as cornerstones for his own work, most systematically articulated in *Administrative Behavior* (3rd Edition, 1976). According to Barnard's idea of "organizational equilibrium," organization involves an ongoing exchange of inducements and contributions, securing people's contributions to the organization by offering them inducements sufficient to satisfy personal needs. Simon (1976) sees this as a "motiva-

tional link" between a person and an organization, an explanation for "why organizational influences ... are such effective forces in molding human behavior" (p. xv). Indeed, later presented as "the Barnard-Simon theory of organizational equilibrium," Simon together with James March (1958) describe this theory as "essentially a theory of motivation" (p. 84). Implicit here, of course, is the assumption that organizations can determine human behavior.

Simon (1976) adopts as well Barnard's conception of authority in organization, expressing it alternately in terms of the person exercising the authority, who can "make decisions which guide the actions of another" (p. 125), and in terms of the person whose actions are being guided, who "permits his behavior to be guided by the decision of a superior, without independently examining the merits of that decision" (p. 11). While Barnard refers to this latter aspect of authority as the "zone of indifference," Simon prefers the "zone of acceptance." In their review of "The Barnard-Simon Contribution," Mitchell and Scott (1988) make the following observation regarding these differing references:

> Acceptance implies positive acquiescence; indifference implies "unreflective going along." Qualitatively (behaviorally) there may be some distinguishing aspects between these ideas, but the authors believe that they are marginal differences. Barnard and Simon's intent was to describe a managerially *induced* frame of mind in employees that produced obedience: eg. compliance with "authoritative communication" (p. 350).

The assertion that the intentions of Barnard and Simon are similar is accurate in my estimation, the work of both grounded in the assumption that the organization can shape human behavior to serve specified purposes. However, I disagree with the conclusion that the difference in terminology is marginal, which suggests that it is without meaning. Indeed, rather than Simon according people greater consciousness and control than Barnard, as is suggested by the interpretation of his use of the word "acceptance," the opposite may well be the case. Their approaches to organization contain clues regarding what I believe to be somewhat differing visions of the relationship of individual and organization.

Whereas Barnard concerns himself with the activities of people in organization, Simon (1976) attends to "the process of choice which leads to action" (p. 1). This difference is apparent in their respective definitions of organization. As you will recall, Barnard (1938) defines organization as "a system of consciously coordinated activities or forces of two or more persons" (p. 81). The emphasis for Barnard is on action. Simon, in contrast, describes organization as a "complex network of decisional processes," drawing metaphorically on anatomy and physiology to characterize the structure and process of organization:

> The anatomy of the organization is to be found in the distribution and allocation of decision-making functions. The physiology of the organization is to be found in the processes whereby the organization influences the decisions of each of its members -- supplying these decisions with their premises (1976, p. 220).

For Simon the organization shapes people's behavior by determining the premises upon which they make the decisions that serve as the basis for action.

Simon conceives of this process of influence as one by which the organization places people "in a psychological environment that will adapt their decisions to organization objectives" (p. 79). This is different than persuasion, the method to which Barnard resorts when the organization cannot offer sufficient incentives to induce cooperation. Persuasion, as Simon himself explains, yields a change in "the evidential environment of choice" (p. 127), but importantly allows for choice. Simon's view of organization, in contrast, limits choice by defining the parameters of a decision. Indeed, according to Simon the purpose of a book such as *Administrative Behavior* is:

> to set the vocabularies in terms of which people talk, because once you influence those vocabularies, you have determined or at least substantially influenced their thought processes" (Golembiewski, 1988, p. 298).

He thus applies to his own scholarship the theory he employs to explain organizational behavior.

Another idea that distinguishes Simon's work from that of Barnard is his notion of "bounded rationality," although Simon sees his contributions to organization theory as "in no way inconsistent with Barnard's view of organization" (Golembiewski, 1988, p. 279). In response to the rationality attributed to the individual by economists, Simon (1976) argues instead that human behavior actually falls far short of such rationality for three reasons: [1] Whereas rationality requires complete knowledge and anticipation of all possible consequences, knowledge of consequences actually is fragmentary; [2] Since these consequences will occur in the future there is no way to accurately assign value to them, something required by rationality; and [3] Whereas rationality requires a choice among all possible alternatives, knowledge of alternatives actually is more limited. According to Simon (1976) people need organization in order to achieve rationality: "The rational individual is, and must be, an organized and institutionalized individual" (p. 102). He leaves a corresponding proposition less explicit, however, that people are more available to organizational influence or control because of these limits on their rationality.

Yet Simon's theory of organization is clearly a theory of control. Indeed, in the introduction to the third edition of *Administrative Behavior* (1976) Simon explains that one of the reasons organization is important is because "it provides

those in responsible positions the means for exercising authority and influence over others" (p. xvi). Those in "responsible positions" constitute a "controlling group" that functions by selecting the "basic value criteria" for making decisions and setting the terms for membership in the organization. Organization, then, enables one group of people to achieve the rationality necessary to direct the efforts of another group of people who, in part induced to contribute given the availability of incentives, and in part inclined to participate given the definition of decision premises, work in behalf of organizational objectives defined by the "controlling group." Of course, to the extent that organization furnishes the rationality that otherwise eludes human beings, it influences the so-called "controlling group" as well, assuming a status independent of those people who constitute such a group.

Simon's interest in control is apparent as well in the emphasis placed on motivation in his subsequent work (*Administrative Behavior* was originally published in 1945) with James March, *Organizations* (1958). The two key chapters of that book explore "motivational constraints." At least two things are significant about their treatment of this topic. First, they expand their exploration beyond the decision to participate and consider what they define as a very different motivational condition, that surrounding the decision to

participate productively; in other words, they focus on the conditions surrounding the achievement of the greatest efficiencies for the organization. Second, while acknowledging the limits of organizational control, they discuss the findings of existing research, and encourage further inquiry, regarding those aspects of motivation over which the organization can exercise control. Indeed, March and Simon (1958) describe the decision to participate in terms of "the motivational problems involved in *using* human beings to perform organizational tasks" (p. 110, emphasis added). In so doing, they sound very much like the "classical" organization theorists to whom they devote a chapter of critique, distinguishing themselves from those who conceive of an organization as a machine by their awareness of human motivation as a factor in performance. Their interest is the same as their predecessors, however, namely how to most efficiently use human beings in the pursuit of organizational purposes. This theme is all the more significant for its persistence in Simon's work and the extent to which he has influenced the work of others.

Public Choice Theorists

Since the 1960's, several theorists have promoted an economic or market approach to organization. The resulting theories, some of which address organization in the public sector (public choice theory) while others focus on the

private sector (agency theory), have much in common with one another as well as with the work of Herbert Simon. The point of departure for all of them is the same, namely the individual decision -- based on calculated self-interest -- to work for the organization. The notion of organizational equilibrium is implicit here, what Fritz Roethlisberger has referred to as the "Barnard-Simon 'Principle of Satisfactory Exchange'" (Mitchell and Scott, 1988), and what these theorists refer to as the employment contract. They do extend the work of Simon by focussing on decision-making as a defining characteristic of organization, but they advance a different conception of the relationship between individual and organization, emphasizing the individual rather than the organizational side of the equation. This, in turn, has implications for the way organization itself is conceived. Indeed, Ostrom (1974) argues that the limitation of Simon's work is that his focus is too narrow, limiting his inquiry to "an" organization rather than exploring the parameters of different decision-making arrangements. The work of public choice theorists take up that challenge. Their conception of organization will be employed here to illustrate the differences between the economic and decision-making perspectives.

For Simon, the rationality available to the individual human being is limited. People thus enter into organization to achieve greater rationality. Public choice theorists, in

contrast, assume that the individual human being is fully rational and that rationality is diminished only when people enter into organization. As Buchanan and Tullock (1962) explain:

> The theory that we have developed in this book has been based on the assumption that individuals are the only meaningful decision-making units, that these individuals are motivated by utility-maximizing considerations, and that they are well informed and fully rational in their choices. Yet we know that "groups" do exist as something apart from the individual members, that individuals are motivated by many considerations, and that individuals are far from being either well informed or rational in their political behavior (p. 297).

While the rational individual can anticipate the consequences of his or her own choices, in the context of the group the uncertainty attending the choices of others limits rationality. According to public choice theory, when the choices of some impinge on the welfare of others (in economic terms, these choices result in *external costs*), people will choose to join together in a decision-making arrangement (organization), reducing uncertainty through agreement and exchange.

Although both Simon and the public choice theorists assume that the lack of complete knowledge limits rationality, for public choice theorists rationality in the group situation derives from the choices of individuals, not their organized condition. Organized activity thus is guided by the aggregation of individual preferences rather than organizational purposes. Public choice theorists, like Simon, equate

organization with decision-making arrangements, but assume that people will choose among these arrangements and select that which they expect to be most efficient (Buchanan and Tullock, 1962). In the absence of a single arrangement, then, organization becomes more transitory and less stable.

Despite the rationality and latitude afforded the individual by public choice theorists, the theory is nonetheless deterministic. Just as decision "premises" influence the behavior of individuals in Simon's work, according to public choice theory individuals choose decision "rules" or "arrangements" that similarly guide their behavior. Like Simon and March, for example, Ostrom (1974) is interested in being "able to specify the consequences which will follow from different organizational conditions." As he explains:

> To assert that consequences follow from conditions is to say that effects have their causes. Knowledge depends upon the specification of relationships between conditions and consequences, between causes and effects. We should be able to indicate the conditions and consequences which derive from the choice of alternative organizational arrangements if theories of organization have scientific warrantability (p. 2).

Buchanan and Tullock (1962) similarly seek knowledge that will enable "prediction and explanation." The presumption here is that certain organizational conditions, or decision arrangements, will yield certain consequences, or behaviors, and that this relationship between cause and effect will prevail once a decision rule or arrangement is selected. In his 1967 Rand

Corporation study *Inside Bureaucracy*, Anthony Downs similarly seeks to set forth law-like propositions to assist in the prediction of behavior, in this case that of government bureaus and bureaucrats (Shafritz and Hyde, 1987). It is perhaps not surprising, then, that Downs is credited with establishing the intellectual framework for public choice theory in his earlier work *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957).

System Theorists

Unlike public choice theorists who focus on the individual, system theorists are concerned with the organization as an entity; the behavior of its members is considered only to the extent that it helps explicate the behavior of the organization. Thus, while these theorists acknowledge "that organizations act only as the result of action by their members" (Thompson, 1967, p. ix), their focus nonetheless is on the so-called actions or behavior of the organization. Katz and Kahn (1978) discuss it in terms of "the problem of levels," arguing that system theory allows for attention at both the macro level, at which conceptualization occurs, and the micro or "phenomenal" level, at which the actual behavior of individuals is observed. However, the organization does take precedence, with its needs or goals "superordinate to and conceptually separate from" those of its members (Harmon and Mayer, 1986, p. 158).

The open system theorists distinguish their work from that of other theorists in two respects. First, in contrast to the closed system or rational model of organization, open system theorists envision an organization that exists in relationship to an environment. Instead of the emphasis on internal equilibrium evident in the work of Barnard and Simon, theorists associated with the open system perspective focus on what is sometimes called homeostatic equilibrium, a reference to the dynamic and ongoing exchange of energy with the environment. Which is not to suggest that Barnard and Simon were inattentive to the environment in which the organization exists, but only that their concern was limited to how the environment affected goal achievement. For system theorists, the concern is the very survival of the organization. Second, instead of a system with fixed boundaries or structure (a physical system), open system theorists conceive of the organization as a dynamic system, its structure defined in terms of activities. As Katz and Kahn (1978) observe:

> It is events rather than things which are structured, so that social structure is a dynamic rather than a static concept. Activities are structured so that they comprise a unity in their completion or closure (p. 24).

For activities to "comprise a unity in their completion or closure" means that the organization operates according to the principle of homeostasis; the system is geared for self-preservation. Indeed, system theorists define organizational

functions in terms of "the outcomes that are the energic source for maintenance of the same type of output," and not the "conscious purposes" of the people who work within the organization (Katz and Kahn, 1978, p. 21). For these theorists, then, the organization is granted an independent ontological status, existing apart from the people who occupy it.

Importantly, the openness of the system is necessarily "qualified," open to its environment but also exhibiting "stable patterns of relationships and behavior within boundaries" (Katz and Kahn, 1978, p. 31). These theorists explain this "duality" in terms of survival, that while the organization is open, indeed dependent on the inputs available to it in the environment, in order to survive it must discriminate, in other words be open "selectively." Thompson (1967) makes a similar distinction:

> *We will conceive of complex organizations as open systems, hence indeterminate and faced with uncertainty, but at the same time as subject to criteria of rationality and hence needing determinateness and certainty* (p. 10, original emphasis).

For Thompson as well as Katz and Kahn, the system's relationship with its environment must be controlled or managed, interdependence thus giving way to rationality, cause-and-effect superceding systemic logic.

Nowhere is this more clear than in their treatment of the relationship of individual and organization. Although the

focus of these theorists is on the behavior of organizations, they do acknowledge that organizations act only as the result of the actions of its members. According to Thompson (1967), the actions of organization members emerge in their interaction with the situation, the interaction mediated by the "perceptions or cognitions" of organization members. But because organization purpose exists independently of its members -- purpose does not emerge in the process of interaction between people and the situation, only people's actions do -- the actions of members must be controlled, directed toward organizational ends.

Thompson (1967) draws directly on Barnard and Simon for this purpose. The notion of equilibrium, "the inducements/contributions contract," enables the organization "to set limits to the behavior that the individual is to exhibit in the organizational context" (p. 105). The zone of indifference or acceptance further limits behavior by enabling the organization "to define appropriate behavior" (p. 106). Thompson joins Simon, Cyert and March in acknowledging the danger of reifying organization, and thus attributing goals to it, but he like them entrusts the direction of the organization to a "dominant coalition." And the dominant coalition functions by controlling decision premises (Simon again), specifying "the cause/effect beliefs to be employed and the relevant hierarchy of outcomes to be preferred" (p. 135).

Although Thompson allows that members of the dominant coalition could express any preference, he argues that "for purposes of control over the organization, the effective preferences are those for which there is an instrumentally rational approach" (p. 137). In other words, organization is directed toward the purposes indicated by "the outcomes that are the energic source for maintenance of the same type of output," by survival as dictated by the system. For Thompson, then, the behavior of individual organization members is determined by conditions that are shaped at least in part by the dominant coalition, the members of which are themselves guided by the dictates of the system. Causation is linear, organizational conditions such that they produce behaviors consistent with organizational purposes.

Katz and Kahn (1978) similarly examine how organization "reduces human variability," but draw upon the concept of "role," rather than the theories of Barnard and Simon, as "the major means for linking the individual and organizational levels" (p. 219). Since an open system is composed of "a structure of events or human acts," and a role consists of "an array of such acts," Katz and Kahn define organization as "a system of roles" (p. 296). In language reminiscent of the "inducement/contributions contract," these theorists describe role as "the summation of the requirements with which the system confronts the individual member" (p. 186). Although

Katz and Kahn go into significant detail in describing the mechanics of evoking and enacting role behavior, for present purposes what is important is that they see the motivation of role behavior as a key characteristic and "continuing requirement" of organization. They describe this process of motivation in terms of "the attraction and retention of individual members and the motivation of those members to perform the organizationally required acts" (p. 296). In so doing, they too provide an image of organization in which the behavior of its members is directed toward pre-existing ends.

The Humanistic Tradition

Theorists associated with the humanistic tradition in organization theory focus on the individual instead of the organization. According to these theorists, an essential tension exists between the needs of the individual and those of formal organization, but they argue that the needs of the two can be integrated. Indeed, the notion of integration is central to works by both Chris Argyris and Douglas McGregor, finding its way into the title of a book by Argyris (1964) and as a descriptor of McGregor's "Theory Y" (1960). Inspired by the work of psychologist Abraham Maslow, specifically his notions of a hierarchy of needs and the need for self-actualization, these theorists assert that changes in organizational and/or managerial practice can create opportunities for human

growth and development, which in turn will enable people to contribute more productively to the organization.

While a shift in emphasis to people's needs, and particularly their need for self-actualization, would appear to be a shift away from the treatment of them as dependent variables, Herbert Shepard's (1965) critique of Maslow reveals a potential problem inherent in any organization theory that emphasizes the satisfaction of individual needs. Since need as presented by Maslow suggests a dependence on others, rather than an interdependence, it creates the basis only for exchange, not mutuality. Not only does the focus on individual need preclude the possibility of mutuality, it also makes people vulnerable to manipulation; others control something that they need. Moreover, Maslow's notion of self-actualization leads to greater autonomy and thus even greater individualism. This individualism is reinforced by, and itself reinforces, what Shepard refers to as the "primary mentality," one in which individual needs are met in a climate of mutual threat and distrust.

According to Shepard, growth toward self-actualization can occur only in a climate of trust; growth is "an interpersonal, a mutual process" (p. 1125). When practices to encourage personal growth are introduced into an organization where the primary mentality prevails, they are short-lived or transformed "into efforts to change subordinates' perceptions

without altering the perceived reality" (p. 1124). Self-actualization requires a "secondary mentality," one that emphasizes mutuality. The change to a secondary mentality cannot be induced, however. Not only does collaborative behavior run contrary to the primary mentality, "inducing" it appeals to that very mentality.

Shepard's critique raises concerns about the humanistic tradition in organization theory. Most important for present purposes is whether the theorists associated with this tradition are using the satisfaction of the need for self-actualization as an inducement toward other ends, a strategy indicative of the dynamic of exchange associated with the primary mentality. In order to address this concern, the earlier works of Chris Argyris (1957, 1964) and Douglas McGregor (1960) are reviewed here as exemplars of the humanistic tradition.

Both authors have made a valuable contribution to the field by providing a critique of formal organization (Argyris) and management practice (McGregor), each highlighting the ways in which human potential is undermined by traditional organization principles and management assumptions. In *Personality and Organization* (1957), Argyris analyzes and illustrates how organization structure and functioning contains the seeds of its own dysfunction. In that work, he identifies how elements of formal organization can have

negative consequences for people and evoke behavior that impacts negatively on the organization. In a subsequent volume, Argyris (1964) explores how to redesign organizations in order to "take into account ... the energies and competences that human beings have to offer" (p. viii). McGregor (1960) similarly assesses the extent to which approaches to management violate human nature. He argues that widely accepted assumptions regarding human nature, assumptions he identifies with Theory X management, are no more than manifestations of the prevalence of such assumptions, not an accurate depiction of human nature. McGregor thus advances an alternative, Theory Y management, which grounds management practice in a set of assumptions containing greater regard for human capacities.

Among these assumptions is that "self-direction and self-control" are viable alternatives to "external control and the threat of punishment" in securing activity in the service of organizational objectives. McGregor (1960) qualifies this assumption, however, to read "in the service of objectives to which he [sic] is committed," elaborating in a subsequent assumption that "commitment to objectives is a function of the rewards associated with their achievement" (p. 47). In other words, people will be committed to the objectives of the organization so long as their own needs are satisfied by participation in the organization, whether it be their need

for self-actualization or subsistence. For McGregor, then, "integration" entails "the creation of conditions such that the members of the organization can achieve their own goals *best* by directing their efforts toward the success of the enterprise" (p. 49, original emphasis). Rather than mutuality, which carries with it a sense of equality in relationship if not a common goal or outlook, McGregor's integration suggests exchange, the satisfaction of need (self-actualization) in return for a commitment to organizational objectives. Moreover, members achieve their goal only to the extent that the organization creates the conditions conducive to it, thus according the organization a power and presence independent of the people who work in its behalf.

Argyris (1957), in building a "systematic framework" for understanding human behavior in organization, makes a similar case:

> ... knowing the condition under which behavior occurs, it should be possible to make predictions as to how this behavior may be changed or modified by stating how the conditions under which this specific behavior can be modified (p. 176).

Like McGregor (1960), who sees "successful management" in terms of "the ability to predict and control human behavior" (p. 4), Argyris argues as well that people's behavior can be determined by organizational conditions; behavior changes as conditions change. Indeed, in a later work Argyris (1964) explores the ways in which organizations can be modified to

enhance people's ability to serve organizational objectives. Importantly, in that volume Argyris employs an open system model and treats people, or more precisely the psychological energy available through them, as an organizational input. Psychological energy is more or less available to the extent that an individual experiences psychological success. The experience of psychological success, in turn, requires among other things that an organization provide opportunities

> for work in which the individual is able to define his immediate goals, define his own paths to these goals, *relate these to the goals of the organization*, evaluate his own effectiveness, and constantly increase the degree of challenge at work (Argyris, 1964, p. 34, emphasis added).

Again, behavior is oriented to organizational goals by making the conditions necessary for self-actualization (or psychological success) contingent on the achievement of organizational goals. Not only is psychological energy a necessary organizational input, psychological success is, at least in part, an organizational output as well.

Management Theorists

The theorists associated with this school of thought, like McGregor, assume the existence of an organization and thus focus on its management. Blake and Mouton (1964) conceive of organization in terms of three "universal" characteristics: purpose, people, and hierarchy. The fundamental question for them, therefore, is "How are organization

purposes achieved through people by bosses?" Similarly, for Hersey and Blanchard (1969) management entails "*working with and through individuals and groups to accomplish organizational goals*" (p. 3, original emphasis). The aim of their book, then, is

> To help the manager understand why people behave as they do and to increase his effectiveness in predicting future behavior, directing, changing, and controlling behavior (p. 7).

According to these theorists, the behavior of some people (managers), can influence the behavior of other people (employees) in support of the goals of the organization, which is assumed to exist independent of the managers and employees acting in its behalf.

The legacy of Chester Barnard is apparent in the models advanced by these theorists, each composed of at least two dimensions, one to account for the functional or production aspect of organization, the other to account for the social or human aspect of organization. This may well explain the consistency with which the same three assumptions appear throughout mainstream organization theory, in each case a cause-and-effect relationship assumed between the social and functional aspects of organization. According to management theorists, like so many of the theorists who preceded them, the manager (or member of a "controlling group" or "dominant

coalition") mediates the demands of these two aspects of organization.

The "managerial grid" of Blake and Mouton, which is included as part of the Hersey and Blanchard framework, is designed to portray the various pressures that shape a particular managerial approach. Organizational conditions, then, influence the behavior of managers as well as that of employees. Although the models of Hersey and Blanchard (1969) as well as Blake and Mouton (1964) accommodate and seek to explain a range of managerial approaches, they build squarely on the work of Argyris and McGregor among others, indicating a humanistic inclination apparent in their preference for an arrangement in which individual and organizational goals are coextensive. Recognizing that this is not always possible, however, these theorists invoke the inducement-contributions theory of Barnard and Simon, indicating that at minimum organizational conditions must be such that individuals see their own goals satisfied along with the achievement of organization goals (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969). Importantly, this is a stimulus for, as well as an outcome of, managerial behavior.

Kenneth Blanchard, along with Spencer Johnson, brought Barnard and Simon's inducement-contributions theory into the popular management literature of the 1980's with their allegory *The One Minute Manager* (1981). One of the many

mottos to fill that book, "people who feel good about themselves produce good results," captures its essence, for at bottom it is a manual on manipulating people to work in behalf of organizational goals. Their book, however, turned out not to be a "feel good" experience for everyone. In 1984, Rae Andre and Peter Ward published a rebuttal entitled *The 59 Second Employee*, although their subtitle is perhaps more telling, "How to Stay One Second Ahead of Your One-Minute Manager." The publication of this second book is significant for at least two reasons. First, it disputes the claim that employees have a "zone of acceptance" or "indifference," that they are willing to put up with a one-minute manager. Second, and regrettably but perhaps understandably, in rebutting *The One Minute Manager* Andre and Ward simply turn the tables on the one minute manager, instructing the employee to manipulate the manager in much the same way as the manager has manipulated the employee.

As organization is conceived in increasingly complex terms, there is no doubt that the objective of control becomes a more difficult one. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the recent attention accorded organizational culture. Interestingly, the basis of Blake and Mouton's (1964) managerial grid is a vision of the manager's job as "one of developing and maintaining a *culture* that promotes work" (p. ix, original emphasis). Whereas these theorists focus on the

range of managerial approaches produced by differing sets of assumptions (which constitute culture), more than twenty years later Edgar Shein (1985) explores how these assumptions are communicated to and adopted by the group. In that volume, he argues that "culture is learned, evolves with new experiences, and can be changed if one understands the dynamics of the learning process" (p. 8). Which is not to suggest that such change comes easily. Nonetheless, Schein describes how "founders or leaders" (or managers) can "embed their own assumptions in the ongoing daily life of their organizations" (p. 242). While he does acknowledge that, once created, a culture can take on a life of its own and thus function as a constraint on the leader, he suggests that managing these constraints is "one of the central tasks of leadership" (p. 171). Despite what he himself calls "a complex interplay of creative and constraining forces," then, the leader still retains control, influencing behavior through the management of culture.

Anomalies to Mainstream Organization Theory

Although the treatment of the individual as a dependent variable is pervasive in organization theory, there are theorists who challenge that model. These theorists differ with their mainstream counterparts regarding each of the assumptions outlined earlier. Whereas in mainstream theory the organization is assigned a concrete status prior to the

individual, these theorists argue instead that organizations are socially constructed, projections of human consciousness. There is no external structure, independent of the people who constitute organization, to determine human behavior. Rather than being driven by purpose, these theorists see organization and organizational purpose as emerging in the process of human interaction. Therefore, the proposition that "organizational conditions produce individual behaviors consistent with organizational objectives" is turned on its head, replaced by the assertion that organizations are constituted in the process of human interaction, the outcomes of which are discovered and interpreted retrospectively.

In his book *In the Shadow of Organization*, Robert Denhardt (1981) advances a perspective on organization in keeping with this latter conception. Because he believes that our experience of organization is shaped by the "rational model" implicit in mainstream theory, however, he devotes a substantial portion of the book to a critique of that model. The significance of this critique for Denhardt lies in the pervasiveness of organization, its omnipresence in our lives. According to him, we are socialized to adopt an "ethic of organization," a mindset within which the world is conceived "in terms of order and structure rather than conflict and change," and people value "discipline, regulation, and obedience in contrast to independence, expressiveness, and

creativity" (p. 5). This has consequences for both the individual and the collective (whether organization or society), limiting the possibilities for the development of each.

Denhardt's departure from the mainstream is most apparent in his proposal to give primacy to the development of the individual rather than the efficiency of the organization. Indeed, that is the stated purpose of the book, to redirect attention to the individual. Even those theorists who write in the humanistic tradition take great pains to argue that they are not putting the individual before the organization but rather in service to it. Denhardt, in contrast, assigns priority to human development. The premise of Denhardt's critique is that the rational model as manifested in organization prevents the individual from achieving a sense of meaning, action, and continuity in his or her life, three aspects of experience that are essential to personal growth. Denhardt therefore explores how the ethic of organization constrains the individual regarding each of these three aspects of experience.

Achieving a sense of personal meaning in life is key. Denhardt (1981) explains it like this:

> As individuals, our first task, and the task which opens all others to us, is to construct an image of the world which is personally and uniquely our own. This is basic. We must learn to control our own view of the world; we must develop a sense in which

> we can distinguish truth from falsity, *our* truth. As we come to understand the world, not simply as it presents itself, but rather on our own terms, we can move from passivity to activity, from dependency to autonomy. Only then can we begin to work in the world, to enjoy its pleasures and to learn from its pain, to expand its opportunities, and to rely on it as we seek salvation (pp. 2-3, original emphasis).

In order to do this, however, people must be able to fully engage themselves in the task of constructing a world. Denhardt draws on the psychology of Carl Jung to explain how the ethic of organization prevents the accomplishment of this task. According to Jung, psychological health requires that the different functions of the psyche be given equal opportunity for expression. While encouraging the expression of certain functions, the ethic of organization discourages the expression of others, limiting people's ability to fully engage in the world. But in order to achieve meaning in one's life, a person must be able to "get in touch with one's own evolving experiences," "opening one's world to its fullness rather than rationalizing its incompleteness" (Denhardt, 1981, p. 56). In the absence of an opportunity to do so, meaning is assigned from outside onto the individual.

Indeed, Denhardt suggests that the ethic of organization may facilitate a shift in responsibility for this process of meaning creation from the individual to the organization. Under such circumstances, a person so identifies with the organization as to lose any sense of identity or personal

meaning outside organizational parameters. Although Denhardt does entertain the possibility that the individual might simply choose to withdraw, he contends that the ethic of organization is so pervasive as to limit alternatives. In pursuing meaning in one's life, therefore, Denhardt proposes that people actively cultivate their own inner resources rather than depending on the direction of others.

To truly realize meaning in life requires opportunities to express meaning through action. Denhardt thus explores the ways in which the ethic of organization enables or constrains meaningful action. Drawing on critical social theory, which posits a relationship between thought and action, he seeks to reveal the ideology underlying the ethic of organization in order to provide a basis for transcending it. According to Denhardt, organization as currently conceived limits our vision regarding the possibilities of life to those in keeping with an instrumental rationality. This constrains action by admitting only those problems or undertakings that are available to technical solution. In so doing, it inclines the organization toward regulation rather than change, sustaining what is and reinforcing the prevailing distribution of power. In other words, limiting the conditions for change ensures that those conditions will prevail, along with those who define and control them.

To escape this trap requires nothing less than changing how we think about organization. Denhardt proposes that this occur in two stages. First, we should dispense with existing notions of organization by revealing organization as "historically constituted, humanly derived institutions" (p. 73). This means to conceive of organization as socially constructed and thus continually subject to change, rather than as existing as a static structure independent of the people who participate in it. Second, he proposes that theory and action be recognized as complementary and inseparable, each informing the other on a continual basis. This too represents a departure from mainstream theory or the ethic of organization, according to which action is guided toward pregiven ends. Just as organization is socially constructed, emerging in and through social process, so too is organization purpose.

The third aspect of human experience examined by Denhardt is the desire for immortality, for achieving some sense of continuity beyond one's own existence. According to Denhardt, the ethic of organization demands that we surrender any and all beliefs and adopt an instrumental perspective, valuing only that which serves as a means toward an end. It is organization, then, in which people invest their "selves," organization and its maintenance in which people seek meaning and transcendence. The human cost involved is significant:

> To be organized is to be certain, certain of one's past, one's present, and one's future. But, though certainty may momentarily appear attractive, it ultimately presents us with the image of death, the final certainty, the only certainty. To the extent that our lives are determined, we have lost our chance to express ourselves, to develop ourselves. We are no longer free (Denhardt, 1981, p.96).

Denhardt therefore argues that people must not put their faith in organization, but instead seek transcedence in the world of the spirit. This, of course, may well humanize organization as well.

Denhardt concludes his book by suggesting that an escape from the ethic of organization depends on "critical acts of self-reflection" rather than restructuring, on the individual rather than the organization per se. The outcome of such reflection, initiated individually but pursued through dialogue, is an understanding of the conditions under which people currently labor. This understanding can then serve as a basis for people to transcend the ethic of organization and replace it with conditions more conducive to human development. While Denhardt provides a compelling vision, however, he does not adequately address how such a vision can be realized. Most notably, although he acknowledges that organization is constituted in the process of people's participation in it, he fails to examine how this dynamic relationship contributes to the ethic of organization on the

one hand, and the process of critical self-reflection on the other.

Frederick Thayer's book, *An End to Hierarchy and Competition* (2nd edition, 1981), is similar to Denhardt's in several respects. He like Denhardt provides a critique of organization as conventionally conceived. And he too advances an alternative vision that departs from the mainstream model of organization, grounding his argument in a set of assumptions very different from those that support mainstream theories. Specifically, Thayer like Denhardt assigns priority to the individual and conceives of organization goals as emerging in the process of social interaction. Thayer also contends that how we think about organization, and not organization structure in and of itself, is key to our ability to realize change.

Whereas Denhardt's critique is organized around the idea of an ethic of organization, Thayer's focus is on hierarchy. Thayer uses the term hierarchy broadly to refer to any relationship in which one person is superior and the other subordinate. Hierarchy is a problem for Thayer because it is the fundamental source of alienation, a condition in which people are separated from one another as well as their "inner selves" (1981, p. A-10). According to Thayer, two qualities of hierarchy are responsible for this condition: [1] disparities in the distribution of power and authority are such that

some people are in a position to determine what other people can and should do; and [2] as a result, people act out roles dictated by the hierarchical order and thus interact as "nonpersons." Like Denhardt's ethic of organization, for Thayer hierarchy is pervasive, "family, church, corporation, public agency, nation-state" all governed by the assumption that "*no organization can achieve its social purposes other than through the interaction of those designated 'superiors' and those labeled 'subordinates'* (p. 44, original emphasis). The real culprit, then, is the belief that hierarchy is necessary and inevitable.

Thayer thus advances an alternative vision of organization, what Harmon and Mayer (1986) describe as a "noncoercive theory of organization" and what Thayer calls "structured nonhierarchy." Structured nonhierarchy is consistent with Herbert Shepard's notion of a secondary mentality, an organization composed of "innumerable small face-to-face groups characterized by openness, trust, and intensive interpersonal relations" (Thayer, 1981, p. 5). Rather than a system under which some people make decisions for others, structured nonhierarchy requires consensual decision making. The premise for structured nonhierarchy exists in "the nexus of *conflict* and *consensus*," in which conflict "is brought to the surface, confronted, and resolved through the creation of consensus" (p. 11). The process of creating a consensus involves, among

other things, "developing a disturbing concern for the satisfaction of opposing interests" and "discovering new possible aims or interests, in which conflicting ones can be absorbed to the larger advantage of all" (P. 137). Organization as structured nonhierarchy, then, emerges in the process of people interacting with one another, their actions ultimately guided by purposes identified through the play of differences and the discovery of new possibilities.

Implicit in structured nonhierarchy is the idea that people are changed as individuals in the process of coming to consensus, that people become who they are in the process of interacting with one another. In this regard, Thayer (1981) cites H. Richard Niebuhr, who asserts that the "self is a being which comes to knowledge of itself in the presence of other selves" (pp. 123-124). This, of course, suggests a certain mode of social organization, for under hierarchy self-knowledge is precluded by the assumption of organizational roles; recall that Thayer conceives of interaction under hierarchy as occurring among "nonpersons." Structured nonhierarchy, in contrast, provides a context within which individual self-awareness can flourish. But while Thayer acknowledges the patterns of interpersonal relations associated with these different forms of organization -- hierarchy and structured nonhierarchy -- he never explores and articulates how these patterns of interaction, at a level more

elemental than organization, facilitate and sustain or preclude different modes of organization. In other words, while he attributes the problem of organization to hierarchy, and by association the pervasiveness of superior-subordinate relationships and the assumption of impersonal roles, he fails to address how these conditions of hierarchy themselves are constituted.

One of the key contributions of Karl Weick's *The Social Psychology of Organizing* (2nd edition, 1979) is that in it he describes how organization occurs, how it is constituted. Indeed, for Weick it is the process of organizing, rather than the substance of organization, that is significant. As he explains:

> The word *organization* is a noun, and it is also a myth. If you look for an organization you won't find it. What you will find is that there are events, linked together, that transpire within concrete walls and these sequences, their pathways, and their timing are the forms we erroneously make into substances when we talk about an organization (p.88).

Weick thus expresses a preference for the use of verbs rather than nouns, seeing organization as nothing more than "the inventions of people superimposed on flows of experience" (pp. 11-12). Organization is emergent rather than static. The focus is on the process of organizing, conceived in terms of the interlocked behaviors that constitute that process. In fact, Weick equates these interlocked behaviors with organiza-

tional structure, "the structure that determines how an organization acts and how it appears" (p. 90). These structures are assembled according to rules that people employ to select certain interlocked behaviors that together form a process.

It is here that Weick most clearly distinguishes his work from mainstream theory, for rather than the achievement of specific organizational goals he envisions organizing as a sense-making activity. The following somewhat cryptic definition curiously captures the essence of what Weick has in mind: organizing is "a *consensually validated grammar for reducing equivocality by means of sensible interlocked behaviors*" (p. 3, original emphasis). Organizing is "consensually validated" in that it entails the negotiation of meaning by those participating in the process of organizing. It involves a "grammar" in that it is systematic, governed by rules. It is at heart a sense-making rather than a goal achievement process, "reducing equivocality" by assembling interlocked behaviors into processes that are intelligible to those constituting them. Finally, organizing as a sense-making process is retrospective, thought following action rather than the more typically assumed reverse.

In perhaps the most oft-cited sentence from *The Social Psychology of Organizing*, Weick offers what he calls a "recipe for sense-making:" "How can I know what I think until I see

what I say?" (p. 133). In other words, people can only make sense of action after they perceive what it is they have done. Weick draws somewhat metaphorically on evolutionary theory in his conception of organizing as a sense-making activity. According to this model, organizing is a process of natural selection. In the midst of a changing environment, people identify certain aspects and act upon them. Weick refers to this as "enactment" and equates it with the "say[ing]" part of the recipe above. These actions then become the focus of attention, and in the "selection" phase of the model people classify and interpret their actions; this is the "see[ing]" part of the recipe. Finally, people remember or retain these interpretations for future use. Weick refers to this phase as "retention," explaining that "the only way the sense-making recipe works is if you can remember the things you've said so that they're available for reflection" (p. 207). Importantly, the organizing process so conceived is cyclical, with the retention phase informing enactment and selection. For Weick, then, causation is circular rather than linear, action informing thought and thought informing action.

Weick does what Denhardt and Thayer do not: he provides a theory to explain how organization is constituted. In doing so, however, he describes a process constituted by behaviors but devoid of people; his references are intentionally to "interlocked behaviors" rather than "interlocked people"

(Weick, 1976, p. 95). His work suffers from a lack of what Harmon and Mayer (1986) refer to as "a theory of the self," a theory that can account for the "psychological dynamics" of organizing (p. 359). It is for this reason that in the dissertation I draw upon the work of Mary Parker Follett rather than Weick. Weick's notion of a "double interact," for example, suggests a simple sequence of stimulus and "rational" response, in which an action by actor A prompts a response in actor B, to which actor A then responds. Follett's notion of "circular response" highlights an important nuance in this sequence, however, in which actor A acts in a way that affects actor B who, *made different by* the actions of A, then responds to A. Moreover, unlike Weick who talks only about the "behaviors" of people, Follett speaks to their relations, seeing relationship as prior to action rather than as a result of interlocked behaviors. A theory of organization grounded in the writings of Follett is presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAME

The work of Mary Parker Follett represents another anomaly to mainstream organization theory, all the more notable because she wrote and lectured during the early part of this century. Interestingly, her perspective on organization has much in common with that of Karl Weick. Follett like Weick emphasizes the process rather than the structure of organization, and thus like him expresses a preference for the use of verbs rather than nouns (1924). Nor would she disagree with the notion of retrospective sense-making, she herself observing that "they *do* and then they have the ideas involved in the doing" (1924, p. 85, original emphasis). Unlike Weick, however, the sense-making aspect of the organizing process is not the focus of Follett's work. She emphasizes the actual experience of organizing instead, attending in some detail to the behavioral aspects of the organizing process, including the interaction that occurs between people. For Follett, human meaning emerges out of activity and the interaction that constitutes it.

This dissertation, which is designed to explore the nature of the social relations that constitute organization, is grounded in Follett's writings. The present chapter begins with a discussion of the key ideas from her work that underpin

the conception of organization that I advance in the dissertation. Next, I will describe how family systems theory supplements Follett's work, bringing greater clarity to the dynamic that fuels interaction. Finally, I will examine what in that dynamic makes an interaction either progressive or regressive.

Circular Response as a Principle of Organization

The "doctrine" of circular response serves as the basis for Follett's theory of organizing, organizing broadly conceived as it occurs in a myriad of settings, both public and private. Therefore, the idea of circular response appears, or is implicit, in much of her work. It receives its fullest articulation, however, in her book *Creative Experience* (1924). In that volume, Follett describes circular response in terms of three "fundamental principles:" (1) that response is not to a rigid or static environment, but to a changing one; (2) that the environment is changing because of the activity between it and people; and (3) that response is always to a relating. These principles, of course, contradict each of the assumptions associated with mainstream organization theory as described in the previous chapter.

In contrast to the concrete existence accorded the organization by most theorists, Follett conceives of organization as dynamic rather than static. According to her:

> There is no static collective will nor "group mind:" we have continuing activity ... its nature is wholly dynamic. We must think no more in terms of social institutions but of social activities (1924, p. 207).

Moreover, this vision of organization yields a very different understanding of the relationship between people and organization. Rather than a pre-existing organization into which people enter, according to the doctrine of circular response people are forever creating their environment. And because of the interrelation between people and their environment, they too are being recreated as they contribute to a changing environment. Importantly as well, it is not the environment (or organization) that alone is shaping people and their behavior:

> We now see behavior not as a function of environment, but as a function of the relation between self and environment. The activity is a function of itself interweaving with the activity of which it is a function (Follett, 1924, p. 72).

Response, in other words, is always to a relating. In contrast to the cause-and-effect thinking so prevalent in mainstream organization theory, Follett thus advances a systemic view of causation, positing stimulus and response as interdependent.

Organization, then, is "the functioning of a self-creating coherence." Follett (1924) expresses it well when she writes:

> You can tear it to pieces if you will and find subject and object, stimulus and response, or you can refuse to; you can claim the right to see it as a rational interplay of forces, as the functioning of a self-creating coherence (pp. 74-75).

As "a self-creating coherence" organization is to be found in activity, and in a "whole-a-making" rather than activity between "parts" and a "whole" (1924, p. 102). For Follett, in fact, the relationship between activity and form is so dynamic as to make any talk of structure inappropriate. Although this generative dynamic itself is inevitable, the nature of the emergent "whole" is not. Follett (1925/1940) thus advances the following "first test" of organization:

> Whether you have [an organization] with all its parts so co-ordinated, so moving together in their closely knit and adjusting activities, so linking, interlocking, interrelating, that they make a working unit -- that is, not a congeries of separate pieces, but what I have called a functional whole or integrative unity (p. 71).

How to achieve an "integrative unity" is another matter, however, requiring people to consciously attend to the interactive relations that constitute organization.

The two concepts by which Follett is perhaps best known, "the law of the situation" and "integration," come into play here. In attending to the process by which organization is constituted, it is necessary to work always with the evolving situation. In her paper on "The Giving of Orders," Follett explains that since the situation is always changing, the order -- or that toward which one's efforts are directed --

must keep up with the situation. Indeed, "the situation is changing while orders are being carried out, because, by and through orders being carried out" (1925/1940, p. 65). The order, therefore, must repeatedly be "drawn fresh from the situation." This, of course, is analogous to the emphasis on continuous improvement in Total Quality Management. Whether informed by Follett or TQM, the point is the same: activity should be guided by a study of the situation rather than by a logic external to it.

Since organization itself emerges in the process of interaction, however, the situation inevitably involves more than one person. And according to the doctrine of circular response, that situation entails "the adjustment of man and man" [sic] as well as "the adjustment of man and situation" (Follett, 1924, p. 122). The use of the word adjustment, of course, assumes the existence of differences, a diversity that Follett argues is life's most essential feature. But in the process of integrating differences she seeks more than "mere adjustment," which suggests compromise. Rather, integration is a matter of invention, the creation of something new, allowing the situation to offer up possibilities that previously did not exist.

An integrative unity thus demands not only that people have a consciousness about the situation, including an awareness of the part their own activities play in it, but a

willingness to remain open to that situation as it evolves. This means that there can be no taking of sides or positions. Indeed, integration requires the examination of the situation irrespective of sides, for as Follett indicates, it is only through such a process that the "facts" of the situation can be truly revealed (1925/1940). Furthermore, this process must be undertaken jointly, uniting all concerned in a study of the situation. There is then, interestingly and perhaps inevitably, a complementarity to the process of integration. According to Follett, "the best preparation for integration ... is a joint study of the situation" (1925/1940, p. 61). She also asserts, however, that "the basis of all cooperative activity is integrated diversity" (1924, p. 174). Just as integration requires cooperation, cooperation requires an integration, the two bound together in a single seamless process.

As indicated previously, people must have a certain consciousness of, and openness to, the situation in order to achieve an integration. Once again, then, we encounter the doctrine of circular response, for a consciousness or attitude conducive to integration can emerge only in the process of interacting with others. Perhaps at her most poetic, Follett (1924) explains it this way:

> Through circular response we are creating each other all the time ... reaction is always reaction to a relating ... I never react to you but to you-plus-me; or to be more accurate, it is I-plus-you reacting to you-plus-me. "I" can never influence "you" because you have already influenced me; that is, in the very process of meeting, by the very process of meeting, we both become something different (pp. 62-63).

In the context of this discussion, to be made different means to be available (or not) to relate in an integrative fashion vis-a-vis the situation; it requires a certain orientation to the situation and to those others with whom the situation is constituted. Furthermore, being made different in this way not only occurs in the process of relating, that relating itself must be well-grounded in the situation. As Follett (1925/1940) observes: "We cannot have any sound relations with each other as long as we take them out of that setting which gives them their meaning and value" (Follett, p. 60). The quality of the relations that constitute organization thus determines its nature, determines the extent to which an integrative unity is possible. And the nature of organization, or the quality of the relations that constitute it, influences the consciousness that people bring to the organizing process.

Organization has been described here both as a "self-creating coherence" and an "integrative unity." It is important to distinguish the two references, the former representing what necessarily is, the latter indicating what

might be. Indeed, Follett is not naive about the frequency with which integration occurs, nor about the possibility of its occurrence in the future. As she admits: "I do not think integration is possible in all cases ... All that I say is that if we were alive to its advantages, we could often integrate instead of compromising" (1925/1940, p. 36). For her, compromise is the prevailing "principle of human association," a principle that precludes progress. She advances integration as an alternative principle, one that can fuel rather than undermine progressive experience.

While Follett speaks to the methods for achieving integration, most notably a joint study of the situation, she does not sufficiently address what it takes to actually engage in such a study. Nor does she fully explain what inclines people toward the two other principles of human association that she identifies, compromise or domination, neither of which is any less of a "self-creating coherence" than integration. Critical questions that remain include: [1] How does one realize the consciousness of situation required for an integration, a consciousness that itself is necessarily borne in relationship; [2] What happens in the absence of such a consciousness; and [3] How does the absence of such a consciousness contribute to patterns of association characterized by compromise and domination? Although Follett's work is

suggestive, it is incomplete. Family systems theory[1] provides a psychological perspective, nicely supplementing Follett's work and providing some answers to these questions.

The Contribution of Family Systems Theory

Despite the fact that family systems theory was first developed some fifteen to twenty years after Mary Parker Follett's death, there exists a clear affinity between the two bodies of work. Follett (1924) does draw upon psychology to inform her work, using gestalt theory (along with theories from other fields) to illuminate the parameters of the phenomenon of circular response. As she explains in her paper "The Psychology of Control:"

> The *Gestalt* school gives us what is called explicitly the doctrine of wholes, which denies that physical, psychical, or social situations are made up of elements in a plus-plus relation. The whole, they tell us, is determined, not only by its constituents, but by their relation to one another (1927/1940, pp. 185-186).

Family systems theorists adopt a similar perspective, describing patterns of emotional functioning in terms of the relations between family members. Indeed, these theorists view the family in systemic terms, envisioning it as a "natural system" governed by "the same natural processes that regulate the behavior of all other living things" (Kerr, 1988,

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[1] As articulated by Murray Bowen and others adhering to his formulation of a psychological theory of the family as a system.

p. 36). There thus exists a parallel between Follett's circular response and the family systems theorist's conception of emotional functioning, the latter asserting a typically unconscious but mutual adjustment to the emotional states of others in a relationship system.

The family, then, is a system governed by interdependence, a system in which each of the parts or people is connected to, and has an effect on, every other part or person. People do not function according to their individual "nature" but rather in accord with their position in the family system (Friedman, 1985). Like Follett, therefore, family systems theorists dispense with linear cause-and-effect thinking, seeing their work instead as an attempt to go beyond such thinking (Bowen, 1978; Friedman, 1985). Given this perspective, family systems theorists also share with Follett an interest in activity, focussing on functioning and interaction rather than personality and illness. And importantly, they believe that the same patterns of emotional functioning apparent in the family operate in other settings as well. Indeed, Murray Bowen (1978) uses his personal experiences to describe how the emotional processes associated with family

functioning are manifested among psychiatrists in the clinical work setting.[2]

One of the building blocks of family systems theory is the concept of **differentiation.** An individual's level of differentiation refers to the extent of emotional separation from their family of origin, but also influences their relations with others outside the family system. Differentiation is a function of two counterbalancing life forces, one which moves the person toward individuality, the other toward togetherness. To be completely differentiated means that the person "can be an individual in the group" whenever it is important for them to be so (Kerr, 1988, p. 41). It entails being an emotionally separate person, equipped with the ability to think, feel, and act for oneself.

Recall that family systems theory views behavior in terms of the natural forces that govern all life. According to the theory, it is the human intellectual system that enables a person to limit the influence of the emotional system on their behavior (Kerr, 1988). The level of differentiation represents the intermix of emotional and intellectual functioning within a person (Bowen, 1978; Kerr, 1988). The higher the level of differentiation, the more able a person is to

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[2] Bowen (1978) and others (Friedman, 1985; Hirschhorn and Gilmore, 1980; Kahn, 1979; Merkel and Carpenter, 1987) point out, however, that an organization is not a family, and that the differences between the two can be significant.

distinguish (or differentiate) emotion and intellect, and choose between what they feel and think as a guide for behavior. Conversely, at lower levels of differentiation emotion and intellect are so "fused" that a person's behavior is dictated by the emotional content of the system. Importantly, to be differentiated does not mean to be cut off from what one feels and the energy that derives from it. Nor does emotional separation preclude emotional closeness. Instead, differentiation entails a consciousness that enables a person to act <u>on</u> what they think and feel rather than reacting <u>to</u> the emotional forces at play in the system.

The concept of differentiation can extend our understanding of the consciousness required for an integration, or more simply, what it requires to be available to the situation. For Follett, it entails adopting "a conscious and responsible attitude toward experience," recognizing the evolving situation, our role in it, and its impact on us (1925/1940, pp. 50-51, 65). But in the context of an emotional system, whether constituted by family members or colleagues, what does this mean? For each of the people involved, it means achieving the emotional separation necessary to be able to draw on the intellect in order to discern the situation and one's place in it. In doing so, the person needs as well to assume responsibility for their functioning in the situation, instead of placing blame or otherwise

attributing their behavior to others in the system, what Murray Bowen (1978) refers to as being "responsibly responsible for self." Moreover, while being clear of one's responsibility to others, a person should not assume responsibility for others, respecting the differences that others necessarily bring to the situation (Kerr, 1988). This too requires substantial emotional separation, in other words, differentiation.

Importantly, differentiation is a relational concept; it occurs in relationship to others and influences the overall level of differentiation in a system. Family systems theorists thus make a distinction between "basic" and "functional" differentiation (Kerr, 1988). Whereas the basic level of differentiation is established during the early years of childhood, functional differentiation is dependent on the relationship process and thus varies over time. The factor that most contributes to functional differentiation is the presence or absence of anxiety or emotional tension in the relationship system. As Michael Kerr (1988) explains:

> When the level of anxiety is low, people are less reactive and more thoughtful. This tends to stabilize individual functioning and to minimize the pressure people put on one another, which can impair someone's functioning. When the level of anxiety is high, people become more reactive and less thoughtful; system functioning is prone to decline (p. 42).

To be reactive means to react unthinkingly to the emotional content present in the system, what Murray Bowen (1978) describes as an "emotional reflex." The process of adjustment earlier likened to circular response, in which each person adjusts to the emotional state of others in a system, allows anxiety to travel between them, so that anxiety in one person eventually manifests itself in another. According to Bowen, the ability to "see" these emotional reflexes is a function of the level of anxiety in the system.

Just as the presence of anxiety influences the level of functional differentiation, the level of basic differentiation influences the presence of anxiety. Family systems theorists posit an inverse relationship between a person's basic level of differentiation and the presence of chronic anxiety (Kerr, 1988); the lower the level of differentiation, the less adaptive the person is under stress, and the higher their average level of anxiety. The qualifier chronic is important, because unlike acute anxiety, which occurs in response to a real threat and tends to be of limited duration, chronic anxiety has little to do with extant life circumstances and therefore is much more persistent (Kerr, 1988). Indeed, rather than a reaction to actual events, chronic anxiety very quickly takes on a life of its own independent of external events, thus containing its own momentum.

What happens in a relationship system when chronic anxiety is present can help explain why people are inclined to dominate or compromise rather than integrate. According to family systems theorists, the more action is prompted by anxiety, the greater the pressure for togetherness. This pressure for togetherness manifests itself in efforts to think and act alike. Under these circumstances, people are less tolerant of differences and thus less able to allow one another to be themselves (Kerr, 1988). When some people become anxious, they become more intent on changing others, increasingly convinced that theirs is the one best way. In reaction to such pressure for oneness, people either resist or capitulate, predisposing them to dominate or compromise.

Resistance typically takes the form of defining oneself in opposition to the other, responding to the pressure for togetherness by distinguishing and distancing oneself. Follett (1925/1940) recognizes the potential for this when she observes:

> The more you are "bossed" the more your activity of thought will take place within the bossing pattern, and your part in that pattern seems usually to be opposition to the bossing (p.57).

A sustained effort to change another, to get the other to do something they would not on their own choose to do, thus tends to prevent just such change. As this pattern of relating escalates, each person becomes defensive and "the flames are

fanned when each blames the other for the escalation" (Kerr, 1988, p. 50). Indeed, Murrary Bowen (1978) reports that when anxiety is high there is a general tendency among people to revert to cause-and-effect thinking, blinding them to their own contribution to the situation. To the extent that each defines him or herself in opposition to the other, their interaction amounts to no more than a contest of wills. Each feels they must prevail over the other. The outcome, then, is either domination or polarization.

Compromise, on the other hand, requires that each person make concessions in order to reach an agreement. Follett (1924) recognizes the cost of compromise to the individual, that "the individual is to give up part of himself [sic] in order that some action may take place" (p. 163). Family systems theorists refer to this giving up of self as "deself-ing" (Bowen, 1978), when under pressure from another a person sacrifices the self (what one thinks and feels) in order to preserve harmony in their relationship. Compromise as well as domination is fueled by reactivity, then, a reaction to the emotional content of the relationship system rather than an action grounded in knowledge of the situation. Interestingly, Follett (1925/1940) suggests that even reasoning with a person, "convincing them intellectually," may not be sufficient for integration. This is undoubtedly because their interaction, while ostensibly in the realm of the intellect,

continues to occur independent of the situation, and thus is propelled by the emotional forces at play in the relationship system.

Integration requires that the people involved take a differentiated stand in the situation. Follett (1925/1940) says as much when she recounts a conversation with a friend regarding integration:

> A friend of mine said to me, "open-mindedness is the whole thing, isn't it?" No, it isn't; it needs just as great a respect for your own view as for that of others and a firm upholding of it until you are convinced (p. 48).

While an openness to the needs of the other is essential for integration, so too is a sense of what one thinks and feels in the situation. Without being so grounded, it is too easy to deself under pressure from the relationship. Without being so grounded, it is impossible to achieve the emotional separation needed to draw on the intellect in order to discern the situation and one's place in it.

Interestingly, while a person's efforts to become more differentiated may reduce their own level of anxiety, initially it may well promote anxiety elsewhere in the emotional system. Their efforts at differentiation, in other words, are experienced as disruptive to the system, and people react to such a disruption in ways that generate anxiety (Kerr, 1988). Uncomfortable with the disturbance in the balance of their relationship system, and the anxiety that attends it, people

act to stabilize the system, to restore it to its previous equilibrium. Follett (1924) expresses both an awareness of and concern for this inclination toward equilibrium, seeing it as an obstacle to integration because it maintains the status quo rather than realizing the potential inherent in the situation.

Family systems theorists describe this process of restoring equilibrium to a relationship system in terms of "triangling." According to the theory, the **triangle** is the "basic molecule of an emotional system," a metaphor for the "dynamic equilibrium of a three-person system" (Kerr, 1988, p. 52). A two-person relationship may be stable when anxiety is low, but the inevitable tensions generated by the emotional forces present in any relationship can undermine such stability. At those times, a third person typically becomes involved, reducing anxiety by spreading it among three relationships. Sometimes, it is not possible to contain the anxiety in a single triangle. When this occurs, the anxiety spreads to other interlocking triangles, again extending the relationship system in order to absorb the stress that attends anxiety.

The description of the triangle as a "dynamic equilibrium" is significant because it highlights the fact that the relationship system is perpetually creating and sustaining itself. In keeping with the doctrine of circular response,

the people involved in the system (or triangle) are influenced by it just as they through their activity influence the system. As Kerr (1988) explains:

> What a person thinks, feels, says, and does is -- to an extent that depends on his level of differentiation and level of anxiety -- a product of his functioning position in a triangle. Similarly, what a person thinks, feels, says, and does has a function in promoting the process of the triangle (p. 54).

Thus, while a person's ability to take a differentiated stand is in part a function of the system and his or her position in it, taking a relatively differentiated stand can influence the overall level of differentiation in the system. Unfortunately, the process of triangling is fueled by an emotional logic, restoring the system to equilibrium but limiting the differentiation of its members in the process. In so doing, it precludes rather than encourages integration.

Another aspect of triangling that precludes integration is the inevitable taking of sides (Kerr, 1988). When a third person becomes triangled into a two-person system, the anxiety that previously had been contained in that system shifts; the tension that existed within the relationship between persons A and B is relieved, the burden now shared by person C in their respective relationships with persons A and B. In order for this to occur, however, some blame must be assigned or responsibility attributed; the third person necessarily

becomes aligned with one of the parties to the original relationship in opposition to the other.

To avoid such side-taking is to avoid being triangled into a two-person system, to "detriangle" instead. The process of detriangling entails a third person being in relationship to the other two but remaining emotionally separate from them, in other words, maintaining his or her differentiation (Kerr, 1988). This prevents the anxiety from escaping the system in which it began, moving each of the two people in that relationship system to assume more responsibility for the problem, to adopt a more differentiated stand. The greater the overall level of differentiation in a system, of course, the greater the chances of an integration. Significantly, family systems theorists attribute the ability to remain emotionally neutral or differentiated in such a situation to a way of thinking rather than to a "technique" of relating, "a way of thinking that translates into a way of being" (Friedman, 1985; Kerr, 1988, p. 46). That way of thinking requires seeing interpersonal relations in terms of the interdependence implicit in interactional processes, replacing cause-and-effect thinking with a systemic perspective.

Progressive versus Regressive Experience

Both Follett and family systems theorists see the individual and the organization or system as interdependent,

each influencing and changing the other in the process of their interaction. Follett (1924) argues that as with any other conception of stimulus and response, the outcome of this process of interaction and change (circular response) is "the release of energy which produces new energy" (p. 209). The question remains whether the energy released is positively or negatively charged, whether it fuels progressive or regressive experience. To be positively charged means that the outcome is progressive, encouraging growth and development in the individual and the system. To be negatively charged means that the outcome is regressive, that the individual and the system return to a less developed state, that functioning is diminished.

Although she acknowledges that reality is sometimes otherwise, Follett advances a progressive vision of social process, one grounded in an appreciation of the dynamic relation that exists between the individual and the whole. As she envisions it:

> The individual by his [sic] responses to the social fabric contributes that which so enhances it that the stimuli proceeding from it to the individual enhances his reactions and he has more to contribute than before (1924, p. 128).

In other words, the development of the individual and that of the whole are interdependent. Importantly, what Follett refers to as the "productive power of the collective life" depends first on "its nourishment of the individual." Only

then does she consider, as a "second test" of the productive life, whether "the contributions of individuals can be fruitfully united" (1924, p. xiii). Her priorities seem appropriate since achieving such an integration (fruitfully uniting the contributions of individuals) requires a certain consciousness on the part of the individuals involved. Elsewhere in *Creative Experience* (1924), however, Follett asserts that "the integrity of the individual is preserved only through integration" (p. 163). Once again, then, we encounter the inseparability of part and whole, that the nourishment or development of the individual ultimately depends on an integration (a whole), just as an integration depends on a developed individual.

Follett's treatment of power can be illuminating here. Follett equates power with control, defining it as "the ability to make things happen, to be a causal agent, to initiate change" (1925/1940, p. 99). But for her, "the only genuine power is that over the self" (1924, p. 186). Power, then, emerges in the process of self-development. This conception of power is consistent with the notion of differentiation. In keeping with family systems theory, Follett asserts that "the more power I have over myself the more capable I am of joining fruitfully with you and with you developing power in the new unit thus formed -- our two selves" (1924, p. 189-190). In other words, control in a

relationship system is achieved only to the extent that one can act based on a clear sense of what one thinks and feels, free of the influence of the emotional forces inevitably at play in the relationship system. Importantly, the source of this power is not the individual but the process of interaction, the test of the legitimacy of power being "whether it is integral to the process or outside the process" (1924, p. 193; 1925/1940, p. 111). Therefore, the individual has power just to the extent that he or she is available to the process, to the extent that he or she is able to participate in "power with" another. This, of course, depends on a person's ability to be differentiated in the situation.

The progressive moment occurs when power is "grown," for power is "the blossoming of experience," and thus in its genuine form at least, cannot be conferred or delegated (Follett, 1925/1940, p. 111). Power is the development of capacity, the capacity of the individual to contribute to an integrative unity. This integration necessarily involves the creation of something new, contributing to the development of the individual as well as the system, and in so doing, contributing to their capacity to achieve subsequent integrations.

Follett does speak to another kind of power, what she refers to as "power over." This power is imposed from without onto the situation and those who are a part of it. And it is

this kind of power that contributes to and emerges from regressive experience. Regression is a concept articulated as part of family systems theory, a phenomenon that according to Bowen (1978) occurs societally as well as within the family. He describes regression as follows:

> When a family is subject to chronic, sustained anxiety, the family begins to lose contact with its intellectually determined principles, and to resort more and more to emotionally determined decisions to allay the anxiety of the moment. The results of the process are symptoms and eventually regression to a lower level of functioning (p. 386).

Like the condition of chronic anxiety, regression feeds on itself, creating what Kerr (1988) has referred to as an "anxiety spiral." Just as an integration contributes to the development of a capacity for subsequent integrations, regression undermines such a capacity.

Most symptomatic of regression is the prevalence of decisions designed to allay the anxiety, decisions intended to control the situation. These efforts at control come from outside the situation, generated and guided instead by the emotional content of the relationship system. These efforts are propelled, moreover, by an individual focus on "rights" to the exclusion of "responsibility." As Bowen (1978) explains: "The more a person focuses on rights for himself, the less he is aware of the rights of others, and the more he becomes irresponsible in violating the rights of others" (p. 279). The result is "power over," and the benefits are necessarily

temporary, for such efforts to allay anxiety only further fuel the regression, diminishing the capacity of the individual and the system to function effectively.

In the discussion of research findings in chapters five and six, the conditions of progressive and regressive experience are described in terms of the extent to which people's subjectivity is evoked or denied. Follett (1924) describes this evoking as one of three aspects of the integrative process, the calling forth of latent capabilities. In the language of family systems theory, when subjectivity is evoked, a person is able to act in a differentiated fashion, grounded in what he or she thinks and feels. When subjectivity is denied, a person is unable to act in a differentiated fashion, acting instead based on the emotional content of the relationship system. In either case, the people involved in a system <u>together</u> create the situation that either evokes or denies their subjectivity. And, as I have tried to convey in this chapter, the differentiation of those involved in a system is a prerequisite to integration, which in turn contributes to the development of both the person and the system, the part and the whole.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN

I began this dissertation with two ideas: (1) That organization emerges in the process of interaction among people; and (2) that people themselves are constituted, become who they are, in the process of interacting with one another. The field research I undertook in support of the dissertation is designed to explore the meaning of the second idea as a basis for better understanding the first; in other words, it is designed to explore what kind of consciousness or capacity for relating is evoked in the process of interaction. Because "ideas cannot be directly observed" (Van Maanen, 1979, p. 14), however, it was necessary to develop an approach to the research that would access the human experience of social relations as constitutive. In this chapter I will describe that approach, first presenting the methodological perspective I adopted in pursuing the research, and then explaining the methods I employed to collect and analyze data. I will conclude the chapter by discussing one of the key "epistemological dilemmas" presented by the conduct of this kind of research, the "impossibility of separating the knowing subject from the object of knowing" (Van Maanen and Bennis, 1979, p. 4).

Methodology

In his 1974 article *Amendments to Organizational Theorizing*, Karl Weick advises that in studying the phenomenon of organization we should take our cues from everyday events, places, and questions. This perspective is part of a research tradition identified with the social definition (Ritzer, 1988) or interpretive (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) paradigm, with "creative sociology" or the "sociologies of everyday life" (Ritzer, 1988), or with "human science" (Van Manen, 1990). Despite the diversity among the theories located within this tradition, what they share is a concern for "what is thought about the social world by those living in it"[1] and a belief in the intersubjective construction of that world.

The qualitative approach is especially appropriate for exploring these types of issues because more than a method it represents a particular attitude toward reality, one that respects the subjective, elucidating people's lived experience (Morgan and Smircich, 1980; Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). Approaches to qualitative research do vary according to emphasis and focus, however, reflecting the theoretical diversity apparent amidst this broad research tradition (Patton, 1990). In the dissertation I adopt a phenomeno-

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[1] Alfred Schutz, cited in Van Maanen, John (1979) *On the Understanding of Interpersonal Relations* (fn p. 17).

logical perspective, advancing the question "What is the experience of this phenomenon for these people?"

The phenomenological perspective is appropriate to the purpose and conceptual frame of this dissertation for several reasons. The purpose of the dissertation is to better understand the phenomenon of organization by examining the quality of the social relations that constitute it. As the focus of attention, it is assumed that social relations capture a fundamental aspect of organization that has yet to be adequately realized. According to the phenomenological perspective, events take on meaning only through people's consciousness of them; "consciousness is the only access human beings have to the world" (Van Maanen, 1979; Van Manen, 1990, p. 9). In other words, while we may "exist" in some pure sense, existence of the self resides in consciousness. To explore the world of organization, then, we must seek the meanings assigned to these experiences by the people who constitute that world.

Another key aspect of the phenomenological perspective is the idea that consciousness is relational, articulated in Edmund Husserl's notion of "intentionality" (Ritzer, 1988; Van Manen, 1990). As Ritzer describes it:

> [Consciousness] was not a thing or a place but a process. Consciousness was found not in the head of the actor but in the relationship between the actor and the objects in the world (p. 207).

Thus, the phenomenon of organization not only is apprehended through human consciousness of it, but that consciousness derives from the human experience of being in relation to the phenomenon of organization and thus shaping it. This is consistent with Mary Parker Follett's notion of "circular response," pointing to the essential interrelatedness of people and their environment.

The focus here is on the process of relating, and because the relationship itself is made different by the process, meaning is "situationally bound," emergent in the situation as it unfolds (Van Maanen, 1979; Van Manen, 1990). Follett, of course, referred to this as the "law of the situation." Although the act of giving meaning to an experience is influenced by prior experience and taken for granted assumptions, it also is shaped by the encounter itself, which "tends to develop its own set of meanings" (Van Maanen, 1979, p. 21). To be situationally bound, then, means that meaning is encounter-specific.

If meaning is encounter-specific, then the individual encounter necessarily becomes the focal point of data collection. Because meaning emerges from the encounter and is a product of human consciousness, access to the encounter can occur only through the individual's experience of it; it is only the person involved in the experience who can validly portray it. Sociologists who work from a phenomenological

perspective typically assert a "methodological mandate" to actually experience the phenomenon; they thus advance participant observation as the only appropriate method of data collection. Michael Quinn Patton (1990), however, indicates that an interview focussing on people's experience and interpretation of the world qualifies as a valid method for research pursued from a phenomenological perspective.

Patton (1990) also makes a distinction between research pursued from a phenomenological perspective and an actual phenomenological study. As he explains:

> One can employ a general phenomenological perspective to elucidate the importance of using methods that capture people's experience of the world without conducting a phenomenological study that focuses on the essence of shared experience (p. 71).

The field research undertaken as part of this dissertation clearly falls into the former category. While the interview was structured to capture people's experience of social relations in an organization, its design was much more informed by an existential than a phenomenological sensibility. Although existentialism shares intellectual roots with phenomenology, and therefore is grounded in some of the same ideas, it also differs from phenomenology in several important respects. And the ways in which it differs speak to issues that are at the very heart of the dissertation.

Existentialists would not argue with the ideas attributed above to the phenomenological perspective. Like their phenomenological counterparts, existential theorists take human consciousness as the point of departure for inquiry (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). From an existential perspective, moreover, people not only apprehend the world through their experiences within it, they exist in relationship to that world, shaping the world as it shapes them. Thus meaning for the existentialist, like those working from a phenomenological perspective, is particular and situated, grounded in the experience of the situation (Fontana, 1980).

The ways in which existentialism distinquishes itself from phenomenology, however, are significant to the substantive issues addressed in the dissertation. Whereas in the phenomenological study the everyday world is set aside or "bracketed" in order to get at the essence of consciousness, existentialism embraces the everyday world, focussing on how people think, feel, and act in the situation (Fontana, 1980; Ritzer 1988). In this way, existentialism tries to comprehend the broader concrete situation while phenomenology emphasizes the more abstract "essence" of consciousness. The more concrete situational orientation was realized in this research through the use of interview questions designed to explore the feelings and thoughts that attended people's experience of their encounters with others.

Another critical difference between phenomenology and existentialism can be seen in the alternative conceptions of the self articulated by Edmund Husserl and Jean-Paul Sartre. Whereas Husserl asserted the ego or self as transcendental, Sartre believed that the self cannot exist apart from the world, that the self emerges in the process of acting in the world of which it is a part (Fontana, 1980). This, of course, is the very essence of the dissertation, which explores people's experience of being constituted or made different in the process of interacting with others. During the course of the interview people were asked specifically to reflect on how their sense of self was shaped by their encounter with another.

Finally, and importantly, existentialism distinquishes itself from phenomenology by its basic concern for human freedom. Indeed, Burrell and Morgan (1979) credit Sartre with the "harnessing of the phenomenological approach in the service of radical humanism." Radical humanism seeks to understand how "men [sic] come to see themselves as trapped within a mode of social organisation which they both create and sustain in their everyday lives" (p. 306). This dissertation project seeks a similar understanding in that it explores to what extent specific patterns of interaction evoke or deny people's subjectivity, resulting in the release or the blockage of their creative potential. Such an orientation is

in keeping with the radical humanist program, which is concerned with "setting human consciousness or spirit free and thus facilitating the growth and development of human potentialities" (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p. 306).

Data Collection

The method of data collection was pretested at a regional office of a state agency in Roanoke, Virginia with the cooperation of four people. Following each interview, feedback was solicited regarding the interview experience in general as well as specific interview questions. The pretest confirmed that the interview worked, that people were comfortable with the format and that it elicited the types of information sought. As part of the feedback, those who were interviewed also identified a problem with one of the interview questions, which was too complex and therefore confusing. As a result, the question was broken into two, providing greater clarity and generating more focussed responses. Finally, the pretest enabled me personally to develop a degree of comfort and competence in conducting the interview, good preparation before initiating the actual research in Washington, D.C.

The Sample

People were selected to be interviewed using a "purposeful sampling" technique. Unlike the random sample, which is intended to ensure generalizability, purposeful sampling is

designed to identify "information-rich cases," cases "from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). This is in keeping with the phenomenological perspective, which rather than generalize seeks to explicate lived experience (Van Manen, 1990). And it was clearly appropriate to the exploratory nature of this project, entailing research designed to identify patterns of interaction and describe their constitutive qualities. Therefore, the population from which participants were drawn was loosely defined, the only requirement being that each person to be interviewed have supervisory responsibilities. In so doing, the experience of social relations as constitutive could be explored from both the superior's and the subordinate's perspective in a single interview.

Another sample selection expedient was to make participation in the research wholly voluntary. Because success of the research depended on people being forthcoming, their willingness and interest in participation was important. Therefore, participation was initially solicited via an electronic bulletin board, allowing people to choose to volunteer without any pressure to do so. Later, in an effort to ensure a certain amount of diversity, several people were approached directly and asked to participate, but at that time

it also was made explicit that there was no requirement that they do so.

As suggested above, the sample was selected to respect diversity to the extent possible. While gender presented no problem, the participation of nine men and nine women easily secured, diversity by race and age did. In the case of both race and age this was a function of the requirement that participants have supervisory responsibility, sample definition thus limiting its diversity. Only two of the eighteen interviewees were people of color (both were African American). And, although the age of participants ranged from thirty-four to fifty-six, thirteen of the eighteen participants were forty to forty-nine years of age, with an overall median age of forty-four years. Because the research was not designed to gauge differences by gender, race, or age, the diversity that was achieved contributed to the richness of the data obtained without detracting significantly from the research project.

A final issue relevant to sample selection is that of confidentiality. In addition to a blanket guarantee of anonymity, at the beginning of each interview I explained that information obtained during the interview would not be presented in a way that would reveal or suggest the person's identity. Although there is no way of being sure, all of those interviewed appeared comfortable with this assurance.

Representatives of the agency, on the other hand, were initially more reticent. In order to secure the agency as a research site, I not only agreed to ensure the confidentiality of those who volunteered to participate, but that of the agency as well. Therefore, any reference to the research site is limited to "a federal agency."

The Video

After brief introductory remarks to orient the interviewee to the research process and project, a twelve minute training video (John Cleese's "Moaning Minnie") was shown. The video, which portrays interactions that both deny and evoke the subjectivity of the employee, was used to illustrate the idea of social relations as constitutive, the behavior of each character in the video provoking and maintaining the behavior of the other. During the first half of the video, for example, a manager (John) is unwilling to listen to the problems an employee (Minnie) is experiencing on the job. The more her concerns and complaints are ignored, of course, the more Minnie "moans." John, meanwhile, becomes exasperated with her "excuses," and concludes their encounter by commanding "I don't want excuses, I want action, now get on with it!" In the second half of the video, a genie appears and shows John how he would interact with Minnie if he were the manager. He prevents Minnie from complaining at length and addresses

her concerns, working with her rather than "managing" her. She then becomes much more amenable to working with him.

Showing the video, and explaining to the interviewee the purpose of including the video in the interview format, was intended to reinforce my description at the outset of the interview of the concept of social relations as constitutive. It also was hoped that the video would serve as a "hermeneutic prompt" (Van Manen, 1990), encouraging the interviewee to reflect on similar work-related experiences. In addition to conceptually framing the interview, the use of the video was designed to reframe the issue of supervisor-employee relations, helping the person interviewed to break out of habitual ways of thinking that might limit their insights. Indeed, the video's humorous approach to management was intended to add to this effect: "Like metaphor, humor casts matters in a different light, letting people step back psychologically and adopt perspectives different from those they normally maintain" (Kahn, 1989, p. 50). It also was hoped that the humor of the video would put people at ease to the extent that they were initially uncomfortable in the interview setting.

The use of the video was most successful in this latter regard, serving nicely as a transition from the daily world of work into the interview, shifting the focus of attention to the subject of the research. Indeed, the fact that most of the people interviewed were readily able to come up with an

example of an encounter from their own experience suggests the success of the video as a hermeneutic prompt. The video was less successful in both framing and reframing the supervisor-employee relationship. Although some of those interviewed did note how both employee and supervisor contributed to their troubled relationship, best captured by the interviewee who observed that the supervisor and employee "hadn't worked out a very good relationship ... it sort of escalated ... it sort of fed on itself," the majority attributed outcomes to the behavior of one or the other.

Perhaps because the video was designed for use in managerial training and therefore highlighted the actions of the supervisor, when asked to describe what they saw happen in the video most interviewees responded in terms of the supervisor's style. Asked about a scene intended to portray a relationship that was not working, people most often described the encounter in terms of the "bruttish," "authoritarian," "autocratic," or "dictatorial" manner of the supervisor. It is important to note, however, that these responses may have resulted in part from what was a caricature of the supervisor's role.

Interestingly, when asked to describe what they saw happen in the part of the video intended to convey a positive relationship between supervisor and employee, several saw the behavior of the supervisor in terms of "playing upon her

interests," "us[ing] a carrot" in order "to get what he wants." Although others saw his proposal of a title change for her more positively, as acknowledging and valuing her abilities, only one person described it as an effort "to reframe her job" and as empowering for the employee ("a title that says you can take control"). It is worth noting too that those who described it in the latter terms were women, and that those who portrayed it in more instrumental terms were men.

The Interview

The interview, in and of itself, is no more than a research technique. It becomes a method, a mode of inquiry, when it is infused with meaning and purpose. According to Max Van Manen (1990), doing research from a phenomenological perspective is "always a bringing to speech of something" (p. 32). The interview was employed as a part of the dissertation project very literally for that purpose, to facilitate the articulation of lived experience by others. In this way, the experience of others could be employed in the service of a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

In the literature on the interview as a research technique a distinction typically is made between the structured and unstructured interview. The structured interview has been defined as one in which "the questions have been formulated ahead of time, and the respondent is expected to answer in

terms of the interviewer's framework and definition of the problem" (Guba and Lincoln, p. 155). In qualitative research, the unstructured interview is preferred because it allows the interviewee to frame and structure the discussion (Marshall and Rossman, 1989); thus, responses emerge from the perspective and experience of the interviewee rather than the researcher.

The interview approach undertaken as part of this dissertation is somewhat of a hybrid. On the one hand, given the purposes of the dissertation project it was necessary to define the issue in advance. The sequencing of questions also had a logic that, while serving project purposes, nonetheless established a framework. On the other hand, tapping into the interviewee's frame of reference was the very essence of this project. Therefore, open-ended questions were used to reconcile these competing demands, raising an issue without structuring the respondent's reply (Guba and Lincoln, 1981) or presupposing a particular dimension of experience (Patton, 1990). The data generated by this approach confirms the method's validity, providing accounts of substantial detail, depth, and diversity.

The quintamensional method of question sequencing was used to structure the interview [see Appendix for interview guide]. Consistent with the phenomenological perspective, the quintamensional approach begins with questions at the descrip-

tive-awareness level and then moves to questions at the affective, attitudinal, or behavioral level (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). After discussing the video, therefore, the interviewee was asked to take a minute to think of an encounter and then to describe it.

Beginning the interview conversation with a description of an encounter served several purposes. First, it captured how the person experienced and assigned meaning to the event (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). Second, description requires minimal recall and interpretation. Moreover, once the interviewee has "verbally relived the experience," his or her feelings and opinions are likely to be more accurate (Patton, 1990). Finally, a description of the event, who did and said what, provided me with a context within which to begin to understand the person's experience. Interestingly, the next phase of the interview, during which I rearticulated the encounter, may have helped the interviewee to become more clear on their own experience of the encounter. For example, one person noted during the interview that "while you were reflecting it back to me, I got a little more insight into why I had been angry at first."

In accordance with quintamensional logic, after working at the descriptive-awareness level, the interview proceeded to explore the affective, attitudinal and behavioral aspects of the interviewee's experience. This took the form of three

statements that I asked the interviewee to complete, in each case first rearticulating the encounter as they had described it to me, and then asking them to complete the sentences "I felt," "I thought," and "I did." The design of this part of the interview was informed by the quintamensional method (Guba and Lincoln, 1981) as well as the work of John Van Maanen (1979). Van Maanen asserts that a phenomenological understanding of the world "is keyed to three tightly interconnected aspects of social life:" The experience itself, the mental or cognitive aspect, and the action or behavioral aspect (p. 15). The three sentences correspond to these aspects of social life. Responding to the sentence completions in sequence undoubtedly contributed to the interviewee's recollection of the experience. And their responses provided me with rich description of the focal event.

Once the interviewee had "verbally relived the experience," and the encounter had been portrayed in general terms, the following specific questions were asked:

> In what ways was your sense of self shaped by this encounter?
>
> In what ways were your actions shaped by this encounter?
>
> What specifically occurred to enable you to take action?
>
> What specifically occurred to prevent you from taking action?

These questions were intended to elicit information regarding how people were constituted or made different in the process of interaction. The responses generated by these questions provided insights regarding the extent to which human potential was released or blocked in each encounter, the extent to which people were more or less able to interact in an integrative fashion. An analysis of individual encounters and their outcomes, illustrating how people were constituted and to what consequence, is presented in the following chapters.

Interviewees also were asked how they thought the other person might have experienced the encounter. Specific questions included:

> In what ways do you think his/her sense of self might have been shaped by this encounter?
>
> In what ways do you think his/her actions might have been shaped by this encounter?
>
> In your mind, what specifically occurred to enable him/her to take action?
>
> In your mind, what specifically occurred to prevent him/her from taking action?

During the conduct of interviews, I always prefaced these questions by emphasizing that I was asking them what they <u>thought</u>, that I knew he/she was not a mind reader and could not truly know how the other person experienced the encounter. Their perspective was nonetheless important, however, because it revealed how they experienced the other person. And their

experience, more so than the actual intentions of the other, is what they were responding to in the course of interaction.

According to John Van Maanen (1979), research that seeks to understand the nature of interpersonal relations is less a matter of observation "than it is of installing oneself within the hearts of others and trying to grapple with the world as they do" (p. 15). The interview format was designed to enable me to do just that. In addition to the questions themselves, how the interview was conducted became very important. Although my natural tendency would be to follow-up with additional questions, during these interviews I kept that inclination in check. Instead, I used silence to prompt more detailed answers (Van Manen, 1990), allowing the interviewee to speak to the initial question as they interpreted it and shape their own response. The only time I took a more direct approach, asking additional questions to focus the interviewee, was when a person totally digressed or otherwise failed to address the question.

Data Analysis

The raw material of qualitative research is "thick description," presenting "the context and meanings of events and scenes that are relevant to those involved in them" (Emerson, 1983, p. 24). When I undertook this research, I did not expect the descriptions to be quite so thick. I was heartened to read of Heidegger's account of "phenomeno-

logical reflection as following certain paths, 'woodpaths,' towards a 'clearing' where something could be shown, revealed, or clarified in its essential nature" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 29). But for too long, it seemed, I was awash with data, unable to see the forest for the trees, much less a path through it.

My approach from the start was inductive. Rather than impose categories of meaning onto the process of data analysis, I allowed themes and patterns to emerge out of the descriptions of encounters. However, unlike the oft-cited "grounded theory" of Glaser and Strauss, which emphasizes the emergence of concepts and theory, the approach employed here focussed more simply on the terms used to describe the experience of encounters and the meanings assigned to them (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984). Ultimately, two tactics were employed in approaching the data: First, "indigenous concepts" were sought from the interviews themselves; then, "sensitizing concepts" from the literature were applied to see if and how they could explicate interviewee accounts of experience (Patton, 1990).

The first phase of analysis, which entailed reading through the transcripts numerous times in order to identify common and compelling themes, was perhaps the most difficult, certainly the most overwhelming. There were not yet signposts by which to navigate, the forest no more than a mass of trees.

Even when these "indigenous" themes began to emerge, they bore little relation to the supposed focus of the research, the constitutive quality of social relations. Upon the suggestion of my committee chair, I began writing descriptions of each of the encounters recounted in the interviews, trying to capture how the response of each person involved in the encounter reciprocated an initiating action on the part of the other. What resulted, while useful, still failed to capture the constitutive quality of the interaction.

It was at this point in the analysis that I came up against a hard methodological reality: the notion of circular response as articulated by Mary Parker Follett was more poetic than practical. From the start of the dissertation project, I had kept the following quote before me for purposes of inspiring and orienting my work:

> Through circular response we are creating each other all the time ... reaction is always reaction to a relating ... I never react to you but to you-plus-me; or to be more accurate, it is I-plus-you reacting to you-plus-me. "I" can never influence "you" because you have already influenced me; that is, <u>in</u> the very process of meeting, <u>by</u> the very process of meeting, we both become something different (Follett, 1924, pp. 62-63).

Indeed, circular response was the organizing principle of the field research, providing a conceptual link between interpersonal behavior and notions of organization. What I still needed, however, were the signposts that would guide me in exploring the actual experience of circular response. I found

that guidance in the basic concepts of family systems theory. Grounded in the same systemic perspective as the work of Follett, as a psychological theory it addressed in much more detail the dynamic of interpersonal relations. It thus provided the "sensitizing" concepts and language for identifying and describing the dynamic that fuels the phenomenon of circular response. For example, family systems theory provided the notion of "reciprocal relationships," in which one person takes on strength as another one loses it (Kerr, 1988). This "sensitizing" concept enabled me to make sense of "indigenous" themes regarding power that had emerged in the interviews.

Another limitation of Follett's work overcome by family systems theory is her focus on the creative or progressive outcomes of human interaction. Her presentation of circular response typically is in terms of integration, emphasizing the creation of a new value in the process of relating. But experience in organization suggests that integration is rare; indeed, it was that reality that prompted me to undertake this research in the first place. Family systems theory concepts, in contrast, provide the basis for understanding the dynamic underlying the more negative or regressive outcomes of circular response as well as the progressive, the encounters that block rather than release creative potential.

Earlier in this chapter I cited Max Van Manen's description of phenomenological research as "a bringing into speech of something" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 32). At that time I was referring to the interview as a vehicle for the articulation of lived experience by others. Interestingly, Van Manen's own reference is to the process of writing. My initial attempts at written description helped me to trace the interaction that emerged in each encounter. When I concluded this phase of the analysis, I had descriptions of the thirty-six encounters recounted to me by the eighteen people I interviewed. The next iteration required that I get behind or beneath the interaction to the dynamic fueling it. For that purpose, I began to sort the encounters according to different categories of interaction, ultimately finding the most useful to be those contained in the framework devised by Miller et al. (1988) and described in the introduction to Part II of this dissertation. I then selected the fifteen encounters that I thought best captured the different patterns of interaction. These patterns of interaction were more or less apparent in all of the encounters described to me. The fifteen that I chose to work with were, in my mind, most illustrative of the different patterns as well as the diversity contained within a single pattern of interaction. To facilitate analysis further, I developed a format within which I described each encounter, the format serving as a vehicle for analysis by focussing my

attention on different aspects of the encounter. The format itself also is presented in the introduction to Part II of the dissertation. For current purposes I need only note that working within the format facilitated insights unavailable to me during my earlier efforts to make sense of the data.

The other practice that contributed to my process of making sense of the data was a commitment to remain true to the words of those who had described these encounters to me. One test of the adequacy of description is the extent to which language is evocative, conveying the lived quality of the experience (Van Manen, 1990). In the presentation of my findings in the next chapters, I often employ the words of the person interviewed. I chose their words, and my own, carefully. In my mind, their words communicate like nothing else can the human experience of each encounter, for they are evocative not only of the encounter but of the person who experienced the encounter; often, as I worked with a transcript, the face of the interviewee would appear before my eyes. Their words, then, have presence as well as power.

Conclusion

Perhaps the greatest source of difficulty in qualitative research derives from the essential interrelatedness of the "knowing subject" (the researcher) and the "object of knowing" (the research subject); in the research process, the two interact and are made different by that experience, their

interaction thus inevitably shaping research outcomes. Whereas in quantitative research validity rests in instrumentation, in qualitative research the researcher is the instrument. To a certain extent, then, validity is a function of the skills, abilities, and experience of the person collecting and analyzing the data (Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Marshall and Rossman, 1989; Patton, 1990). And as the instrument of data collection, the researcher's interaction with the research subject can be evocative, yielding rich description and insights that would be otherwise unavailable. But no amount of skill and ability changes the reality of this interrelation, according to Van Maanen and Bennis (1979) one of several "epistemological dilemmas" encountered in qualitative research. Indeed, it is for this reason that Van Maanen describes the study of interpersonal relations as "a most tricky and paradoxical affair" (Van Maanen, 1979, p. 17), for it means addressing in the interview situation the interrelations to be explored in the research itself. Moreover, the "dilemma" must be addressed twice, first during data collection, in the interview itself, and then during data analysis, when the researcher interacts with the interviewee through the medium of the interview transcript.

Although I had intellectually acknowledged that I would encounter in the interview situation the very interdependence I was seeking to study in the interaction of others, the

experience of it still came as somewhat of a surprise to me. For example, during my tenth interview, as I was making my introductory remarks (including a description of the research), the person who I was interviewing indicated that he had a PhD in Social Psychology and that he "used to teach this stuff." I reacted to this information by wondering if he would find my research in some way lacking. I then cited to him the work of Karl Weick in what could only be described as academic posturing. I was made different by my interaction with him, and in being different I acted differently, necessarily influencing the interview, if only temporarily. Fortunately, the showing of the video provided me with the time to reflect on the experience, as well as the opportunity to recover my self, and thus my perspective as the researcher, for the remainder of the interview.

The regular assumption of such a reflexive posture, working in a journal at the conclusion of each interview, helped me to maintain an awareness of myself in the interview setting. In so doing, the journal work contributed to the data collection process by keeping me cognizant of my role in shaping the interview. It also contributed to the analysis of findings, by revealing my experience of the interview and how that might influence my understanding of it.

I also guarded against projecting my meanings onto the experience of others. To remain true to interviewee words and

meanings entailed exercising what Michael Quinn Patton (1990) refers to as "empathic neutrality." In what he himself admits might appear an oxymoron, he joins empathy, as a stance toward the people in an encounter, with neutrality, as a stance toward the findings. Empathy, which is relational and connects us with the experience of the other, need not interfere with neutrality, which requires only that we remain committed to "the world as it is" rather than to some predetermined sense of it. I took care, therefore, not to strain a "sensitizing concept" to fit the data, or to stretch the description of an encounter to fit the concept.

One well established technique for addressing the biases inevitably introduced by a researcher is called "triangulation" (Patton, 1990). The technique takes a number of forms, employing other data sources or perspectives in order to confirm the validity of findings. Many of the approaches associated with triangulation were inappropriate for the purposes of this dissertation project. For example, it often is recommended that interviews be corroborated with observation to ensure that people do what they say they do. In the research undertaken here, however, the meanings assigned to events, and not the events themselves, were what was significant. What I did do was enlist the help of another analyst who independently reviewed the interview transcripts and confirmed my interpretation of them. This alternative form of

triangulation, clearly more consistent with the orientation of this research, ensures that findings are not the artifact of a single researcher.

PART II

FINDINGS: THE INTERPERSONAL DANCE

> A relationship then, whether brief or long-term, distant or close, symmetrical or asymmetrical, is basically people dancing with each other -- coming together and moving apart, influencing and being influenced, attempting to connect and sometimes failing to connect (Miller, Wackman, Nunnally, and Miller, 1988, p. 14).

The dance has been used as a metaphor by several family systems theory authors (Lerner, 1985; Miller et al., 1988) to portray patterns of interaction. Since organization emerges in the process of interaction, exploring the nature of the interpersonal dance can reveal important qualities of organization. In this part of the dissertation, therefore, I will illustrate how the interpersonal dance is manifested in relationships between supervisor and employee and supervisor and boss.[1] In each case how people are constituted in the process of interaction will be the focus of analysis, illustrating what Lerner (1985) suggests when she likens relationships to "circular dances in which the behavior of each partner provokes and maintains the behavior of the other" (p. 12). This focus provides a context within which to understand behavior that otherwise might make little sense.

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[1] For purposes of clarity, the words supervisor, employee,and boss will be used in a standardized manner throughout this section of the dissertation: (a) "supervisor" refers to the person interviewed; (b) "employee" refers to someone who reports to the supervisor; and (c) "boss" refers to the person to whom the supervisor reports.

Miller et al. (1988) provide a useful framework for describing and understanding different aspects of the interpersonal dance. In it they identify four basic dance "states," or patterns of interaction: (1) Togetherness; (2) Separateness; (3) Directing/Complying and (4) Leading/ Following. People in relationship can stay in one state for a long time, or move from one state into another at relatively short intervals. Thus, encounters presented in the next two chapters to illustrate one dance state typically contain examples of other dance states. The framework also accounts for the energy animating the dance state, whether it is charged with positive or negative energy. This is significant because it highlights the fact that the interpersonal dance itself is inevitable, as Miller et al. observe, "You cannot not dance." Instead, it is a matter of whether the dance is fueled by positive or negative energy.

I have used the framework developed by Miller et al. to organize the findings of my research.[2] These are presented in the following two chapters. In chapter five I examine encounters that involve patterns of interaction in which participants move together or apart. In chapter six I explore encounters in which one of the participants is attempting to

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[2] In some cases I have extrapolated from the model presented by Miller et al. in presenting the interpersonal dance states as they are manifested in the organizational setting.

effect change, either by directing the other or taking the lead. To the extent possible, I have presented both positive and negative examples of these interactional patterns, although there are many more examples of negatively charged encounters.

It is important to note that the terms "positive" and "negative" do not refer to the presence of good or bad feelings on the part of the people involved in an encounter. Instead, the encounters designated as positive are those in which a pattern of interaction results in the release of creative potential; the encounter is progressive. In contrast, encounters designated as negative are those in which a pattern of interaction blocks creative action, in other words, the encounter is regressive.

Each encounter is presented within a standard format containing four sections. In the first section, The Dance, I describe the encounter. Here the focus is on the actual event, who did what, when and where. The intention is to illustrate the pattern of interaction as it unfolded. There is no attempt here to explain why it unfolded as it did; when motives are attributed, it is an attribution made by the person who was interviewed and is included as indicative of what they were thinking at the time.

In the next section of the format, The Dynamic, I explore the forces that animate the dance. Again the focus is on

action, how the behavior of one "provokes and maintains" the behavior of another. As Mary Parker Follett (1924) observed:

> An individual as an abstraction does not meet another individual as an abstraction; it is always activity meeting activity. There is no use chasing through the universe for a "real" you and a "real" me; it is more useful to study our interactions, these are certainly real (p. 177).

Here, however, I will be examining the energy that fuels activity. For this purpose I will borrow from one of the basic concepts of family systems theory, functional differentiation.[3]

Functional differentiation reveals itself in the actions of the individuals involved in an encounter. For example, is a person able to be an individual even in the face of pressure from the relationship, taking action that is grounded in a clear sense of what they think and feel? Or do they "deself" (Bowen, 1978), sacrificing the self (what they think and feel) in order to preserve harmony in the relationship? Similarly, do they maintain emotional objectivity, remaining in touch with the other person while not assuming responsibility for them? Or do they act to change the other, to persuade them of some "truth" or induce them to take some action? Finally, is

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[3] This is not a family systems theory analysis, nor is it my intention to diagnose levels of differentiation; even practicing family systems therapists are unable to evaluate differentiation on a day-to-day or week-to-week basis (Bowen, 1978). Instead, I use the concept of differentiation more simply as a guide in my analysis of the forces that animate the action as it occurs in an encounter.

a person able to tolerate the emotional intensity that attends an encounter or do they act to alleviate it or otherwise disrupt the relationship in order to reduce intensity? For example, do they triangle in another person, or a goal or issue (Friedman, 1985), in order to defuse emotional tension?

In the third section of the format, The Pivotal Event(s), I highlight those actions that most contribute to the encounter's outcome. This takes the form of elaboration, describing in more detail the most significant events of the encounter. The final section of the format, The Outcome, contains a description of how each person is constituted in the process of interaction. My focus here is on whether their subjectivity is evoked or denied. If subjectivity is evoked, a person is able to function in a relatively differentiated fashion, grounded in a clear sense of what they think, feel, and believe. This enables them to be truly in touch with the situation, a prerequisite to positive and creative action, and thus a progressive experience. If subjectivity is denied, a person is unable to achieve emotional separation, and acts to change self or other in order to preserve or restore harmony in the relationship. The emotional content of their action interferes with being truly in touch with the situation, and they thus revert to a less developed state, experiencing a regression.

CHAPTER 5

TOGETHER AND APART

Togetherness

Togetherness, like each of the other states in the interpersonal dance, can be charged with positive or negative energy. When the dance is fueled by positive energy, it is characterized by mutuality. Comfortably engaged in the same activity, participants in this dance attend to each other as well as to self. An example of positive togetherness is presented below under the heading "Working Together." When the dance is fueled by negative energy, partners become bound together rather than moving together freely. This latter state often is characterized by a reciprocal relationship in which a characteristic in one person reinforces its opposite in the other.

Although the details vary from encounter to encounter, the same pattern of interaction underlies all the examples of negative togetherness, a pattern in which one person gains strength as the other loses it. In the first encounter presented under the heading "Bound Together," a supervisor literally gives up power as her boss assumes it. In the two cases that follow, a role played by one reinforces the opposite (but complementary) role in the other; in one case the supervisor is dominant and the employee submissive, and in

the other the supervisor is decisive and the employee indecisive. In a final example of negative togetherness, boss and supervisor manipulate one another, binding them together in a relationship in which the power of one is defined in terms of its absence in the other.

Working Together

The Dance #1. Perhaps the best example of positive togetherness is an encounter that occurs between a supervisor and employee whose relationship previously has been more negatively charged. Indeed, the encounter is precipitated by a pattern of relating reminiscent of parent and child, the child seeking autonomy, the parent control. In his desire for independence, the employee remains apart from the relationship with the supervisor. In her desire for control, the supervisor probes for information, attempting to connect with the employee. The pattern of relating is withdraw-probe-withdraw, each a response to the other.

The encounter begins when the supervisor asks the employee a question:

> I asked something and he just sort of blew. I mean the young man blew up (laugh) in front of a couple of other people, and I was like "whoo," you know, "what happened here?" And it was like "okay," and I said you know, "let's calm down now," and I said, "let's get together at another time."

In their subsequent meeting, supervisor and employee sit down alone "in a quiet office." As she described it:

> I sort of asked him why he felt the way he did that day ... And so he explained that he felt like it was too close a supervision and he could work more independently, and that he wanted to be independent. And I explained how as a manager I felt like I needed to know, because in the end he was going to be leaving and I was going to be responsible for what was there.

A discussion of their respective needs enable them to "work out an arrangement," a way of working together in which the employee "could feel a little bit more independent" and the supervisor sufficiently informed. As the supervisor observed: "It was a matter of having to work out that relationship between the two of us."

The Dynamic. The new dance begins when the employee blows up and the supervisor responds but does not react. By containing her reactivity, she permits him the space necessary to experience and then communicate his feelings and thoughts. Moreover, the supervisor's recognition in the passage cited above that "it was a matter of having to work out that relationship" indicates that she understands the problem is not the employee's behavior alone, but rather what they are creating together. In fact, she reports that at the time of the meeting she reassesses her "style," "whether or not I was being a little too close," acknowledging her contribution to the dynamic. She thus assumes responsibility for her own behavior, enabling her to more clearly define her own needs while staying in touch with him. Finally, she feels "a little

nervous," "because you don't know what's going to happen ... you have to respond on the spot to whatever is being said." This suggests a willingness on her part to remain open to whatever might emerge rather than devising a strategy for managing the meeting and manipulating the employee.

The employee brings to the meeting both an awareness of his own experience in the relationship as well as an openness to the supervisor's perspective. Like her then, he is able to focus on what they are creating together rather than what he alone experiences. When asked what specifically occurred to enable her to take action, she responded: "He was able to express to me ... what the problem was and so we could work it out." Her response to the same question regarding his experience reveals the reciprocal nature of the encounter: "My expressing to him what I needed enabled him to take some action to correct what I was doing that bothered him." Supervisor and employee are mutually engaged in a process of problem-solving. Both express their respective needs, listen to the needs of the other, and entertain the possibilities for another kind of relating. They move together in a process that is affirming and productive for both.

<u>The Pivotal Events</u>. Two events contribute to their move into a different pattern of interaction. First, while the employee's blow up is pivotal, it alone could not have led to this new dance state. Instead, it is his display of emotion

coupled with her ability to tolerate the intensity of his feelings that enable them to come together in a different way. Indeed, his emotionality abates in response to her relatively differentiated stand.

Second, during their meeting she explains to him that she needs to know what he is doing "because in the end he was going to be leaving and I was going to be responsible for what was there." In so doing, she acknowledges his autonomy, that he has an identity independent of her and the work for which they are responsible. She thus respects his individuality while honoring their interdependence.

The Outcome. When asked in what ways she thought the employee's actions might have been shaped by the encounter, the supervisor responded:

> I think probably more aware of having to communicate to me more. That I had a need that wasn't being satisfied and that he could do something to satisfy something that I needed, and so that he could change his actions by providing me with information and save me having to be asking him for it, and making him feel like he was not working on his own.

The interrelatedness of their activities is implicit here. To the extent that they both recognize this interdependence and adopt a new way of relating, they create a new value in their relationship. They are able to do this, however, only by continuing to interact in a way that evokes the subjectivity of both self and other. In the present encounter, both

supervisor and employee are able to break out of their previous roles, each gaining a better sense of their own needs as well as those of the other. Free of the emotional ties that previously bound them, apparent in their avoid-probe-avoid pattern of relating, supervisor and employee are now able to be in touch with the circumstances of their relationship, working out an arrangement that recognizes their interdependence while respecting their individuality.

Bound Together

The Dance #2. In this encounter the supervisor goes to her boss twice during a several day period with two different staffing arrangements, each of which she has worked out in consultation with a staff member and a manager from a regional office. On the second occasion the boss says "no" to the proposed arrangement, acting in a way that is "very brusque" and indicating that "this is not to be discussed." Although the supervisor speculated about what she could have done, she could "try to force a discussion a little bit more" or "try to prevent her from making the decision, try to get it deferred," in the meeting with her boss she simply "followed her directions."

The Dynamic. At the beginning of this encounter, the supervisor's actions are grounded in a sense of her own competence. She acts, then, out of the power she derives from the knowledge that she can perform the task effectively.

Rather than experience the reaction of her boss as a temporary setback and "leave the door open for a decision at another time," however, the supervisor capitulates. Indeed, in the wake of her boss' reaction she feels "sort of a diminishment." Although she reports that the encounter "affirmed my sense of myself as a person who tried the best that I could to get for my staff what I thought they wanted and needed," she also feels herself to be "a person less able to carry out my job."

The "brusque" manner of the boss leaves the supervisor feeling "frustrated that she wouldn't seriously entertain it [the proposed staffing plan]." As the supervisor explained:

> It wasn't that having listened to all of it carefully she had decided that for whatever reasons this wasn't going to work. It was that she dismissed it out of hand.

The supervisor experiences the response of her boss as an unthinking reaction rather than a thoughtful decision. The emotional content of the boss' reaction reinforces this sense, as do subsequent comments that suggest it is an arbitrary exercise of the authority the boss derives from her position.

It is important to note here that the boss acts in this way only after the supervisor has exhibited the confidence and initiative to consult with others and devise a staffing plan. Significant as well is the fact that the boss has been in this position less than six months. While there is no way of discerning the motives of the boss, it may be that she

experiences the supervisor's actions as a disregard for her authority; in the presence of the power exercised by the supervisor she feels without power. She acts, then, to alleviate the discomfort that attends such a feeling by asserting the authority of her position.

Interestingly, the supervisor responds by ceding her sense of personal power to the formal authority of the boss. When asked to complete the sentence "I thought," the supervisor responded: "I thought that we had a new way of handling staffing decisions," decisions that "in the past I was able to make myself." Moreover, this "new way of handling staffing decisions" has an authority of its own. As the supervisor explained: "It was set up that she was authorized to make a decision and I asked her to make one and she made it."

Indeed, not only does the boss have the authority to make the decision, the supervisor's participation bolsters that authority. When asked how she thought her boss' sense of self might have been shaped by the encounter, the supervisor responded: "I just supported her sense of herself as a powerful figure because she could make me -- she was empowered to make those decisions." The idea of the supervisor supporting the boss' "sense of herself as a powerful figure" suggests that this kind of power is relational, that it is exercised only to the extent that there is another willing to participate in it. This notion is reinforced by the thought that she

begins to express but then interrupts, that she supported her boss's sense of herself because the boss could "make" her do ... what?

The power that the boss has over the supervisor is grounded in her authority to evaluate the supervisor. When asked what prevented her from taking action, the supervisor explained:

> There is a real uncertainty about how she's going to evaluate me, does she think I am a candidate for promotion, am I going to get a bonus, what's her opinion of me. And the uncertainty of her opinion at this point, the possibility that it may fluctuate sharply based on things and I don't know what those things are yet, certainly are a barrier in my taking some of those other actions. So it is a lot safer just to say "yes ma'am."

In order to maintain harmony in the relationship with her boss, she sacrifices a part of herself to her boss' potential opinion of her. The passage cited above indicates that she believes the uncertainty she experiences about how the boss will evaluate her -- the basis for decisions regarding promotions and bonuses -- can be best addressed by placating the boss. The sense of power enjoyed by the boss, then, is purchased at the expense of the supervisor's own sense of herself and her personal power.

The Pivotal Events. Key to this encounter is the supervisor's willingness to deself in the presence of the authority of her boss. Her concern regarding the boss' opinion of her ultimately means that what she believes is

negotiable under pressure from the relationship. Nor does this occur in a vacuum. The behavior of the boss suggests a discomfort with the power apparent in the supervisor's initiative. The pressure to conform experienced by the supervisor is real, but importantly is experienced as a reaction to the boss' assertion of the authority of her position. Both, then, contribute to the circumstances under which the supervisor deselfs.

The Outcome. The supervisor, who at the outset possessed the confidence and initiative to act autonomously, now feels herself to be "a person less able to carry out my job." As she perceives the encounter, "it was one more circumstance where she was able to be in control." Indeed, when asked what enabled her to take action, the supervisor responded by talking not about the initiative she had exercised in developing the staffing plan, but rather about following the directions of her boss. As she explained: "I was enabled in the fact that she has the authority and I don't, I don't have any recourse."

This belief on the part of the supervisor, that the authority of the boss' position leaves her without options, indicates the extent to which her sense of being without power is associated with the authority she accords the boss. Therefore, while the boss invokes the authority of her position, most notably with her injunction "this is not to be

discussed," the supervisor's own definition of self contributes to constituting the boss as powerful. In so doing, the subjectivity of both is denied, each defined in terms of the other's relative power. Bound by the dynamic that fuels this reciprocal relationship, supervisor and boss remain unable to achieve the emotional separation necessary to truly work together, whether to jointly develop a staffing plan or to address issues of relationship.

The Dance #3. In the meeting in which this encounter begins, the supervisor asks the employee to "tell me in just a few words what you feel the essential problem is." The work group of which they are a part is in the process of preparing a report, and the employee has brought in detailed notes regarding interviews she has conducted. When the employee hesitates and indicates more than once that she "rather not," the supervisor urges her on by saying "just try it," and "let's just try." The supervisor is trying to get the employee to do something, "to learn to better synthesize a great deal of detailed data." The employee responds by getting "angry" because "you won't even listen to all this."

The employee's "emotional reaction" prompts the supervisor to think "don't continue pressing this particular course, it's not getting anywhere, don't keep this meeting going if she's ready to leave and she needs time to cool off and be by herself." The supervisor then takes the notes from the

employee, telling her "I'll go through it and then we'll get back together." When they reconvene, the supervisor shows her a half page outline to which the employee makes "a couple of corrections, but then said 'yep, that does it."

The Dynamic. When asked what she thought enabled the employee to take action, the supervisor responded:

> She was able to take action when we sat down, when she looked at my small brief outline of her major points, and she was able to see that I had used what she had done, and that we could go back to our old way of working.

This comment suggests that interaction between the two historically has been governed by a pattern of relating in which the supervisor is dominant and the employee submissive. On the occasion of this encounter, the supervisor is trying to get the employee to do something she is not comfortable doing. When the employee feels she cannot comply (submit) with the supervisor's direction, she reacts. It could be she is seeking the dependence that she found so comforting in the past. She also may have experienced as threatening the supervisor's attempt to effect change. Whatever her motives, however, her action is to assert herself.

In reaction to the employee's assertion of self, and the emotionality that attends it, the supervisor acts to reduce the intensity of her feelings and restore balance to their relationship. Although her inclination may have been correct -- "don't keep this meeting going if she's ready to leave and

she needs time to cool off" -- her failure to acknowledge these sentiments, and to address the episode at a subsequent time, denies the employee's anger. Although the supervisor later considers "say[ing] something, apologiz[ing]," she "decide[s] better," reasoning that the employee "may be embarrassed, better just see if she likes this," that it "was enough of a lesson to show what I was trying to get."

But the only "lesson" is that they can comforably revert to their old roles. The employee's actions indicate that she is comfortable with a return to their "old way of working" together. The supervisor, then, does not "speak to her about it anymore, really because I noticed that she was happy and bubbling at that point," that "it might be counter-productive to bring it up." Indeed, the actions of the supervisor suggest that she too may find comfort in a return to their old ways.

The Pivotal Event. As in the case used to illustrate positive togetherness, the emotional outburst of the employee in this encounter might have led to a new, and positive, way of working together. The supervisor's reaction, however, produces a very different result. Unlike the supervisor in the first encounter, who by containing her reactivity permits the employee the space needed to experience and then communicate his feelings and thoughts, the supervisor in the present encounter acts immediately to alleviate the intensity of the

employee's emotions. In so doing, she denies the employee the opportunity to experience, understand, and communicate her feelings. The supervisor not only fails to respond to the employee's apparent discomfort with the initial request to synthesize, but at no time, either during or after their meeting, does she acknowledge the employee's anger.

The supervisor's reactivity is indicative of her inability to remain emotionally separate. When asked how the encounter shaped her sense of self, the supervisor explained: "I often tend to immediately think that I have done something wrong, that I've hurt someone's feelings." Ironically, concerned that she is somehow responsible for the employee's feelings, the supervisor is unable to see how she is contributing to the negative dynamic fueling their interpersonal dance. And so she acts in a way that perpetuates it, assuming responsibility not only for work that might more appropriately be completed by the employee, but for her emotional state as well.

The Outcome. At the beginning of this encounter the employee feels she is not being heard, interestingly, at the very time she is being urged to speak. As the supervisor herself realizes in retrospect: "She wanted me to see what she had done, she wanted some recognition of that." Thus, the supervisor's failure "to see what she had done" is experienced by the employee as a failure to truly see her. The employee's

expression of anger, of course, is one way of being seen. In her reactivity, however, the supervisor fails to acknowledge this aspect of the employee's experience as well.

Denied this aspect of her experience, the employee reverts to her old role for definition of self. Perhaps unwittingly, but perhaps not, the supervisor acts in a way that facilitates and reinforces the employee's sense of self as dependent. With her follower securely in tow, the supervisor now has no option but to take the lead. By reverting to their respective roles, the subjectivity of both supervisor and employee is denied; defining themselves in terms of these roles, they act in accordance with role expectations rather than with what they think and feel. This precludes any further development of the employee, not just by eliminating the opportunity for the employee to learn, but by reinforcing their comfort with and attachment to the roles they have assumed.

The Dance #4. In this next encounter the employee reportedly has a problem coming to closure, a problem which manifests itself in a common response of "yes but." The supervisor attributes this behavior to a lack of confidence on the part of the employee, his inability to say "this is what we have and its good enough." The supervisor acknowledges as well, however, that "I think his actions were shaped in that I let the leash be long ... because I let him do his thing."

The supervisor's reaction is to "shorten the leash," which means "more hands-on work myself, more interim meetings, interim products from him." When asked how the employee's actions were shaped by the encounter, the supervisor described his own actions this way:

> I was saying "here's what you're going to do," "here's what we need to do," "here's when we need to do it by," and "here is how we will take into account your concerns in trying to get all those things in there."

Indeed, according to the supervisor, the employee "needs me to push the button ... and then he'll do it"

The Dynamic. In the supervisor's mind, the employee will not change; he is incapable of coming to closure. To "let the leash be long" means to "let him do his thing." The use of the phrase "his thing" suggests that the inability to come to closure is an innate and unchangeable characteristic of the employee. Thus, the supervisor believes that the employee will not change unless he does something to change him: "I'm going to have to do some of it for him because he just won't be able to do it."

The supervisor, then, sees himself as facilitating action on the part of the employee. When asked what he thought enabled the employee to act, the supervisor responded "my taking a stand." Interestingly, when the supervisor was asked what enabled him to act, he referred back to the employee; "He couldn't set priorities so I had to help him set those

priorities." The actions of each, then, are bound up in the actions of the other.

It is important to highlight that the supervisor is not responding simply to an action taken by the employee, but to his experience of the employee as someone who cannot come to closure. When asked how he thought the encounter shaped the employee's sense of self, the supervisor responded: "I think he came to realize that he may need a little boost in terms of sorting out, and that that's something he wants from a supervisor." He defines the employee, then, in terms of his reliance on a supervisor.

And this contributes to the supervisor's own sense of self. When asked how the encounter shaped his sense of self, the supervisor explained: "It increased my feeling of my own competence" because "I could do something that he couldn't." Thus, the supervisor derives a sense of himself in relation to his sense of another, his own actions fueling further the very behavior he is responding to in the employee. The employee's response, in turn, reinforces his sense of himself as someone not able to come to closure.

The Pivotal Event. The event that most contributes to the outcome of this encounter is the supervisor's experience of the employee as someone who cannot be decisive. He then acts in a way that bolsters his own sense of himself, his "own competence as a researcher" and "an analyst," but interest-

ingly, not as a supervisor. He can be the supervisor and make decisions because the employee is unable to do so. The employee participates, of course, by waitng for the supervisor to decide for him. Indeed, the supervisor's willingness to decide allows the employee to remain indecisive.

The Outcome. As the metaphor of a leash so clearly suggests, the supervisor's actions constitute nothing more than a manipulation, objectifying the employee as a tool to be controlled by the skilled hand of the supervisor. Instead of a process that might enable the employee to address issues of confidence and closure, a process that would evoke his subjectivity, the encounter pushes the employee into the role of the indecisive one.

Although the supervisor expresses some frustration regarding this, and explains that "I just wanted to work with him as a colleague," he acts in a way that precludes the possibility of such a relationship. Indeed, becoming responsible for bringing the employee to closure pushes the supervisor into the role of the decisive one. In this way, similar to that experienced in the previous encounter, the subjectivity of each is denied, both supervisor and employee defined only in terms of their respective roles.

For the supervisor in this encounter, these roles carry with them a certain amount of authority. When asked what enabled the employee to take action, the supervisor responded

in a way that reveals how he thinks about these roles. After indicating that the employee responds to "my taking a stand," the supervisor explained why the employee does this:

> He operated under the same kind of principle that I operate [under] in this organization, which is that its very clearly defined as a hierarchical organization ... Your job as a staff member is to think and to make your point of view known to your boss. Your boss' job is to make a decision. And when that decision comes, you may or may not like it, but your job is to help implement that decision.

This conception of the organization as hierarchical, and the roles that attend it, may well reinforce the pattern of relating evident here. As the "boss," the supervisor sees it as his job (or role) to "make a decision" (or be decisive). When the employee expresses "yes but" sentiments, he fails to honor his job (or role) "to help implement that decision," even though he does "make [his] point of view known." The supervisor then feels he has no option but to make the decision for him. Just as a belief in hierarchy reinforces this pattern of relating, this pattern of relating reinforces a belief in the validity of hierarchy.

The Dance #5. The final example of negative togetherness is an encounter that begins with a meeting called by the boss and attended by the supervisor and the three staff people who report to him. The boss begins the meeting by asking the supervisor "where is your agenda?" When he replies "you called this meeting," she explains that "it's your job to

manage me, and as a result you should have an agenda, otherwise we don't need to have this meeting."

After learning that she has treated others similarly, the supervisor approaches the boss to discuss the meeting, "to explain how I felt ... and to try to figure out why it was done." When he does, however, she attributes the way she acted to her "management style," adding that "I'm not changing, I have no regrets about doing it, and I'll do it again." This makes him "back up," concluding that "it was a fight I couldn't win and so I chose not to get into it." Instead, he begins to "approach her with options." As he explained, "presenting her with options gave her the feeling that she was the boss, and the decision wasn't mine it was hers."

The Dynamic. The supervisor reports feeling "humiliated" in response to the initial meeting of this encounter, his sense of self diminished. What occurs in this meeting is not just significant for him because he finds himself unable to meet the expectations of the boss; "If I had known I was expected to bring an agenda, I would have had an agenda." It is important as well that it occurs in the presence of staff who report to him. Indeed, he indicated that at the time "I wondered, well, what's going on that all of a sudden I have to be treated this way in front of staff." He thus experiences the meeting as undercutting his authority. As he expressed it:

> You take away any initial hopes I have of guiding and leading and fulfilling my function in the organization as it was set up, because some of them at any rate felt they didn't have to listen to me.

His sense of authority or power is relational, then, in part tied to the people who report to him.

The authority of his boss, of course, is implicated here as well. As the supervisor explained:

> She saw this as stage setting, and she wanted the staff to be there because if she jumped on me in front of them then they were also to be kind of in awe of her and her position.

The boss can exercise the power of her position only if the power of the supervisor is diminished. Interestingly, the apparent meaning of her words "it's your job to manage me," seeming to accord him a degree of power, conflict with the more essential though unspoken message of the interaction, which is that she will manage or manipulate him. Their subsequent meeting reinforces this message, attributing her actions to something as immutable as her "management style."

Just as her sense of power depends upon his lack of it, his sense of powerlessness can be understood only in terms of the authority accorded her. When asked what prevented him from taking action, the supervisor responded "her position," and then "rank has its privilege," a phrase he repeated a number of times. Indeed, here is another encounter in which the authority associated with a position is infused with power beyond that grounded in capacity; "If it's a question of who

was right and who was wrong, generally the person with the rank was right and the person without it was wrong." As he explained:

> What she had was a position, high level in the organization, and that's what she had and she used it, she used it as a stick, and she figured if she clubbed you over the head and it hurt, you would ask yourself, "well, what do I have to do not to get hit with this stick again."

And it is this question, "what do I have to do not to get hit with this stick again," that prompts him to take action.

When asked what he thought prevented the boss from taking action, the supervisor answered that he began to approach her with options. The action that is ostensibly prevented, of course, is his further humiliation, although he put it more simply: "My life was a lot more tolerable ... we were able to make it a tolerable situation." By presenting her with options, giving her "the feeling that she was the boss," he is taking her injunction seriously to manage her, manipulating her in much the same way that she has manipulated him. But there is a difference: Her manipulation of him reinforces his sense of himself as a person without power, while his manipulation of her reinforces her sense of herself as a person with power. Their mutual manipulation, then, is the tie that binds supervisor and boss in this encounter.

<u>The Pivotal Event</u>. Key to the outcome of this encounter is the boss exerting pressure on the supervisor and the

supervisor yielding to that pressure. Her definition of self depends upon his servility; she can be powerful only if he is without power. She thus acts in a way that he experiences as humiliating, diminishing his sense of self. He deselfs in the face of this pressure, defining himself in accordance with her needs and expectations. Indeed, under the guise of managing her, he participates in the construction of a relationship in which she plays the powerful role opposite his role as powerless.

The Outcome. As with the other encounters used to portray negative togetherness, the boss and the supervisor in this encounter define themselves in opposition to one another. What makes this encounter confusing is that each seemingly presents themselves as something they are not: the boss may say "manage me," suggesting that she is ceding control to the supervisor, but in fact she remains in control; the supervisor may act in a way that he thinks will give the boss the feeling that "the decision wasn't mine it was hers," suggesting control on his part, but in fact the decision is hers, and thus the control as well. Boss and supervisor together participate in the charade, each following the lines of a script they have jointly produced. Each, then, is constituted in the role accorded them by that script, she the powerful boss, he the powerless subordinate. In the process, their subjectivity is denied, their behavior governed by the logic

of the script rather than by their own sense of the situation as it presents itself to them.

Separateness

Separateness and togetherness exist as complements. In the well-differentiated relationship, people can comfortably work together or apart. Indeed, their ability to work together appears to enable them to work apart, moving freely from one dance state to the other. When the dance is negatively charged, the same complementarity exists. In the two examples presented here under the heading "Moving Apart," the dynamic of negative togetherness pushes the relationship into negative separateness; in the first case, negative separateness takes the form of avoidance, in the second case it takes the form of polarization. First, however, under the heading "Working Apart," is an example of positive separateness.

Working Apart

The Dance #6. This encounter involves a supervisor and boss who "often had differences of opinion" but "tended to have a good rapport," and thus were able to "talk things out." The encounter begins with the boss asking the supervisor to write two paragraphs for a report. Despite the supervisor's efforts, however, she cannot write them because she "couldn't conceptually buy into [it]." She explains to the boss, "I cannot write this, since I don't believe it I can't write it." She suggests to him that instead, "you should write it." He

responds to her suggestion, as she explained, by "acknowledging that he asked me to do something that was against my grain, and ... willing to take the action of taking it back and accepting it as his own."

The Dynamic. The boss is requesting that the supervisor do something she feels unable to do. When asked to complete the sentence "I felt" regarding this encounter, the supervisor responded:

> I felt frustrated. I might have even felt like I was letting him down by not being able to write it, that is my job. But I also felt that I couldn't do it justice and I needed to express that to him ... because I didn't believe in it.

She feels frustrated because she cannot be responsive to his request and at the same time be true to herself. Her concern about "letting him down" suggests that she is somewhat invested in his approval or acceptance of her. And her reference to "that is my job" is reminiscent of the supervisor who asserts that the job of the boss is to decide and the job of the staff to help implement the decision regardless of what he or she believes. Ultimately, however, the supervisor in the present encounter acts on an awareness of what she believes (and what she does not) as well as a regard for the boss.

Several things contribute to her ability to take a position while respecting his. She describes herself as "having independence" and "feeling confident enough" to go

talk to him, to tell him she cannot do what he has asked because she does not believe in it. Being "confident enough" means that she believes sufficiently in herself and the merits of the position she is taking to stand on her own. Her reference to "having independence" indicates that she can stand on her own apart from the needs and expectations of her boss.

The supervisor also is enabled to take action because she experiences the boss as someone with whom she can truly be heard. She talks about this in terms of his "openness," his willingness to listen and "to really think through what the person is telling you and what impact it has on that person as well as yourself." Her description suggests that the boss is sufficiently differentiated himself that he can respect her beliefs, although different from his own, and act in a way that is supportive of her as an individual. His action of "taking it back and accepting it as his own" indicates that he does not feel a need to change her, to make her do it, but can act on his own beliefs while respecting hers.

The Pivotal Event. The pivotal event in this encounter is the meeting in which the supervisor tells her boss she cannot write the two paragraphs and suggests that he write them instead. Each is clear on what they believe. Neither is emotionally invested in bringing the other around. Both are able to act on what they believe while accommodating the needs

of the other. Therefore, they are able to maintain their relationship as well as their respective sense of themselves.

The Outcome. Unlike previous encounters in which the self becomes negotiable under pressure from the relationship, in this encounter both boss and supervisor are able to define themselves while remaining in relationship with the other. Indeed, working together enables them to work apart. A clear sense of who each is and what he or she believes, in each case grounded in self but respected in the relationship, yields the positive energy that fuels this interaction. This pattern of relating evokes the subjectivity of each, enabling them to address their respective needs while attending to the relationship. The report too may benefit, to the extent that the boss is influenced by his interaction with the supervisor and thus brings a somewhat changed sensibility to the task of writing the two paragraphs in question. True integration, of course, would entail their continuing in a state of positive togetherness, working jointly to craft two paragraphs with which they were both satisfied. Although they do not, they act in a way that respects the individuality of each as well as the integrity of their relationship.

Moving Apart

The Dance #7. This encounter is prompted by the employee's imminent departure on vacation the week before a report for which he has been responsible is to be issued. To ensure

that the report is issued on time, the supervisor arranges for a woman who is familiar with the subject matter to be involved in the job's completion. The supervisor also sees her own involvement as essential: "It meant that I was going to pretty much just drop everything else and work on this."

The level of effort required to complete the job is substantial. In the week prior to the employee's departure, the supervisor reported that "I was working late, and this other woman was saying 'I'll cancel my leave and come in,'" although "he was working his regular schedule." Moreover, the two work on the project full time during his absence, throughout the week as well as the weekend.

The supervisor expects the employee back on Monday morning:

> He was supposed to be back on Monday. And Monday was the day the report was due to be issued ... and he didn't show up at work (gasp) ... So rather unhappily, the two of us launched back into doing the things that had to be done to finish up getting this report ready. And we pretty much were done with these things about noon, and he came in, he showed up. And he never said anything about why he hadn't been there before.

The employee never explains his delayed return and the supervisor never asks. Instead, she simply tells him: "Here's where we are, and here's what else has to be done, and alright you take it from here, are we clear on that?" The employee completes the process necessary for the report's release, and the report is issued the following day.

The Dynamic. By the end of the encounter, the supervisor is feeling like the employee "kind of abandoned this effort." His failure to work late, to be "just kind of business as usual," compounded by his delayed return without explanation, leave the supervisor feeling "angry." When asked to complete the sentence "I felt," the supervisor responded:

> Angry. I felt that he wasn't being responsible enough, and that I was having to pick up the pieces, and this other person was having to pick up the pieces, and get his job done for him. And I've got plenty of other work to do, so I was really annoyed, angry.

If the employee is not being responsible enough, then the supervisor feels that she must be.

Although the supervisor is angry at the employee for not being responsible, her own actions in the encounter may contribute to him being so. She describes herself as someone who is willing to work extra hours and do whatever is necessary to get a job done, to do things "that are not really [my] tasks but specifically a task that a subordinate would do." In a pattern of interaction indicative of negative togetherness, then, her assumption of responsibility for the job's completion, including her choice to involve a third person, may well have led the employee to relinquish control, to not be responsible.

The involvement of another staff person, someone who is familiar with the subject matter and able to contribute to the

job's completion, certainly has practical value in this situation. It has emotional value as well, however. The tension generated in the relationship by the employee's departure on vacation prior to the release of the report is relieved, at least in part, by bringing in someone else to do the work. In addition, the supervisor can be aligned with someone other than the employee, moving her into a relationship that she experiences as more stable. Moreover, both aspects of the move to triangle enable the supervisor to avoid addressing with the employee the issues and attending emotions raised by the encounter.

Indeed, the supervisor experiences herself as "a person who sometimes avoids emotional encounters in the workplace." Although she reported thinking that "I should be willing to be more direct with him," she was concerned that it would "interfere with getting the task done." More importantly, perhaps, she "did not want to get into something that was going to be emotionally draining." For her, then, the encounter "reinforces my sense that I may be willing just to take it, to swallow the negative emotions and to do things my way instead of getting into whatever's happened." Thus, when he is delayed in returning from his vacation and offers no explanation, though she is admittedly upset she says nothing.

Importantly, avoidance on the part of one reciprocates avoidance on the part of the other. This encounter can be

seen as a series of avoidances, she of him and he of her, a pattern which undoubtedly transcends the immediate circumstances. She describes him as someone "who has had a lot of emotional problems in the past" and therefore "I'm always walking a fine line with him about pressuring him too much." This coupled with her more general inclination to "avoid emotional encounters" predisposes her in their relationship to avoid interaction and simply "do things my way." Before his departure, for example, she does not discuss with him the content of the report, but in his absence, she reported that:

> We made a lot of changes in the report ... decided that we didn't agree with it, either we couldn't find enough support in the papers he'd done, or we didn't agree with his analysis of what was there.

His actions clearly complement hers, for he too avoids interaction. For example, he never says anything to her about the significant changes made in the report.

In the interview, the supervisor speculated that as a result "he may feel that he's somewhat diminished." The changes in the report, on top of the supervisor's assumption of responsibility for the job and her involvement of a third person, may well constitute for him sufficient pressure under which to deself. In so doing he purchases a certain degree of emotional space in the relationship with the supervisor, but at a cost to his own sense of self.

The final and most notable act of avoidance occurs when the employee fails to explain his delayed return. The explanation she offers for her own silence on that occasion is very telling:

> If he had returned and given some explanation for why he was late, my behavior would have been different, because then I would have said something ... I would not have been as annoyed by it if he had had a good reason. The fact that he was silent on it entirely ... contributed to my just saying "whatever this is I'm not going to get into it right now."

Interestingly, this passage is part of the supervisor's response to the question "What enabled you to take action?" She seems to be saying that she would have said something had he. He may well be operating according to the same logic.

The Pivotal Events. The supervisor's inclination to avoid emotional encounters contributes more than anything else to the outcome in this case. Her failure to deal effectively with her expectations of the employee, and to confront the anger she experiences when he fails to meet those expectations, undermines her ability to truly work with the employee, whether together or apart. It is not surprising, then, that she feels "like it's an unresolved thing for me."

The involvement of a third person in this encounter further reduces the possibility for resolution in the relationship. While of practical value, in terms of getting the work done and relieving the tension between supervisor and

employee, it ultimately aligns the supervisor with the staff person against the employee. In this way, triangling not only enables the supervisor to avoid the tension inherent in her relationship with the employee, but it acts as well to dissociate the employee. The employee participates in this process, of course, by ceding responsibility and avoiding interaction.

The Outcome. The relationship that emerges in this encounter is one characterized by avoidance. Supervisor and employee appear to be engaged in a dance in which each circles the other, careful to avoid contact. The choreography enables them to continue their dance even as issues and events intervene. The dance facilitates the maintenance of "business as usual," holding supervisor and employee together while keeping them apart. To the extent that it keeps them apart in a state of negative separateness, it precludes their coming to a resolution regarding their differing needs and expectations. The dance thus perpetuates itself. To the extent that it holds them in a state of negative togetherness (with one taking responsibility and the other ceding it), the dance denies the subjectivity of both, undermining their ability to achieve a more differentiated relationship. It contributes as well to their pattern of avoidance, fueling further the dance of negative separateness. In the absence of greater differen-

tiation, movement into a more positive dance state is not possible.

The Dance #8. This encounter is another example in which negative togetherness gives way to negative separateness. It occurs in the context of a performance review being conducted by the employee's second level supervisor. According to the supervisor:

> I simply told her I was not going to [promote her] until I could see evidence that she could produce written material that was useable in a first draft form ... And she was very insistent that she was a good writer.

The supervisor's initial approach to the meeting is to "just giv[e] her feedback." When the employee responds with an "instant rebuttal," however, the supervisor "tried to do my best logical selling;" "I attempted to cite evidence and make a case for the fact that I had no clear support for her opinion of herself." Although the supervisor reported that in the end he "tried to explain to her that she was much better off working for me -- 'if you get a hard-nosed supervisor,' I said, 'he's going to kill you,'" the employee arranges to be transferred to another part of the organization.

The Dynamic. In this encounter, supervisor and employee become locked together in a mutually reinforcing pattern of attack and defend. According to the supervisor, the employee is typically defensive, that in previous discussions of her performance "it was always the supervisor's fault." It is not

surprising, then, that she experiences the performance review in general, and the supervisor's "feedback" in particular, as an attack. She reacts, then, by defending herself with an "instant rebuttal."

When asked how he thought her sense of self may have been shaped by the encounter, the supervisor conceded that "she may have felt that her person was not really appreciated," although he concluded "but I can't think that her sense of self was totally diminished." The employee's reaction in their meeting, however, suggests that her sense of self in fact may be very much on the line. And as the supervisor reported, there were various factors that exacerbated her defensiveness:

> A combination of what I was saying, my personality ... she was probably disappointed in the scores she was getting ... the setting, the package of attitudes and opinions she brought in with her, and then probably my somewhat blunt and direct manner, all combined to make her more defensive than she would normally have been.

Indeed, the supervisor's approach to their meeting, his "personality" (he describes himself as "very bright, I don't suffer fools well") and "somewhat blunt and direct manner," may have contributed to putting her on the defense.

Interestingly, her defensiveness may put him on the defense as well. He experiences her "instant rebuttal" as an attack, and responds with his "best logical selling." When

asked how his sense of self was shaped by the encounter, he explained:

> I felt good about myself. I mean given my personality I thought I gave it the best shot that I could ... And I don't think it was a matter of delivery or personality, it was facts, evidence, and she couldn't accept it.

His expectation that she would accept "the fact that I had no clear support for her opinion of herself," however, indicates the extent to which he may be emotionally invested in his effort to "persuade" or "convince" her. In fact, he concluded a description of how he had made his "case" to her by saying:

> She didn't say "oh gee, I didn't realize that it was an 100% indictment of my abilities, I guess I will have to work on that," which is the appropriate and correct answer. Whether you believe it or not is a different matter, but at least it indicates that you're willing to consider what people think as being somehow authoritative.

This suggests that he needs her to consider what he says as "somehow authoritative." When she does not, he too becomes defensive, engaging in "his best logical selling." She, of course, experiences "his best logical selling" as an attack, which serves only to heighten her defensiveness.

A pattern of attack and defend, fueled by the respective attitudes and actions of supervisor and employee, ultimately resolves itself into an "impasse;" negative togetherness yields negative separateness. The impasse may have existed all along; as the supervisor reported, the meeting "reinforced [the employee's] sense that she was right and I was

wrong." According to him, "the bottomline as she interpreted it was that she was going nowhere, she was not going to get from me what she wanted." It appears equally true, however, that he was not going to get from her what he wanted: "I could clearly hear what she was saying, but it wasn't the answer I was looking for." The impasse, of course, is the impossibility of reconciling his "facts" with "her opinion of herself." To do so would require that she concede his "facts" in spite of her "self." This is something she is unable to do, her defensiveness a defense of the self. They end up polarized, then, perhaps as they started off, each emotionally invested in the rightness of their respective position.

The Pivotal Event. The thing that contributes most to the outcome of this encounter is the supervisor's inability to take a differentiated stand in the face of the employee's defensiveness. His "best logical selling," to "persuade" the employee of the rightness of his assessment of her abilities, serves only to fuel her defensiveness. His reactivity to her defensiveness, becoming emotionally invested in his effort to persuade her ("I felt I had failed in my mission"), fuels his own defensiveness. In the dance state of negative togetherness, the behavior of the one (attack) reinforces the behavior of the other (defend). If they were not already polarized, then, the dance of negative togetherness leads them to their "impasse," into the state of negative separateness.

The Outcome. The dance of negative separateness, manifested in the polarization of supervisor and employee, predisposes them to a pattern of negative togetherness in which each is defined in opposition to the other. The dance of negative togetherness similarly inclines them toward polarization. Together, these dance states deny the subjectivity of both supervisor and employee, bolstering the emotional investment each has made in their respective positions. The emotional content of their behavior in the meeting precludes a conversation, to say nothing of subsequent action, regarding the employee's development, the supposed purpose of their meeting. Unfortunately, the employee's move to another position, and another supervisor, will do little to change the outcome of subsequent meetings of this type. The employee may well remain defensive. The supervisor's response, then, will be critical.

CHAPTER 6

EFFECTING CHANGE

The encounters presented in this chapter illustrate patterns of interaction that unfold when one of the participants is attempting to effect change, either by giving direction or taking initiative. In the dance state described by Miller et al. (1988) as directing/complying, one person gives the other an instruction. If the other person is uncomfortable with the instruction, Miller et al. describe the dance state as pushing/blocking, providing a useful image of the resistance generated by being told to do something inconsistent with one's experience. Examples of this negatively charged dance state are presented under the heading "Pushing." In the dance state described by Miller et al. (1988) as leading/following, one person moves independently of the other. If the other person is uncomfortable with the move and does not follow, Miller et al. (1988) describe the dance state as pulling/dragging, again evoking an image of resistance. Examples of this dance state are presented under the heading "Pulling." All of the encounters described in this chapter resolve themselves into dance states of togetherness and separateness. These encounters are presented separately to illustrate the resistance generated when one person is uncomfortable with another's attempts to effect change.

Pushing

There were no examples provided in the interviews of an encounter in which a direction was both given and received in a comfortable and confident fashion. Four of the five encounters described below illustrate how the push/block dance state manifests itself in the workplace; two involve interaction between a supervisor and employee, two involve interaction between a supervisor and boss. In each case it is important to note that the block, which is a response to an initial push, is experienced as a push and is reciprocated with a block, reinforcing the push/block pattern of interaction. In the final example presented in this section, the supervisor takes a differentiated stand in the face of a direction she is uncomfortable with, and the encounter thus resolves itself in a more positive dance state.

Push/Block, Push/Block

The Dance #9 and #10. Two very similar encounters, described by different supervisors, illustrate what can happen when comfort and confidence on the part of both supervisor and employee do not attend an instruction. In each case the supervisor just wants to tell the employee what to do. In each case the employee resists. And in each case "time" prevents supervisor and employee from addressing the negative dynamic underlying their interpersonal dance.

In the first case, the supervisor characterizes his relationship with the employee as "very collegial." On the occasion of the encounter described, however, the supervisor is feeling "pressed for time" and wants only "to tell him what to do ... I wanted him to do the things that I wanted." He thus becomes frustrated when the employee wants "to go on and talk it through." Although the supervisor does respond somewhat to the employee's efforts to engage him in a dialogue, "I didn't go on at length like I usually do with him" but "I spent more time than I really wanted to," he concludes the encounter by directing the employee to "here, take them and do something with them."

Although the supervisor in the other encounter acknowledges that the employee "has got the indepth knowledge and information at hand," he continues to implicate himself in the work of the employee because "I have a better feel for how the product should come out in the end." The employee resists the supervisor's direction by meeting with him on several occasions to discuss changes in a report, but then failing to incorporate a lot of the changes indicated by the supervisor. The supervisor experiences the employee's omissions as "one more shot at getting it the way that he wanted." In response, the supervisor "s[its] down and start[s] to take the draft and crank in" the changes that have been omitted.

The supervisor is interrupted in making these changes, however, when the employee enters his office. When the employee learns that the supervisor is feeling pressured because he has more work to do than time to do it in, he offers to take the report back as his "responsibility" and complete it. Although the supervisor is reticent, he agrees to the arrangement "given the time constraints."

The Dynamic. Both supervisors are ambivalent about their roles in the present encounters. As one explained:

> I'm not really like an authoritarian kind of person ... I don't like being that kind of person. I really prefer being like a collegial kind of person.

The other supervisor indicates as well a preference for working together:

> Had I had more time probably what I would have done is had him sit down, like we've done in the past, and try to go through each change together and that way we can talk about them and hopefully come out with a product that is good and that both people are happy with.

On the occasion of their respective encounters, however, both supervisors feel like "I should have been tougher or something," "I should probably deal with the staff stronger than I have been." Their ambivalence around role, whether to be "authoritarian" or "collegial," coupled with their polarized thinking regarding supervision generally, inclines them under the circumstances of these encounters toward the authoritarian

role. Their inclination to be "tougher" also is fueled, however, by the resistance of the employees.

The employee's resistance in each case is a reaction to being pushed, the resistance fueled in part by a fear of losing self. Nor is this fear groundless since the supervisor is trying to get the employee to do something contrary to the employee's own inclinations. Both supervisors seem to think that they know what is best and that the employee does not. One of them, although describing the employee as "intellectually quick," thinks that the employee "wasn't understanding what I wanted." Similarly, although the other supervisor acknowledges that the employee "has got the indepth knowledge and information at hand," he continues to assert that "I have a better feel for how the product should come out in the end."

Indeed, each supervisor seems to believe that the employee will not take action, the action envisioned by the supervisor at least, unless forced to do so. The supervisor from the first encounter described it this way:

> I looked at it like this was just his personality in the sense that he was kind of more interested in the intellectual content of the work and not necessarily the deadlines or what I thought was pressing at the time.

Thus, when asked what he thought enabled the employee to take action, he responded: "It was my saying to him, 'here, do this." The other supervisor expressed the same sentiment somewhat differently: "My persistence in doing the product the

way I think it ought to be, prevented him from doing it the way he thinks it ought to be."

Each encounter concludes with the supervisor ceding control, at least temporarily, to the employee. Neither supervisor appears particularly confident that the employee will in fact "do the product" the way the he wants it done. The supervisor in the first encounter leaves the employee with the direction "here, take them and do something with them." The supervisor in the second encounter has "mixed emotions, because when it comes back to me there are still going to be some of the same things that I think need to be changed." Neither supervisor, however, believes he has an option.

When asked what prevented him from taking action, the supervisor in the first encounter responded: "probably the reaction of the other person." In his mind, then, the resistance of the employee precludes any other action that might satisfy his need for closure. He indicated as well, however, that he was prevented by "my own feelings about wanting to have a good working situation and not create unnecessary tension ... you're not in a situation where you want to alienate the other person." Ironically, in an attempt to avoid "creating unnecessary tension," he acts in a way that may well perpetuate a pattern of interaction that will inevitably do just that.

The supervisor in the other encounter reported feeling "helpless" under the circumstances. As he explained:

> [I felt] helpless because I couldn't get done what I wanted to get done, and knowing that if I took the time to do that, that the other project I have to do is going to slip and I'll be in the doghouse on both of them.

It is only when he feels unable to do it himself that he allows the employee to work further on the report. He thus experiences the encounter as one in which there is no alternative. When asked what prevented him from taking action, this supervisor responded that "time was the determining factor." Although he indicated in his response that "I had three options -- one was to do it the way I did it, two is to do it myself, and three was to sit down with him and try to go throught it," time precludes him from pursuing options two and three.

The Pivotal Event. In both encounters, the supervisor attributes action to time, to being "pressed for time" or to "time constraints." For the supervisor in the first encounter, feeling "pressed for time" initially prompts him to push the employee. Interestingly, the other supervisor is prompted by "time constraints" to stop pushing the employee, at least temporarily. In both encounters, however, there is a sense of urgency. In both, tension is experienced in the relationship within which the encounter occurs, tension that may or may not be precipitated by "time." And, in both encounters the

supervisor unloads the tension that attends the relationship onto the issue of time. Though in the short term this reduces the tension, in the long term it perpetuates the negative dynamic underlying the pattern of interaction.

Indeed, unloading the tension onto the issue of time, in effect triangling the relationship with the pressure of time, is like a detour into a cul-de-sac. While the detour may represent a short term success, seeming to break the impasse fueled by the push/block interpersonal dance and thus reduce tension, success in the future will require the continued presence of that with which they have triangled, the pressure of time. It appears inevitable, then, that they will exit the cul-de-sac and return to the push/block pattern of interaction, until the next time.

The Outcome. The pattern of reciprocal relating characteristic of negative togetherness is apparent in both of these encounters. In part it is because the respective actions of push and block represent more deeply rooted opposing forces. In part it is because this very pattern of interaction tends to produce and/or reinforce a reciprocal relationship. In the first encounter, the supervisor becomes decisive in reaction to the employee's indecision. In the second encounter, supervisor and employee become polarized, a form of negative separateness which necessarily gives way to negative togetherness. In both encounters, supervisor and

employee are or become bound together in their reciprocal relationship, acting only in reaction to the actions of the other.

In both encounters, supervisor and employee define themselves in opposition to each other. In so doing, the subjectivity of each is denied. Locked in their respective positions, neither is able to be truly in touch with himself or the other. Indeed, each becomes emotionally invested in maintaining his position, independent of the "facts" of the situation. Further action is prompted, then, by the emotional conditions of the relationship rather than the actual conditions of the situation as it presents itself. The triangling with time relieves the tension implicit in the relationship in the short term, but does nothing to change the dance.

The Dance # 11. This next encounter begins with the boss learning of information that he believes would bolster testimony he will be giving on Capitol Hill. When he expresses an interest in having the information included in the testimony, the supervisor says "no, we can't do it;" in the supervisor's judgement, the information has not been validated sufficiently for release, though it is not clear whether this concern is articulated at the time. In response, the boss tells the supervisor "it's your job to get these in

the testimony today." The supervisor described his own response this way:

> I didn't pop-off or anything, I just said 'okay' ... I just went and did it ... typical [name of organization] paramilitary fashion ... just kind of took it in stride as part of the job.

The Dynamic. The boss is asking the supervisor to do something that is inconsistent with his professional judgement. As the supervisor explained: "All the things I knew to do from all my experience ... were the set of conditions that was preventing me from wanting to do what the boss wanted." He initially acts then, based on what he knows rather than what the boss wants.

There is no evidence that the supervisor ever explains why he does not want to include the information in the testimony. Nor is there any indication that the boss asks for an explanation. The boss fails as well to explain his own sense of urgency. Instead, he invokes the authority of his position. When asked how he thought his boss' sense of self might have been shaped by the encounter, the supervisor responded:

> He was sort of viewing himself as the boss and when he says "gee, wouldn't this be great to have this in the report," he's really communicating "I want this in the report" ... So I think he felt that I was not sort of respecting his authority or understanding the relationship. I think he felt that I was kind of out of line by telling him "no."

The supervisor's assertion of self, then, is experienced by the boss as a disregard of his own self. The boss reacts by identifying himself with the position that accords him authority in the organization. He similarly identifies the supervisor with his position; "It's your job to get these in the testimony today." In so doing, the boss fails to acknowledge the value of the supervisor's professional judgement, in effect disregarding the supervisor's self. Indeed, the supervisor reported: "I felt like he didn't respect what I was trying to do."

Although the supervisor's initial resistance is fueled by a sense of what he knows, once the boss says "it's your job," for him "there wasn't anything that prevented me from doing it." When asked what enabled him to act, the supervisor reported:

> There was this sort of relationship of that's the boss and I'm the staff and that's my role. And [I] kind of realized that you know they're paying me money, and I'll go and do this, and that was okay, that's fine.

The supervisor identifies himself as his boss has, in terms of his position and a particular understanding of his "role" as "staff." In order to do so, however, he must sacrifice that part of his self that derives from "all the things I knew to do from all my experience." To take it in stride as part of the job, then, requires that he deself.

The Pivotal Event. The turning point in this encounter is when the boss invokes the authority of his position. Responding to the supervisor's resistance as a challenge to his self, the boss appeals to the hierarchical convention, that it is the job of the staff to help implement the decisions of the boss regardless of what the staff thinks. The supervisor participates, of course, by submitting to the convention as well. Therefore, each defines and in turn is defined in terms of his respective position.

The Outcome. The supervisor, who begins the encounter acting on what he believes, in the end acts in accordance with his designated role as "staff." Though he ever so briefly takes a relatively differentiated stand, he retreats instantly under pressure from the relationship. From the very start, the boss is unable to achieve emotional separation, responding to the supervisor's "no" not as an expression of professional concern but as a challenge to his authority. When the hierarchical convention is invoked, the subjectivity of both supervisor and boss is denied, each defined in terms of the positions accorded them. Beyond the damage done to the sense of self of both supervisor and boss, this aspect of the encounter is critical because it removes them from the realm of the situation. Action is no longer taken in terms of the validity of the information and its contribution to the

testimony of the boss, but in accord with the hierarchical convention.

The Dance #12. The following encounter occurs during a large meeting in which regional as well as headquarter staff are in attendance. As in the previous encounter, the boss is preparing to present testimony to Congress. And again, the boss wants "to say something from the data" that the supervisor is "not comfortable with." In this encounter, however, the boss tries to persuade the supervisor, to make him comfortable. As the supervisor described their meeting:

> He wants to say something from the data, and everybody is going "yes, we can say that," and I go "I'm not comfortable with that" ... And I go into my reasons. Well he wanted to do it. And I said, "I'm not comfortable with that." And he would try to get me to be comfortable with it.

Their exchange ultimately escalates to a "shouting match." The supervisor then makes the following statement:

> If you ask me if I am comfortable with it, if I think we can say this, my answer is "no." If you tell me that you've made the decision, you want to go forward with this, then I'll try to do everything I can to support it, and find ways to do that, and of course won't publicly contravene what you're doing, but that's your decision.

The boss then decides not to incorporate the data, to "not take it that far."

The Dynamic. The encounter begins when the boss wants "to say something" with which the supervisor is not comfortable. While there is an intellectual component to the

position taken by the boss, his thoughts regarding the data and the issues on which he will be testifying, there is an emotional component as well. As the supervisor noted when asked how he thought the boss' sense of self might have been shaped by the encounter:

> I think that he may have been very much afraid that he didn't know what he thought he knew. Because here was somebody who was different from him, and it's been an acknowledged difference ... he'd refer to me as "the doctor" ... And that says to me that he's not comfortable with that. So he views himself as a man of the data, and the data says this to him, and the doctor is saying "no." I think that was unsettling for him.

Emotionally invested in what he knows, and what he does not, the boss defines himself in relation to "the doctor," and "the data says this to him, and the doctor is saying 'no.'" Unable to concede the positon of "the doctor," the boss sets out instead to persuade him of his own position.

The actions of the supervisor ("the doctor") also have an intellectual component. When asked to complete the sentence "I thought," the supervisor responded: "I thought that he was pushing it too far. I thought the data did not support the position that he was trying to develop." His resistance, however, has an emotional component as well. According to the supervisor: "He was trying to get me to agree to something, and because he wanted me to agree with it, that was the stimulus for me to say no." Indeed, he described his resistance several times in terms of "digging in my heels."

It is at this point in the encounter that the circular dance begins to unfold. Continued efforts to convert another tend only to further fuel resistance. Thus, the supervisor remains steadfast, unwilling to entertain the position of the boss. In the face of such resistance, however, the one attempting to effect change tends to assume the reason he has not yet been successful is that he has not tried hard enough. Therefore he exerts an even greater effort to change the mind of the other (Friedman, 1985). Somewhat predictably then, boss and supervisor become engaged in a shouting match, a match that in the supervisor's words "would have just kept ping ponging back and forth."

The "ping ponging" is interrupted when the supervisor presents the boss with an ultimatum. His ultimatum rests upon the same hierarchical convention invoked in the previous encounter by a boss trying to get a supervisor to act. This time, a supervisor employs it to try to get a boss to not act: "The final action I took was to remind him of his job as a boss ... That kind of brought it to a head." The supervisor's appeal to the hierarchical order does have its intended effect, but it purchases the resolution of what has become a polarized debate at a cost. Although supervisor and boss are no longer locked into their respective positions regarding the validity of including a certain statement in the testimony, they are no less bound by the underlying dynamic that fuels

their interpersonal dance. The supervisor's concluding remark in his description of the encounter is telling: "Eventually he did not take it that far, but he never forgot, never forgot."

The Pivotal Event. The polarization that occurs between boss and supervisor is the central aspect of this encounter. While their disagreement whether to include a particular statement in testimony may be valid, it is not what animates the debate. Instead, it is the emotional investment of each in changing the mind of the other, and the energy expended in resisting such change, that fuels what the supervisor so aptly described as "ping ponging." Nothing in the encounter's conclusion changes this dynamic. Indeed, it may well reinforce such a pattern.

The Outcome. In the end, the boss concedes the position of "the doctor." He does so, however, not because of the merits of the supervisor's argument. Instead, it is because he has been reminded of "his job as the boss," which is to decide. Dependent on the supervisor's approval of his decision, the boss defers. Ironically, the actions of the boss himself contribute to his predicament. The supervisor resists the initial efforts of the boss to persuade him, taking a position in opposition to him. The persona of "the doctor," something they have jointly created, then enables the supervisor to prevail in his opposition.

Each ultimately helps to define the other in their respective roles. Interestingly, though, from the beginning of the encounter each has acted in a way that denies the validity of these roles, in effect denying the subjectivity of both supervisor and boss. Indeed, this may well have precipitated the outcome of the encounter. The boss, busy trying to change the supervisor's mind, does nothing to engage his expertise in jointly determining what could be said in the testimony. The supervisor, similarly invested in trying to change the mind of the boss, fails to address the concerns presumably animating the boss in the first place, the preparation of persuasive testimony. The emotional content of both their actions, then, interferes with their ability to address the business of preparing testimony.

Push/Block, Lead/Follow

The Dance #13. The boss in this encounter has been assigning numerous tasks to the supervisor without indicating any sense of priority. The supervisor reported that this was "getting me a little crazy ... because I can't do everything all at once." As a result, she feels a need for "feedback" from the boss, for the boss to give her some sense of "what's high and what's low."

The supervisor uses a regularly scheduled biweekly meeting, in which they typically review "what's been happening," to address the issue of priorities. She does this by

going into their meeting with an agenda, describing those things for which she is responsible, and laying out "all of the options and the different arguments" regarding approaches for getting the work done. The meeting lasts two hours, during which they "got a lot accomplished." The supervisor reported that afterward "I had a much better sense of what was first, second ... how to get the work done." She reported as well that subsequent to their meeting the boss "was more helpful to me than she had been at other times."

The Dynamic. The supervisor reported being "angry" at the beginning of the encounter "because I felt like there had been a lot of stuff laid on me that she wasn't really tracking." She feels overwhelmed by the amount of work being assigned, but also frustrated because she believes the boss "keeps thinking I have nothing to do here." She responds to a pattern of direction with which she is uncomfortable, then, by acting to block it. Her resistance, however, takes a positive form as she initiates, indeed facilitates, a conversation in which supervisor and boss can jointly problem-solve.

Although the supervisor reported being "angry," she does not act out of this emotion. Instead, she acts out of a clear sense of what she knows about the job and what is required by it. In other words, she takes a fairly differentiated stand, articulating her own needs while staying in touch with those

of the boss. While the supervisor reported that the boss "might have felt a little bit challenged," by presenting options she "gave her specific choices," "so I don't think I boxed her into any corners." In fact, the supervisor's account suggests that she is not emotionally invested in getting the boss to decide something in particular. She does need for the boss to decide something, however, and the boss appears to be willing and able to do that.

The Pivotal Event. The thing that contributes most to the outcome of this encounter is the ability of the supervisor to take a relatively differentiated stand. Though angered by the way her boss is assigning work, she does not act out of anger, a move that might well have yielded a very different response. By presenting a clear picture of everything that needed to be done along with options for how to proceed, the supervisor created an opportunity for the boss to lead as well as follow. Although the supervisor thought that the boss might have "felt a little bit challenged," the boss' approach to the meeting suggests that she is not emotionally invested in having the supervisor play the subordinate role. In the present encounter, at least, this boss appears comfortable with the supervisor taking the lead, and thus contributes to creating opportunities for the supervisor to follow as well as lead.

The Outcome. At the conclusion of the encounter, the supervisor feels "a little bit more like she and I could get along." Grounded in a sense of themselves, rather than invested in a role (whether leader or follower), supervisor and boss are able to remain focussed on the demands of the situation. The subjectivity of both is evoked, each appearing to function from a clear sense of their own needs and a respect for those of the other. Not only was the outcome of the encounter itself positive, but it contributes to a pattern of interaction that may well encourage them to address subsequent problems similarly.

Pulling

The final two encounters to be presented provide examples of what happens when one person is uncomfortable with the lead taken by the other. In both cases the encounter involves a supervisor and an employee, and in both the supervisor initiates change with which the employee is uncomfortable. As with the push/block dance state, here too the employee's resistance (drag), which is a reaction to an initial pull, is experienced by the supervisor as a pull and is reciprocated by a drag, reinforcing the pull/drag pattern of interaction.

Pull/Drag, Pull/Drag

The Dance #14. This encounter begins in a discussion between supervisor and employee about alternative staffing arrangements. As the supervisor described their meeting:

> I was explaining the different arrangements and what I saw, what my thinking was behind it, and she got very unhappy about it ... She got very disturbed, and was wanting to hold on to the person she was working with right now, and gave me a lot of excuses, reasons why it didn't make sense for me to move this person to another project, why this person would be really unhappy, why she would be really unhappy, and wasn't it possible to have some other kind of staffing arrangement.

During their meeting the employee also starts to generate options, options the supervisor portrayed as "clearly self-interested on her part." The supervisor concludes the meeting by indicating to the employee that "it was useful for me to listen to what she had to say, I still had to think about the larger picture, you know how the work was going to get done." At the time, she indicates as well to the employee that she is still in the process of exploring other options.

The employee comes into work the following day feeling "even worse," what the supervisor described as "close to tears." The supervisor herself proceeds as planned, talking to a variety of others, trying to determine the feasibility of different options. When asked to complete the sentence "I thought," the supervisor responded:

> I thought about all the different ways I could resolve the problem, to make it so that we could both get the work done and have her stay satisfied with what was going on.

During this time, however, the supervisor found herself avoiding the employee, "until I figure out what my plan is."

The Dynamic. The employee is uncomfortable with the direction that the supervisor is moving in. Her actions in their meeting indicate that she experiences the possibility of a new staffing arrangement as a threat. The observation by the supervisor that the employee is being "clearly self-interested" and "coming out of her own needs," may suggest why. The employee's sense of herself in the workplace is at least in part a function of her relationship with the staff who work with her. To the extent that she is emotionally invested in her role in that relationship, a plan that interferes with it in effect endangers her sense of self. Since it is the supervisor who is proposing such a change, the threat is experienced in the employee's relationship with her as well. When asked how she thought the employee's sense of self might have been shaped by the encounter, the supervisor explained:

> As she was leaving and I noticed she was upset, I said something like "is there something I'm doing that is making you upset." And she said she wanted to ask me the same question ... The sense I got was she was asking me is there something she was doing that was making me sort of be negative towards her or basically punish her in someway.

Despite assurances to the contrary, that a new staffing arrangement is not intended as punishment and that she appreciates the employee's contribution, the supervisor reported that "I don't think she believes me anymore."

The employee acts to resist the supervisor's efforts by redirecting them. She does so in at least two ways, first through her very emotional behavior, and second by offering counterproposals. The supervisor experiences the employee's resistance as a pull (though in her words it felt more like a "push"). Indeed, when asked what enabled her to take action, the supervisor responded by referring both to "being challenged" and "that emotional part too," but then said, "I wouldn't say enabled me but it sort of pushed." Perhaps not surprisingly, her inclination then is to resist: "It made me almost feel like I'm going to dig in my heels and it's too bad."

The supervisor's behavior is fueled by her own emotional reaction to the encounter. Although she completed the sentence "I felt" with the word "angry," and repeated the phrase "I felt angry" several times, the feelings underlying the anger are more revealing. The supervisor explained that the employee "started generating options to me as if I hadn't thought about all these options." This upsets her because "she didn't seem to have faith that I was making good decisions." Similarly, she reacts to the employee's emotional upset by feeling "bad," "because I consider myself a sensitive supervisor," and "I'm not used to having people that unhappy with me." Instead of taking a emotionally separate stance while remaining in touch with the employee, the supervisor is

reactive to the emotional content of the employee's experience and thus begins to define herself in accordance with it.

Indeed, the supervisor's experience of the encounter leads her to start thinking, "well what's wrong with me, have I done something wrong here?" This echos the sentiments of the supervisor in a previous encounter who explained, "I often tend to think that I have done something wrong, that I've hurt someone's feelings." In that encounter, the supervisor responds to the emotional intensity of an employee by acting immediately to alleviate it. In the present encounter, the supervisor attends to her own emotional needs instead. As she explained:

> When I talked to my boss I realized that where I had ended up was about where anybody would have given the constraints that I had. I've talked to other people who felt like this person was a little bit out of line in not wanting to take new staff for a new job. So I've gotten back a little bit of my sense of self from other people.

The expression "gotten back a little bit of my sense of self from other people" is striking in this context, indicating the extent to which she experiences her interaction with the employee as effecting a loss. It highlights as well a pivotal event in this encounter. In order to deal with the loss experienced in her relationship with the employee, she triangles in a whole host of others.

The Pivotal Event. The sense of self that emerges for the supervisor in her interaction with the employee leaves her

feeling "angry," "bad," and as if the employee "didn't seem to have faith that I was making good decisions." The sense of self that emerges in interacting with her boss and other supervisor's, in contrast, is one with which the supervisor is more comfortable. But by triangling with others, she is aligning herself with them in opposition to the employee. It is this move that may well fuel her inclination to avoid the employee, "until I figure out exactly what my next plan is." And it may occur, at least in part, in reaction to her sense that the employee is "continuing to try to make this case." In response, then, the supervisor prepares to make a case of her own.

The Outcome. The issue of staffing had not been resolved at the time of the interview. The potential for moving into a state of negative separateness exists, the sense of opposition evident above yielding to an all out polarization. The supervisor has been constituted in this encounter as being either for or against the employee. The employee has been similarly constituted. The subjectivity of both is denied, the actions of each ultimately a reaction to their experience of the other. Unable to attend to the business of their relationship, supervisor and employee are unable as well to truly attend to the business of staff. Whatever staffing arrangement is selected, the negative dynamic fueling their

relationship at the time of this encounter may well interfere with "getting the work done."

The Dance #15. This encounter begins with a supervisor feeling that "I just really needed to clear the air with him about what was really going on." After working together for two or three months, the supervisor is concerned about the employee's performance as well as his attitude toward her. As she reported:

> He was really bright and ended up being promoted the next year, and I was just really having trouble having him produce, you know simple things like write-ups for me, and just not taking a lot of initiative on the job in terms of trying to lay out a particular [project], and not coming in to me to talk about methodology and issues we should be looking at. You know, none of the dialogue that you would expect, especially someone at that level who is really into a job.

The supervisor is troubled as well by other behavior, which although "real subtle," leaves her feeling "like I wasn't important, that the job wasn't important, and it was just plain rude." For example:

> I would have meetings with him, you know we would plan to meet in his office to go over tasks or whatever and the phone would ring, he'd pick it up, he'd be on it for fifteen minutes, or someone would come by with a question and he'd take time out.

Her concern also is prompted by the fact that "my perceptions of this person were very different than what I'd certainly heard from my boss, as well as other people." With perfor-

mance appraisal time approaching, then, she just "wanted to make sure."

The supervisor initiates a meeting with the employee "to clear the air" and "to make sure" her perceptions are accurate. As she described it:

> So we had a meeting, and I really laid out to him my concerns that there was this lack of urgency for the job, and essentially on a more personal level I didn't like the way I was being treated by him ... And I left feeling really good ... I guess he basically said he didn't realize he was doing that. I felt like we got a lot clear. I'm not sure we got things resolved, but he knew how I felt. I told him that I was going to have to rate him and some of this stuff had to change before that came along.

After their meeting, the employee's behavior changes. At least in the short term, he consults with the supervisor regarding the project and its priority. Interestingly though, he ends up leaving the job, and their relationship as supervisor and employee, "because he was pulled off on a special project." The supervisor speculated that in the long term "I don't think his behavior changed."

The Dynamic. The pattern of relating evident in this encounter is one in which one person seeks relationship and the other avoids it, the actions of each reciprocating those of the other. The supervisor, although concerned about the employee's productivity, appears more disturbed by his behavior in relation to her. Indeed, her reaction to his behavior, which among other things is to feel "like I wasn't

important," suggests that her sense of self as a supervisor is at least in part defined in relation to him. The employee, of course, is responding to her very efforts at being supervisory. He acts, therefore, to obstruct the possibility of genuine relationship, although he does this in a way that makes it not appear so. Ironically but predictably, this only encourages the supervisor's continued efforts at relationship.

The supervisor's experience of her meeting with the employee highlights the extent of her emotional investment in the outcome of the encounter. When asked to complete the sentence "I felt," the supervisor responded:

> Nervous, exposed, and vulnerable, because I was going to be talking on a more personal level than just job-related stuff. And uncertain about its outcome and whether it would really help change some of his behavior to a point at which we would be working as a team.

Her decision to approach the meeting in this way is fueled in part by a "personal agenda," a desire to "deal more assertively and more positively with unpleasant feelings and thoughts that I have about people." She does so, however, very much in reaction to his behavior toward her. Although she indicated in the interview that "it didn't really matter how he responded," her actions suggest otherwise.

Most notable among her actions is the raising of both relationship and performance issues in the same meeting. In the past the employee has avoided relationship or at least

maintained a safe distance between himself and the supervisor. Therefore, his availability to engage in a conversation regarding relationship issues is unclear. If the possibility for authentic exchange does exist, however, her telling him that she "was going to have to rate him" creates an impossible situation; an authentic exchange calls for one kind of relating, being rated another. Indeed, while she may be seeking relationship, the mention of ratings calls forth something quite different.

The employee's own actions in the meeting are in keeping with his previous style. According to her description, he responds by being "pretty open," "responsive," "genuinely concerned," and "somewhat apologetic." Indeed, when asked what enabled her to take action, the supervisor responded:

> I guess it was something he said ... that just made me feel better about him and our interaction ... that he was sincerely interested in what I had to say and seemed to want to work on that.

Interestingly, when asked what prevented her from taking action she responded similarly, indicating that his positive attitude may have "diffused the anger." She later wonders, however, whether his behavior is genuine, or "if it's because he knew rating time was coming." Acknowledging that "he wanted to be promoted," she concludes, "I sort of have the feeling that's why he changed." Given his departure from the

job shortly after this incident, her suspicions may well be correct.

The Pivotal Event. The outcome of this encounter, the employee's departure from the job and the relationship, may have been inevitable. The supervisor's mention of the rating process, however, seals their fate. She herself likened her role in the performance appraisal process to having "this club over somebody." When the extension of a collegial hand is resisted, she seeks to draw upon the force she associates with the rating process. This, of course, only further fuels his resistance, encouraging him to sever rather than strenghten relational ties.

The Outcome. The image of the unrequited lover befits the supervisor whose interest and efforts to "work together as a team" are repeatedly rebuffed. The employee's resistance only fuels the supervisor's attempts at relationship. Further attempts at relationship, including her mention of the performance appraisal process, do nothing more than further fuel the employee's resistance. Supervisor and employee are each constituted in opposition to the other. Both are emotionally invested in their opposing positions, the pull/drag pattern of interaction ironically encouraging the very emotions generating the dynamic in the first place. The subjectivity of each is denied, then, neither able to see their way clear of their respective positions to truly address

the issues presented to them by their relationship.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

The premise of this dissertation is that organization emerges in the process of people interacting with one another. The quality of their interaction determines the consciousness they bring to the organizing process and thus the nature of organization itself. In the previous two chapters I have employed the metaphor of the dance to describe and analyze a series of interactions between supervisors and employees or bosses. The focus of analysis in each case has been on how people are constituted in the process of interaction, how the dance unfolds between them so that the consciousness and behavior of the one evokes and maintains the consciousness and behavior of the other. Importantly, both people together create their unfolding pattern of interaction; in other words, response is always to a relating.

The present chapter begins with a summary of the findings contained in chapters five and six, highlighting the broader patterns of interaction that prevail across cases. Following that summary, I will discuss the implications of these findings for how we think about the phenomenon of organization. I will conclude the chapter by addressing the significance of these implications for the practice of public administration.

Summary of Findings

Analysis of the individual "dances" revealed two persistent patterns of interaction, one indicative of the negatively charged dance state of togetherness, the other the negatively charged dance state of separateness. Interestingly, the dance states associated with change, as portrayed in chapter six, appear to resolve themselves into the dance states of togetherness or separateness. It may be that like the "changing lines" of the *I Ching*, which define the condition represented by a particular hexagram while the stationary lines provide it with structure, the dance states in which change is sought capture the dynamic that fuels the more elemental states of togetherness and separateness. Indeed, movement and change are essential features of relationship, and the value of the dance metaphor is that it conveys this dynamic quality.

Recall from chapter three that when the level of anxiety is low in a relationship system, people are more comfortable with themselves and others. They feel less inclined to put pressure on one another to conform to their expectations or assumptions. However, when anxiety is present there is a greater pressure for togetherness, a greater pressure to think and act alike or in a consistent fashion. The encounters described to me during the course of this research were mostly ones in which anxiety was present and, as a result, ones in

which people experienced the pressure for togetherness that attends anxiety. In these encounters, people reacted by either capitulating to or resisting such pressure.

When they capitulated, the relationship system moved into, or was fortified in, the state of negative togetherness. Instances of negative togetherness can be found in eight of the dances presented in chapters five and six (see the dances numbered 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12). In each case the encounter is characterized by some form of reciprocal relating, a pattern of interaction in which people assume opposite but complementary roles. According to family systems theorists, this pattern of interaction often evolves when one person becomes anxious about the behavior of another person; the anxious one perceives the behavior of the other as a problem. To the extent that the anxiety persists, it tends to fuel the very behavior that prompted it, resulting in an "escalating cycle of anxiety and problem behavior" (Kerr, 1988, p. 37). The outcome is the emergence of a set of compensating tendencies. Examples of such cycles include [1] the pattern of dominance-submission apparent in dance # 3; [2] in dance # 4, the pattern of decisiveness-indecisiveness; [3] in dance # 7, the assumption of responsibility by the supervisor and the seemingly irresponsible behavior of the employee; and [4] the pattern of attack-defend in dance # 8.

In each of the encounters in which this occurred people necessarily "deselfed," sacrificing the self in order to preserve or recover the balance in their relationship. In so doing, they assumed a role and acted according to its dictates, rather than taking action that was grounded in a sense of what they thought and felt in the situation. This tendency is present in all instances of negative togetherness reported in chapters five and six. It is particularly apparent in those five cases (see the dances numbered 2, 4, 5, 11, 12) in which what I have come to call the "hierarchical convention" was invoked explicitly, although the convention clearly is operating in still other encounters.

The hierarchical convention is perhaps best captured by the interviewee who explained:

> There was this sort of relationship of that's the boss and I'm the staff and that's my role. And [I] kind of realized that you know they're paying me money, and I'll go and do this, and that was okay, that's fine (see dance # 11).

In this encounter, a supervisor initially responds to the request of his boss to include certain information in congressional testimony by saying "no, we can't do it." This is a violation of the hierarchical convention, of course, according to which superiors make decisions and subordinates help implement them. The boss reacts by asserting the authority of his position, invoking the hierarchical convention by reminding the supervisor that "it's your job to get

these in the testimony today." Importantly, the boss exercises the authority of his position by defining the parameters of the supervisor's position. The supervisor, who initially acts based on "all the things I know to do from all my experience," then capitulates, submitting to the logic of the hierarchical convention.

What is noteworthy about the hierarchical convention is that the person in the subordinate position accords power to another, "power over" themselves, solely on the basis of the position occupied by that other. In dance # 2, when I asked the supervisor what enabled her to take action in the encounter, she talked not about the initiative she had exercised in developing a staffing plan, but about following the directions of her boss: "I was enabled in the fact that she has the authority and I don't, I don't have any recourse." The supervisor in dance # 5 expresses a similar sentiment in his frequent refrain "rank has its privilege," explaining that "if it's a question of who was right and who was wrong, generally the person with the rank was right and the person without it was wrong." In other words, the authority associated with a position is infused with power beyond that present in the capacity of the position holder.

This convention is troubling because of the cost to the people participating in it. When invoked, the hierarchical convention results in the denial of the subjectivity of both

people in the encounter, defining each solely in terms of the positions or roles accorded them. To the extent that they act based on the authority of these roles rather than the dictates of the situation, it has social costs as well, precluding integration. What is perhaps most troubling is that not only does a belief in hierarchy fuel and reinforce the convention and the subsequent pattern of interaction, the pattern of interaction itself reinforces a belief in hierarchy.

In the dance state of negative togetherness, participants are bound together by the mutually reinforcing roles they assume. Such roles, and the logic in which they are grounded, are the ties that keep the people in these encounters inextricably bound together. In this dance state, the life force that moves people toward togetherness overwhelms the counterbalancing force toward individuality. Interestingly, when people resist rather than capitulate to the pressure of togetherness, and define themselves in opposition to one another, though they move into the dance state of negative separateness they are no less bound. For again they allow a logic to prevail that is independent of the situation in which they find themselves.

Instances of negative separateness can be found in seven of the encounters described in chapters five and six (see the dances numbered 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15). In each case pressure for togetherness is resisted, one person distin-

guishing and distancing him or herself by defining the self in opposition to the other. In each case, resistance on the part of one reinforces the position (or opposition) of the other, resulting in the polarization of the two. Not unlike the roles assumed in the dance state of negative togetherness, in the dance state of negative separateness participants adopt positions that exist in relationship to one another; though opposing, the position of the one is defined in terms of the position of the other. Even if these positions at one time were related to the situation, the dynamic that fuels a person's continued adherence has little to do with that situation.

The dynamic that fuels the dance state of negative separateness is captured well in what Edwin Friedman (1985) refers to as "the treadmill of trying harder." Continued efforts to convert another, to get the other to do something they would not on their own choose to do, fuels resistance. As the supervisor in dance # 12 explained: "He was trying to get me to agree to something, and because he wanted me to agree with it, that was the stimulus for me to say no." Indeed, the supervisor in that encounter, as well as several others interviewed as part of this research, repeatedly used the phrase "digging in my heels" to convey the steadfastness with which they resisted efforts at persuasion. Unfortunately, in the face of such resistance the one attempting to

effect change assumes his or her failure is due to a lack of trying. They thus exert an even greater effort to literally change the mind of the other. The image evoked by this dynamic is that of a tug-of-war, a contest of wills in which each feels they must prevail over the other.

The negatively charged dance states of both togetherness and separateness are stimulated by the reactivity of participants. To be reactive means to react unthinkingly to the emotional content of the relationship system, to not have a consciousness and understanding of it. As a rule, when anxiety is low, people are less reactive, but when anxiety is high they are more so. The presence of anxiety is experienced as disruptive to the relationship system, and in their reactivity to it people act to stabilize the system, to restore it to its former balance.

Deselfing, of course, is one way in which people attempt to preserve or restore harmony in a relationship system. Another way to restore equilibrium is to triangle, reducing anxiety by drawing a third person into the relationship system. A most striking example of this occurs in dance # 7, where the involvement of another staff person clearly serves emotional as well as practical purposes. In dances # 9 and 10 anxiety is unloaded onto the issue of time rather than another person, but to the same effect. Avoidance is still another tactic for allaying anxiety. This may take the form of

literally avoiding another, as in dance # 14, or avoiding issues with emotional content instead, as in dances # 3, 7 and 15. In all of the above instances, while the discomfort experienced around the anxiety may be temporarily relieved, in the long term the actions taken to allay anxiety only contribute to regression. And, like the condition of chronic anxiety, regression feeds on itself, fueling what Kerr (1988) has referred to as an "anxiety spiral."

Progressive movement in a relationship system requires that the partners enter a more positive dance state. This entails containing one's reactivity to the emotional content of the system. In dance # 1, for example, the supervisor does not react to the employees emotional outburst. Instead, she is able to tolerate the intensity of his feelings, creating a subsequent opportunity for them to discuss that which is animating such emotion. Importantly, it is not just a matter of being able to refrain from reacting, but the ability to truly confront and respect the feelings associated with such an outburst. The latter is something the supervisor in dance #1, unlike her counterpart in dance # 3, was able to do, demonstrating her capacity for differentiation.

The ability to take a differentiated stance is essential to entering and remaining in a positively charged dance state. In each of the positive dance states described in chapters five and six (see dances numbered 1, 6, 13) the partners are

able to act in a differentiated fashion. The supervisor and boss in dance # 6 are each clear on what they think and feel, but neither is emotionally invested in bringing the other around to his or her way of thinking. Both are able to act in accord with what they believe while accommodating the needs of the other. Working together thus enables them to work apart, positive togetherness facilitating positive separateness. In dance # 1 differentiation yields positive togetherness and an integration. In that encounter, supervisor and employee are able to together work out an arrangement for working together. Their arrangement, like the agreements reached in dances # 6 and # 13, respects the individuality of the partners as well as the integrity of their relationship. In each of these encounters, then, the participants are able to effectively manage the competing life forces of togetherness and individuality.

Implications

Organization as integrative unity requires that people consciously attend to the interactive relations that constitute it. To attend consciously means to act in a differentiated fashion, to bring to the process of interaction a consciousness about what one thinks and feels, aware of the emotional forces at play in the relationship system but not beholden to them. Of course, differentiation is relational, itself emerging in the process of interaction. Just as the

quality of their relations influences the consciousness people bring to the organizing process, that consciousness influences the quality of their relations. The quality of their relations determines as well the nature of the ever-emergent organization, whether it is characterized by integration or one of Follett's other two principles of association, domination or compromise.

Integration requires a consciousness of the situation, an awareness of the part one's own activities play in it, and a willingness to remain open to that situation as it evolves. Without such a consciousness, it is impossible to engage in a joint study of the situation irrespective of sides or positions, a requirement for integration. To undertake a study jointly means that one must remain open to the contributions of others while being in touch with one's own sense of the situation. To study the situation irrespective of positions means that one must refrain from becoming so invested in a particular way of experiencing the world that one is unavailable to change should the situation suggest such a shift. To remain open to the situation as it evolves requires differentiation, a consciousness of and confidence in what one thinks and feels that allows one to entertain the possibility of change.

This type of consciousness was absent in almost all of the encounters described to me during the course of my

dissertation research, differentiated behavior the rare exception rather than the rule. Reactivity, not differentiation, prevailed in these encounters, interaction fueled by the emotional content of the relationship system rather than a consciousness of the situation. Indeed, reactivity removes people from the realm of the situation, their behavior animated by forces that have little to do with the extant situation. In dance # 11, for example, the boss never asks the supervisor why he does not want to include the data in the testimony. Instead, he reacts to the supervisor's resistance by invoking the authority of his position, informing the supervisor "It's your job to get these in the testimony today." Of course, the supervisor never inquires about the sense of urgency experienced by the boss. Instead, he reacts to the boss' emotion by capitulating, doing that which the boss has requested. Their respective actions have little to do with the validity of the data, the merits of including it, or the extent to which its inclusion contributes to the persuasiveness of the testimony.

As is evident in the encounters described in chapters five and six, when people become reactive they assume roles or adopt positions that bear little relation to the situation itself. They define themselves, or their roles or positions, in relation to one another and the emotional forces animating their interaction. Each person becomes defined in opposition

to the other, assuming complementary (but opposite) roles or adopting opposing positions. In the absence of more differentiated behavior, their cycle of interaction serves only to reinforce these roles or positions and the pattern of relating to which they contribute.

While the supervisor and boss in dance # 12 may have a difference of opinion, it is not what animates that encounter. Emotionally invested in what he does and does not know, the boss defines himself in relation to the supervisor (a PhD). He is unable to concede the supervisor's position when they disagree in public, so instead he attempts to persuade the supervisor of his own position. Of course, the supervisor resists such persuasion: "He was trying to get me to agree to something, and because he wanted me to agree with it, that was the stimulus for me to say no." Given the emotional investment on each side, it is not surprising that their exchange escalates to a "shouting match," the actions of each reinforcing the actions of the other, fueled by the emotional investment each has in being right. Not only does this dynamic remove them from the realm of the situation, it results in their polarization, each defined in relation to the position assumed by the other.

Once people enter such a pattern of relating, their actions are governed by a logic associated with the roles or positions adopted, not the demands of the situation. Real and

substantive differences are obscured by more superficial ones, played out in terms of an emotional rather than a situated logic. The boss will or will not include the data in his testimony to Congress. In dance # 11, the hierarchical convention is invoked too quickly to permit an open discussion regarding the merits of including the data in the testimony. Similarly, the exchange between boss and supervisor in dance # 12 so quickly becomes polarized that neither can truly hear, no less respect, the concerns of the other. When people become defined in terms of superficial differences they are unable to address their substantive differences because their pattern of interaction prevents them from challenging the assumptions in which their roles or positions are grounded. Indeed, by acting in accordance with roles or positions people reinforce such assumptions.

This pattern of interaction precludes integration. In the absence of a discussion regarding real differences it is impossible to be truly informed about the situation, for information necessarily rests in the communication of difference. Integration requires the revealing of differences, it entails the appreciation -- not the elimination -- of diversity as life's most essential feature. In dance # 1, integration becomes possible only after the employee reveals that he is feeling too closely supervised and the supervisor explains that she needs to know the status of his work. A

discussion regarding their respective and differing needs enables them to work out a way of relating that can accommodate the needs of both. The pattern of interaction represented by this discussion yields an integration, importantly an integration regarding a pattern of interaction. This is significant because the ability to consult the situation begins with the ability to attend to the more fundamental business of relating.

This highlights the inseparability of organization and the people who, in the process of their interaction, constitute it. Organization as integrative unity requires that people be able to attend to the process of their interaction in a differentiated fashion. When they are able to do this, the emergent organization is one that can work progressively, meeting the situation as it evolves. In the process, it contributes to individual development as well, promoting within the people who constitute it the capacity for future integrations. When other patterns of interaction prevail, unless the participants are able to achieve or recover a more differentiated stand, organization exists independently of the situation, sustained by the emotional content of the relationship system. Under these circumstances, the organization and the experience of the people who constitute it is characterized by regression, undermining their capacity to escape the downward spiral associated with this pattern of relating.

Significance for Public Administration

I conducted the research for this dissertation in a federal agency that is in the process of implementing a program of Total Quality Management (TQM). The success of such an undertaking requires that those participating in it be available to the situation, be available to work together to discern what in the situation is interfering with the provision of quality services. The growing popularity of TQM is significant in the context of this dissertation because, more than a management technique, TQM entails a different way of thinking about organization, envisioning a different pattern of relating among employees, and between them, their managers, and the situation of their work. To the extent that government at all levels continues to apply TQM principles to the provision of public services, it will be important to foster a consciousness regarding how patterns of interaction contribute to or detract from the quality of service provision.

But the implications of this dissertation for public administration extend well beyond the boundaries of a single agency and its application of TQM to service provision. In his introduction to *Refounding Public Administration* (1990), Gary Wamsley makes the following observation about the utility of the interpretivist and radical humanist paradigms to the practice of public administration:

> Though these paradigmatic approaches have many virtues, they are far more useful in rethinking human relations and the role of management in organizations than they are in rethinking the role of public administration in constitutional governance (p. 20).

This dissertation project is grounded in the radical humanist paradigm, examining the necessarily intersubjective experience of human interaction in order to understand what in that process contributes to the release or blockage of human potential. It is nonetheless relevant to governance as conceived by Wamsley and his colleagues in the *Refounding* volume, which occurs in the process of interaction among people ("human relations") but extends beyond the traditional organizational boundaries that delimit an agency.

Central to the role that the authors of the so-called "Blacksburg Manifesto" (Wamsley et al., 1990) prescribe for public administration is a commitment to the public interest. Because of the position it holds in the broader governance process, these authors assert that public administration is well situated to facilitate the process by which the public interest is discovered. Indeed, their definition of what constitutes the public interest makes this role a particularly compelling one. Rather than associating it with the content of public policy, they conceive of the public interest in terms of the ongoing process in which it is discovered; the public interest is emergent, never certain.

To be committed to the public interest as a process entails being able to attend to it as it unfolds. Because the public interest ideally accounts for "the interests of all relevant stakeholders, including citizens at large" (Wamsley et al., 1990, p. 41), the process for which the public administrator is responsible is one in which he or she must engage with others. In other words, in attending to the public interest the public administrator interacts with others within as well as across formal organizational boundaries. And the consciousness that people bring to this process necessarily influences its outcome, contributing to the definition of what constitutes the public interest.

The authors of the Manifesto do acknowledge the need for public administrators to develop "personal reflexivity," what they describe as a "consciousness of their own values and assumptions and how they affect daily decision making" (p. 50). However, the process that these authors envision requires more than that. It requires a consciousness about relationship, that public administrators engage with others not as "stakeholders" but as members of a broader community. The authors bemoan what has been labelled "interest group liberalism" and the "centrifugal pressures" it has brought to bear in the public policy process. They seem to suggest that the public administrator alone, armed with the consciousness that derives from "personal reflexivity," can mediate the play

of competing interests that inevitably populate the public policy arena. But without a shift in consciousness among all participants in the process, from what Herbert Shepard (1965) calls a primary to a secondary mentality, interaction in this arena will continue to be fueled by the logic of exchange rather than that of mutuality. And participants will play out their respective roles accordingly, oriented to the satisfaction of their individual claims and preconceived interests rather than being open to the unfolding situation and the possibilities it contains.

There is perhaps no better example of this than the perennial task force or advisory committee, one of the hallmarks of American governance. In the name of representation, people typically are selected to serve in such organizations based on their association with the interests of a particular group. Defined in terms of their association, people are more inclined to act out of a position; indeed, the members of the group expect as much from one another. Each, then, acts to advance his or her own position or interest, a certain amount of emotion now invested in prevailing for no other reason than to prevent someone else from doing so. The goal is to protect one's claim or interest, not to engage and meet the situation.

One does not need to agree with the role advocated for the public administrator by Wamsley et al. (1990) to ac-

knowledge that the process of public administration occurs within a realm that extends beyond the individual agency, if not on a task force then in what has been called an iron triangle, issue network or policy subsystem. Wamsley himself defines these subsystems as "elaborate structures and processes of interaction" (Wamsley et al., 1990, p. 141). A subsystem is an organization then, like an agency or task force it is constituted in the process of human interaction. Its character and the outcomes of its operation are shaped by the patterns of relating that constitute and sustain it. The policy and institutional loyalties that people bring with them to their participation in the subsystem thus should be a matter of concern, at least to the extent that such loyalties may incline people to dominate or compromise rather than truly engaging in the situation.

Whether on a task force, as a member of a policy subsystem, or otherwise engaged in the process of public administration, when people are organized according to individual interests it predisposes them to become emotionally invested in satisfying those interests. The findings of this dissertation suggest as well that the inclination to organize in such a fashion is a consequence of the emotional forces at play in the system itself, in this case broadly conceived to comprehend a system of governance or even the society of which it is a part. The relative emotional development or con-

sciousness that people bring to the organized condition thus shapes their process of interaction. Importantly, to shape that process means to determine its outcomes, including the future capacity of both individual and group to meet the situation and achieve an integration.

The authors of the Manifesto also address the public administrator's relationship to the citizen, advocating that the administrator facilitate the "substantive involvement" of citizens in the governance process (Wamsley et al., 1990, p. 48). It is not clear what for them constitutes a "substantive involvement." And this is important because, in addition to the contribution such an involvement can make in terms of policy or program outcomes, the experience of being involved can contribute to or detract from the growth and development of the citizen as well. The development of the citizen, in turn, determines his or her capacity to be substantively involved in the governance process. Here, as in organization more formally conceived, we find the potential for either progressive or regressive experience, with consequences for both organization and member, polity and citizen.

Although the citizen exists in relationship to the public administrator on a variety of dimensions (eg. as "client," the recipient of services), perhaps the most significant is the level at which trust in administrative institutions is engendered, the public trust that is essential to the legit-

imacy of public administration as an actor in the governance process. In the Manifesto, Wamsley et al. (1990) assert that such trust "will develop among citizens to the extent that administrators communicate the realities of administrative practice" (p. 39). But this fails to account for the interdependence that necessarily characterizes human relationships. For the citizen cannot be merely a passive recipient of knowledge transmitted by the public administrator. If the experience of supervisors in a public agency is any gauge, it suggests that people will resist or capitulate in response to such efforts. I would agree with Camilla Stivers (1990), then, who in a later chapter of the *Refounding* volume argues that developing and sustaining public trust requires that the public administrator do more than "communicate the realities of administrative practice." For her, "the key missing ingredient is active accountability to citizens, mediated in dialogue and joint action, which sows the seeds of trust" (Wamsley et al., 1990, p. 261). In other words, trust is borne in the process of interaction among administrators and citizens. Because it is grounded in that trust, the legitimacy of public administration is constituted in the process of interaction.

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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW GUIDE

I. DESCRIBE WHAT YOU SAW HAPPEN IN THE VIDEO:

A. WHAT DID YOU SEE DURING THE INITIAL ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN JOHN & MINNIE?

B. WHAT DID YOU SEE DURING THE ENCOUNTER IN WHICH THE GENIE PLAYS JOHN?

I'D LIKE TO MOVE FROM THE VIDEO TO YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES, FIRST YOUR EXPERIENCES WITH SOMEONE YOU SUPERVISE, THEN WITH THE PERSON YOU REPORT TO

II. ENCOUNTER WITH EMPLOYEE -- TAKE A MINUTE TO THINK ABOUT A SPECIFIC ENCOUNTER WITH AN EMPLOYEE

A. DESCRIBE ENCOUNTER; CIRCUMSTANCES, WHAT HAPPENED

I'D LIKE TO TALK ABOUT HOW YOU EXPERIENCED THIS ENCOUNTER; I'M GOING TO ASK YOU TO COMPLETE 3 SENTENCES

B. "WHEN (REARTICULATE ENCOUNTER), I FELT _____."

C. "WHEN (REARTICULATE ENCOUNTER), I THOUGHT _____."

D. "WHEN (REARTICULATE ENCOUNTER), I DID _____."

I HAVE SOME MORE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR EXPERIENCE OF THIS ENCOUNTER

E. IN WHAT WAYS WAS YOUR SENSE OF SELF SHAPED BY THIS ENCOUNTER (SOS = how feel and think about self)?

F. IN WHAT WAYS WERE YOUR ACTIONS SHAPED BY THIS ENCOUNTER?

G. WHAT SPECIFICALLY OCCURRED TO ENABLE YOU TO TAKE ACTION?

H. WHAT SPECIFICALLY OCCURRED TO PREVENT YOU FROM TAKING ACTION?

NOW I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU ABOUT WHAT YOU THINK THE EMPLOYEE'S EXPERIENCE OF THE ENCOUNTER WAS

I. IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU THINK THEIR SENSE OF SELF MIGHT HAVE BEEN SHAPED BY THIS ENCOUNTER?

J. IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU THINK THEIR ACTIONS MIGHT HAVE BEEN SHAPED BY THIS ENCOUNTER?

K. WHAT SPECIFICALLY OCCURRED TO ENABLE THEM TO TAKE ACTION?

L. WHAT SPECIFICALLY OCCURRED TO PREVENT THEM FROM TAKING ACTION?

III. NOW I'D LIKE TO TALK WITH YOU ABOUT AN ENCOUNTER YOU'VE HAD WITH THE PERSON TO WHOM YOU REPORT -- TAKE A MINUTE TO THINK OF A SPECIFIC ENCOUNTER

A. DESCRIBE ENCOUNTER; CIRCUMSTANCES, WHAT HAPPENED

I'D LIKE TO KNOW ABOUT HOW YOU EXPERIENCED THIS ENCOUNTER; AGAIN, I'M GOING TO ASK YOU TO COMPLETE 3 SENTENCES

B. "WHEN (REARTICULATE ENCOUNTER), I FELT _____."

C. "WHEN (REARTICULATE ENCOUNTER), I THOUGHT _____."

D. "WHEN (REARTICULATE ENCOUNTER), I DID _____."

AND AGAIN, I HAVE SOME MORE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS REGARDING YOUR EXPERIENCE OF THIS ENCOUNTER

E. IN WHAT WAYS WAS YOUR SENSE OF SELF SHAPED BY THIS ENCOUNTER

F. IN WHAT WAYS WERE YOUR ACTIONS SHAPED BY THIS ENCOUNTER?

G. WHAT SPECIFICALLY OCCURRED TO ENABLE YOU TO TAKE ACTION?

H. WHAT SPECIFICALLY OCCURRED TO PREVENT YOU FROM TAKING ACTION?

I'D ALSO LIKE TO ASK YOU ABOUT HOW YOU THINK THE PERSON TO WHOM YOU REPORT EXPERIENCED THIS ENCOUNTER

I. IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU THINK THEIR SENSE OF SELF MIGHT HAVE BEEN SHAPED BY THIS ENCOUNTER?

J. IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU THINK THEIR ACTIONS MIGHT HAVE BEEN SHAPED BY THIS ENCOUNTER?

K. WHAT SPECIFICALLY OCCURRED TO ENABLE THEM TO TAKE ACTION?

L. WHAT SPECIFICALLY OCCURRED TO PREVENT THEM FROM TAKING ACTION?

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MPA Program Coordinator

* Design and manage pre-career MPA program
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1985/89 **U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**
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Management Analyst

* Designed and conducted management studies
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* Analyzed and processed proposals for reorganizations and delegations of authority

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* Developed, managed and conducted professional development and training programs

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