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RHETORIC OR REALITY?:
An Examination of Feelings of Empowerment amongst UK Employees in 2 major business organizations.

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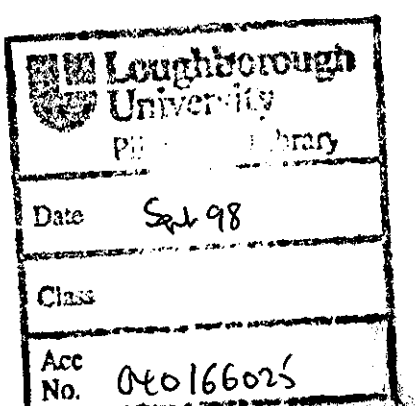
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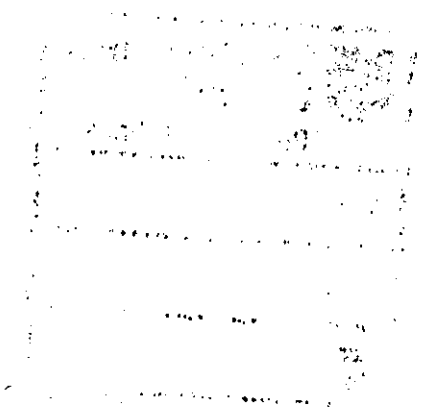
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DEDICATION

To Ollie whose constant encouragement and support over the last three years kept me going through my darkest days. Without you I could never have fulfilled this dream and I dedicate it to you with my gratitude and undying love.

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Finally, my love and thanks to Mum and Dad whose pride in me is the most important thing of all.

ABSTRACT

Through the adoption of triangulated methodologies, this thesis seeks to evaluate the success of two large organizations in adopting empowerment initiatives. By focusing on two operating units in each organization, it considers perceptions of empowerment at the non-managerial employee level and the effects on these perceptions of personality, orientations to work and the contexts of the units and their organizations.

Through the use of management interviews, employee focus groups and questionnaires completed by non-managerial employees, the research indicates that aspects of the individual, whilst often contributing to attitudes towards empowerment, do not directly effect whether or not employees feel empowered. Rather, it concludes that job insecurity, management behaviour and the union/management relationship have a larger effect. However, what arises as central to the acceptance of empowerment in modern organizations is the clarity with which the policy is introduced. This thesis finds that organizations introduce ambiguous, mystical messages to their employees which merely cause confusion and unmatched expectations and that rather than increasing staff commitment, organizations are further alienating their employees.

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EXPLANATION OF BENEFITS AGENCY GRADING SYSTEM

During the research period the grade system within The Benefits Agency was changed to a new system of Pay Bands. However, there are still equivalent bands for each grade. During this thesis the old system of grading will generally be referred to as most managers and employees still refer to themselves in this way. The grades are set out below with their equivalent pay band, civil service grade and general job specifications. This has been done to help the reader understand some of the comments made by employees, which include references to these grades and pay bands.

GRADE	PAY BAND	EQUIVALENT CIVIL SERVICE GRADE	JOB SPECIFICATION
AA	A1	AA (Administrative Assistant)	Non-managerial
LO2	A4	AO (Administrative Officer)	Non-managerial
LO1	B3	EO (Executive Officer)	Team Leader
HEO	C3	HEO (Higher Executive Officer)	Command Manager
SEO	C4	SEO (Senior Executive Officer)	Deputy District Manager
Grade 7	D1	Grade 7	District Manager

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

"No army can withstand the strength of an idea whose time has come"

Victor Hugo

The changes in work organization in recent years have given rise to many new management practices (Walton, 1987; Storey, 1992). In a more competitive and customer focused market place, organizations are required to become more organic and responsive to change (Legge, 1995). As a result of this, much interest has been placed on the contributions of the workforce, with organizations attempting to gain as much return from their single, largest resource as possible (Storey, 1987). The concept of empowerment has, therefore, been grasped by organizations who claim to believe that decisions should be made at the lowest possible level and that employees should take more responsibility for their own work (Johnson, 1992). Whilst some are already dismissing empowerment as a "buzzword", others appear to be 'jumping on the bandwagon' with The Industrial Society finding that organizations are increasingly moving towards this way of working (The Industrial Society, 1995). If empowerment is to succeed in meeting the aims for which it was intended, there is a need to evaluate whether empowerment is really having an impact on those for whom it is supposedly intended - non-managerial employees.

The relatively recent onset of empowerment in practice, means that little research has been conducted specifically in this area. That literature which does exist, is generally what might be termed "popular management" and tends to take the form of anecdotal evidence (Pickard, 1993; Forrest, 1995); management surveys (Lowe, 1994; The Industrial Society, 1995); or conceptual approaches to empowerment based on psychological theories (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Thomas and Velthouse, 1990). Some of these studies have touched on the effects of organizational reality on non-managerial employees, but few have actually considered what makes people feel empowered in any more than a superficial way. What the researcher intends to do in this thesis is, by using a triangulation of research methods, to build on the gaps left by the singular anecdotal, survey and conceptualization approaches, and draw more

substantive conclusions about the reality of empowerment in contemporary organizations. On the basis of a study of two large organizations in the United Kingdom, it seeks to evaluate how demographics; personality characteristics; organizational culture and climate; and the actual nature of empowerment programmes, impact on feelings of empowerment amongst non-managerial employees. Through this analysis it is hoped that organizations might be better able to evaluate the success of their empowerment programmes, something which many are failing to do.

Chapters Two, Three and Four review the literature in this area to evaluate the current theories which surround empowerment, and to identify more clearly why this current research is needed. Chapter Two seeks to conceptualize empowerment through a discussion of its roots in both the sociological, Industrial Democracy literature and the psychological, Quality of Working Life movement. It considers the relationship between Empowerment and Employee Involvement; discusses the theories of the Labour Process school which argue that empowerment is little more than exploitation; and considers the use of the term across different disciplines. It concludes by offering an operational definition which is used throughout the thesis.

Chapter Three looks at the characteristics of empowerment in the workplace. It identifies, through the use of case-study and survey evidence, the main commonalties between modern empowerment policies and their reasons for introduction. This Chapter also considers the potential barriers to these policies, concluding that the success of empowerment will, in some part, be contingent on how well organizations overcome these barriers.

Chapter Four considers the impact of empowerment on individuals. It discusses the conceptual approaches to empowerment which conclude that empowerment is essentially a psychological phenomenon and is dependent on the interpretations of individuals. It dwells on the cognitive model produced by Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and considers how other literature, particularly the sociological approach to orientations to work, may help to explain why some people appear to adapt more

easily to empowerment than others. This Chapter concludes that, overall, the success of empowerment will be contingent not just on the individual, the organization or the wider industrial context, but on an interplay of all these factors.

Chapter Five discusses the methods adopted in this research, from the general approach, Triangulation, to the specific ways in which data were collected and analysed. Both qualitative (management interviews and employee focus groups) and quantitative (questionnaire survey with 342 returns) methods were used and the relative strengths of these two forms of research are discussed, whilst the strength of this thesis in integrating both approaches is highlighted. Indeed, the main aim of this research is to fulfil a need in the empowerment literature by juxtaposing these two approaches to evaluating empowerment in practice. The central research questions are also set out here. Additionally, this Chapter also includes a presentation of the factor analyses which were conducted on two inventories included in the questionnaire.

Chapter Six introduces the two organizations who took part in the research: The Benefits Agency and BT. It discusses the structure of these organizations, their union/management relations, and the present pressures which each organization faces, looking at the organizations' approaches to quality and the reasons behind their introduction of empowerment. Two operating units were researched in each organization and these are discussed with respect to the nature of their work and their reactions to the empowerment initiative. This Chapter creates a contextual backdrop for the ensuing results chapters, by comparing and contrasting the two organizations in the conclusion.

The data utilised in this thesis was acquired through qualitative methods of managerial interviews and focus groups, and a questionnaire to obtain quantitative data. By using both approaches, it is believed that the quality of the findings and the potential illumination of the research questions will be enhanced. The results are presented in two chapters: firstly, the themes which emerged from the management interviews and focus groups are presented in Chapter Seven. Each theme is discussed separately for each operating unit and comparisons are made across operating units and across

organizations. The themes which emerged were: Training and the Essence of Empowerment; Cultural or Structural Change?; Acceptance and Resistance of Empowerment - Managers; and Acceptance and Resistance of Empowerment - Employees. The inter-relationships between these themes are considered in the conclusion of this Chapter. Secondly, Chapter Eight sets out the questionnaire results in two sections. The first considers the overall results from the questionnaire, considering the extent to which the two organizations and their operating units differ according to their orientations to work, personality characteristics, as well as attitudes towards management, their organization and empowerment. It illuminates these differences with the use of qualitative data obtained through open questions on the questionnaire. Section Two looks at the results of correlations and regression analyses which were computed for both the entire sample and the separate organizations. These consider the extent to which personality, orientations to work, and attitudes of management and their organization, affect individual's orientation to empowerment.

Chapter Nine discusses the results presented in Chapters Seven and Eight in the light of the research questions set out in Chapter Five. In doing so, it also considers the similarities and differences between the results collected from the qualitative and quantitative methods, following the proposal by Morris and Wood (1991) that utilisation of both methods allows the research questions to be considered at different levels and therefore gives a clearer picture of reality.

Finally Chapter Ten presents a discussion of how the findings and conclusions reached in the previous three Chapters, can contribute to a greater understanding of the literature in this area and the implications which this has for contemporary "empowering" organizations.

CHAPTER TWO: The Conceptualization of Empowerment within a Management Theory Framework.

Time Present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.

Eliot - The Four Quartets (as cited by Legge, 1995: 329)

INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews the history of participation within organizations over the last century and tracks the historical lineage of both psychological and sociological approaches, linking their contributions to present day management techniques. In doing so, a distinction is made between two forms of participation which are becoming increasingly disparate in their intentions and usage: a direct, individual form of participation generally adopted by management for communications with staff, and collective representation through the more formal partcipation of union associations. From this general grounding, the review moves to the continuing debate of Human Resource Management and its relationship with contemporary industrial relations and employee relations initiatives. Finally, it introduces the specific, contemporary concept of empowerment and the debates and issues which surround both its use and application in present-day organizational life. In doing so, the chapter seeks to conceptualise empowerment within this management theory framework and set out the thesis's basis of a contingency approach to empowerment initatives.

HISTORY OF ORGANIZATIONAL PARTICIPATION

In the latter years of the nineteenth century, philanthropic employers introduced share schemes to extend welfare provisions within their companies and, hence, began a move towards employee participation in organizational life. Despite the fact that these schemes were unsustainable in many situations due to worsening economic conditions, the vestiges of participation ideals remained. These were boosted after the First World War with the development of the Whitley Councils which paved the way for a rise in prominence of collective bargaining in employment relations - although

this was already well established in large, manufacturing organizations - from the start of the twentieth century (Clegg, Fox & Thompson, 1964), most influentially in the Public Sector. However, at the time such participative legislation was occurring, management theory was being heavily influenced by the Scientific Management techniques of Frederick W. Taylor.

Scientific Management was based around the principle that efficiency could be improved by standardizing job performance; the division of job roles into specialised fragmented tasks; and by reasserting the hierarchical discipline of management. In his book, "Scientific Management", Taylor compared factory work to a baseball game, "I think every man who has watched first-class play, or who knows anything of the management of the modern baseball team, realizes fully the utter impossibility of winning with the best team of individual players that was ever gotten together unless every man on the team obeys the signals or orders of the coach and obeys them at once when the coach gives those orders" (1947: 46). His theory of management was based on the premise that workers were motivated purely by financial, extrinsic incentives and encouraged differential piece-rate systems of remuneration, imposing a 'carrot and stick' approach to motivation which became part of his management philosophy. Although Taylor indicated his awareness that workers have feelings, he saw money as their primary driver and neglected the psychological and social variables which affect organizational behaviour (for a debate of this assumption that employees are driven by instrumental motives, see Chapter Four).

Classical Management Theory complemented and built upon the work of Taylor, by expanding the principles of scientific management to the wider organization. The concept of management was said to be effectively 'invented' by Fayol (1916) who stressed the need for a bureaucratic structure (Weber, 1947) and closely prescribed rules and procedures. Yet, this approach assumed the right of managers to manage, and did not account for any challenge of this right. Meanwhile, during the Second World War whilst classical theorists still dominated management thinking (Urwick, 1943), the opportunities for formal employee participation in Britain re-emerged as a result of government intervention to control the economy. Joint Production and

Advisory Committees were set up to encourage productivity and reduce antagonism between management and workers. The committees were designed to open a dialogue between management and employees regarding production and efficiency issues but Brannen (1983) suggests these Committees had little support from management and there is evidence that, over the next twenty years, the incidence of JPACs and joint consultative committees declined considerably (MacInnes, 1985).

The 1940s and 1950s were further influenced by the findings of the Hawthorne Studies conducted by Fritz Roethlisberger. These studies are generally seen as both the birthplace of industrial sociology and of the Human Relations School, although previous work had been conducted in Britain by the Industrial Fatigue Research Board (Wyatt, Fraser and Stock, 1928) on the social conditions of work. Roethlisberger's experiments demonstrated the importance of group work and of the 'informal organization' within the formal organizational framework. This antilogy to the restrictive techniques of Taylor was reiterated by writers from the Neo-Human Relations school such as Lewin and McGregor who saw organizations as systems of interdependent human beings who affect, and are affected by, organizational processes. Hence, the 1950s and 1960s provided evidence to management that, by acknowledging the human content of organizational life, efficiency would be increased and evidence was provided that participation (Lewin, 1947) was a key factor in motivation and productivity. The motivation theories of Maslow (1943) and Herzberg (1966) emphasised this requirement to acknowledge the needs and desires of workers in order to improve worker performance. Indeed, the opportunity to operate discretion over one's work was considered by Maslow as a constituent of the ultimate human need - Self Actualisation which he defined as, "What a man can be, he must be. This need we may call self-actualization....It refers to the desire for self-fulfilment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially...the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming" (1943: 382).

However, the work of the Human Relations theorists was criticised for failing to acknowledge the role of the organizational structure and the necessity of performing

certain tasks. Additionally, they took a unitarist view of organizations, ignoring the element of differentiation which exists between sub-groups (Fox, 1974). The development of the contingency approach, which followed, allowed an appreciation of how the two elements: task and technology interacted. Blauner, for instance, stated that, "the worker's relation to the technological organization of the work process and to the social organization of the factory determines whether or not he characteristically experiences in that work a sense of control rather than domination" (1964: vii). Blauner looked at the actual nature of an employee's work (he restricted his research to blue-collar workers) and how it affected their social character and personality. He found that the average worker did not want responsibility for general management decisions but was far more concerned with the immediate work process and, particularly, his ability to set his own pace of work. As Blauner wrote, "the pace of work is probably the most insistent, the most basic, aspect of a job and retaining control in this area is a kind of affirmation of human dignity" (1964: 21).

Possibly the most famous studies which constitute this systems approach are the Tavistock Institute Studies by Trist and his colleagues. The Socio-technical movement, as it became known, owed much to these studies which took place in the coal mines of Durham, England and a textile mill in Ahmedabad, India. These studies looked at the organization of work methods and found that workers who performed a composite work role were more productive. The composite work role involved people working in autonomous groups which were responsible for arranging their own shift and task rotation. "He is a 'complete miner'- the collier" they wrote, "who supervises himself and is the person directly responsible for production" (Trist et al, 1963:33). Hence, these socio-technical studies argued for the development of job design where psychological needs and requirements such as variety and decision-making are met. The Quality of Working Life movement evolved from these studies in the 1970s, and remains popular in Scandanavia today. This movement sought to take the results of the Trist studies one step further and analyse how the general findings that autonomous work groups and participation in decision making are beneficial to the organization, may be viable in practice. The studies incorporated theories of job characteristics generated by psychologists (e.g. Hackman & Oldham, 1976) and gave

rise to a number of studies in the psychological arena based on the motivational consequences of job enrichment and participation (e.g. Karasek, 1979; Lawler, 1973).

Meanwhile, Britain in the 1970s was experiencing a resurgence of a different form of employee participation due, in part, to joining the Common Market in 1973. The move into power of the Labour Party in 1974 fuelled this strengthening of the trade unions and led to the Bullock Committee of Inquiry, which proposed a statutory right for trade unions to claim seats on the boards of companies employing more than 2,000 employees, and in this sense the only way for management to regain power was by sharing it (Flanders, 1970). The increasing need for organizations, therefore, was to be seen to be taking employee care seriously whilst, in reality, many of the Quality of Working Life programmes were aimed at reducing the costs of absenteeism and labour turnover. Indeed, Buck (1972) wrote that these incentives were compatible, "some corporate executives recognise the importance of the employees' emotional health as well as their economic productivity, believing that the two can overlap" (1972: 17). Overall, however, managers remained sceptical of employee participation at any senior, influential levels and mainly introduced "quick-fix" bottom-up policies in order to satisfy the increasingly strong voice of the unions.

Throughout this brief history of organizational participation, reference has been made to two distinct types of employee participation - a traditional, representative Industrial Relations form of industrial democracy and the more individualistic, psychology-based approach, targeted at direct communications with employees. These forms of participation, whilst common in their acknowledgement of the merits of employee involvement, emerge from different values and beliefs and are directed at different levels of involvement. Whilst the industrial relations form of participation is a collective power at the company and national level through the use of Trade Unions and collective bargaining, the psychological approach, based around the Human Relation-type theories, concentrates on the day-to-day tasks carried out by individual workers. Forms of involvement such as joint consultation, financial participation, profit sharing, and share ownership schemes, which still exist in many organizations

today, are those which most resemble pluralist ideals. Indeed, Marchington et al (1992) suggest that these methods offer a higher level of participation than more psychological notions of information sharing and communication improvements (see the discussion of authors' "escalator of participation", below). As will be discussed later in this chapter, it is possible that the left-wing connotations which surround the term "empowerment" create expectations of this more collectivist approach to employee involvement. However, the change of economic and political climate since the late 1970s has led to the supremacy of individual participation to a large extent. The election of the Conservative government in 1979 was followed by recession and high unemployment in the early 1980s, which deflated union membership. Moreover, the industrial relations policy of the government was driven by the need to restrict inefficiencies, supposedly caused by the monopolistic and restrictive nature of trade unions, in order to remain nationally competitive and this led Mrs Thatcher to introduce a stream of anti-unionist legislation. Hence, there was a move away from traditional pluralist management ideals of industrial democracy and collective bargaining, towards individualistic managements which became much more involved with issues of consumerism and competition. The return to right wing politics, the emergence of international competition, particularly from Japan, and the development of an "enterprise culture" (Legge, 1995) under the Reagan and Thatcher political regimes, created a resurgence of interest in people management issues, reminiscent of the Organizational Development philosophy of the 1970s.

Meanwhile, America (Walton, 1985) and Britain looked to Japan for organizational inspiration and developed Quality programmes, advocated by 'gurus' such as Deming and Juran. Total Quality Management began to be adopted throughout British Companies in the late 1980s and early 1990s. British, European and World standards of Quality required companies to take advantage of all assets available to them, of which the most under-utilised - employees, became central to organizational thinking. Yet, the TQM proponents such as Crosby (1984) and Deming (1986) had placed their emphasis on measurement, tools and techniques and had minimised the case for employee involvement at any more than a "defect spotting" level (Wilkinson et al, 1992). Meanwhile, American gurus, most notably Peters and Waterman (1982) in

their popular management text "In Search of Excellence" referred to employee involvement as crucial to the success of their 'excellent' companies, "A second attribute of effective value systems is the effort to inspire people at the very bottom of the organization" (1982: 284). TQM techniques such as Quality Circles gave American and British theorists an opportunity to gain employee commitment through the application of theories, in some part developed by the aforementioned Quality of Working Life movement.

Quality Circles resembled the composite work groups suggested in the socio-technical studies but were mainly introduced to blue-collar, manufacturing environments and were directed primarily at the quality of the products manufactured. Not only did Quality Circles bring the promise of commitment to organizations but also a successful project would supposedly bring cost savings (Dale, 1984).The unions still exerted some influence, however, and, although Dale reported in his many studies of Quality Circles, that union opinions were generally favourable, he found that 5 out of 14 companies studied who had suspended their Quality Circle programme had done so due to union opposition (Dale, 1984). Unions, however, were not the main contributors to the downfall of Quality Circles in the UK, lack of strategic implementation and support from middle management were blamed by Frazer and Dale (1986) for contributing to the decreasing influence of this form of employee involvement. The short shelf-life of Quality Circles led some to believe Ramsay's (1977) proposition that these employee participation schemes were products of a "cycle of control", that is that they are superficially introduced to overcome crises in industrial relations and restore managerial legitimacy (for other inherent limitations of Quality Circles see Wilkinson et al, 1992). Quality Circles were said to be a response to the union crisis of the late 1970s. As Hill stated, "There was some evidence to support the thesis of a cycle of control. First, participation was introduced partly to solve a perceived crisis in industrial relations earlier in the decade. Second, participation was restricted to a narrow range of issues and middle managers reduced its effectiveness even in this limited area. Third, circles decayed once the crisis had passed" (1995:35). In Japan, Quality Circles had been part of a wider strategic drive for Quality which involved changes in the whole organizational system. The fact that

Quality Circles were not generally introduced with this wider 'Total Quality Management' in Britain (Hill and Wilkinson, 1995), and were directed at the "manipulation" of employee commitment to some extent, added fuel to the cycles of control, 'quick-fix' theory. Yet, many similar initiatives remain today in the form of peer group meetings and team briefings so it might be hypothesised that it was the label of "Quality Circles" which died rather than the concept itself (see Waves Theory, below).

The emphasis on people issues throughout the western world led to personnel management becoming more central to organizational concerns. This occurred particularly at the beginning of the 1990s which saw a widespread need to downsize amongst organizations which had boomed in the 1980s but which had been hit by the recession. In several cases the outcome of this shift of thinking was termed "Human Resource Management" (HRM) but the extent to which HRM really differs from Personnel Management is open to much debate. Whilst some theorists see HRM as a more strategic role for the Personnel department, others see it as a recognition by Chief Executives and other senior board members of the importance of their people asset (Fowler, 1987). Indeed, Storey (1992) states that often the personnel department remains on the periphery of HRM issues, "It was not unusual to find that industrial relations specialists and personnel managers were on the periphery or even completely outside these forms of change" (1992: 9). Evidence from previous literature on empowerment, presented in Chapter Three, suggests that this pattern is common for the introduction of empowerment programmes, in agreement with these theories.

John Storey, in his research-based analysis of HRM, believes that its development and its wide appeal in modern organizations is due, to some extent, to the sense of direction created through the symbolism which it elicits. This concept is taken further by Guest (1990) who likens HRM to the American Dream of human growth, improvement and opportunity, but argues that this is merely rhetoric which hides anti-unionist feelings amongst a more unitarist management. He states that HRM is a "smokescreen behind which management can introduce non-unionism or obtain

significant concessions from Trade Unions" (1990: 393). The relationship between HRM and Industrial Relations is discussed in Chapter Three.

Throughout this summary of Human Resource Management, issues have been raised about how much the pure, textbook examples of HRM are really being felt, or indeed, implemented, on the shopfloor. Whilst the 'harder' side of HRM (Storey, 1987) such as workforce reductions, performance related pay, et cetera are visible in many modern organizations, the 'softer' issues of commitment and valuing people are more ambiguous. Storey reported that whilst the managers he interviewed tended to agree that employee involvement was a good idea, specific initiatives were more difficult to identify. Indeed, Legge wrote that, "it is difficult to know where rhetoric ends and the extent to which compliance with the normative 'soft' version HRM model is really sought or achieved on the shop-floor" (1995:127).

The 'softer' side of HRM is essentially centred around the concept of managing values through the development of a strong corporate culture and, the effectiveness of this approach is, in the eyes of many management researchers, made harder when the instrumental techniques associated with 'hard' HRM are so clearly visible (Legge, 1995). If organizations are to change employee attitudes and gain commitment to their organizational goals, social psychology would suggest that certain conditions should be met. According to cognitive consistency theory (Salancik, 1977), behaviours, such as employee involvement, will only be successful in altering attitudes if employees feel that they have a choice in taking on this change, and that it has not been sanctioned by rewards or penalties. This would cast doubt on whether culture change in the HRM/ empowerment mould could ever hope to change attitudes. Storey (1992) identified a number of ways in which HRM policies are introduced, but the tendency, particularly in the case of Empowerment (see Chapter Three), is for top down systematic change which contradicts issues of employee participation and which challenges the choice element of cognitive consistency. Further, the accompanying 'hard' initiatives such as down-sizing and performance related pay contribute to a "carrot and stick" approach which adds to the belief that, according to cognitive consistency, culture change implemented in this way, will

rarely lead to attitude change. Hence, what Anthony (1977) perceives as the ultimate aim of such techniques - the internalisation of organizational goals - is unlikely.

A discussion of these issues of HRM, and the plausibility of attitude change through the development of a strong corporate culture, leads one to question the relationship between HRM rhetoric and reality (Legge, 1995). The concept that HRM poses symbolic direction rather than pragmatic policy and that the message may be used as a 'mask' (Legge, 1995: 244) or a 'smokescreen' (Guest, 1990:393) for more sinister motives, all appear to relate as much to empowerment per se as to HRM, and this will be discussed further later in this Chapter. What remains interesting in relation to empowerment is that, whilst it possesses the strategic, pro-active and unitarist characteristics of other HRM policies, the actual placement of empowerment in relation to other involvement techniques remains a matter of debate. Many have argued that it is merely a product of old TQM and employee involvement techniques which have been brushed off and repackaged whilst others see them as a full circle return to the technocratic methods of Taylorism. The next sections set out these arguments with regard to empowerment and, by exploring the etymology and usage of the term across other disciplines, seek to conceptualize it within the management theory framework.

EMPOWERMENT IN THE 1980s & 1990s: CONTEMPORARY MANAGEMENT THEORY

Empowerment and Employee Involvement

The literature suggests that the relationship between 'empowerment and 'employee involvement' is an ambiguous one. There are four central relationships between the two terms which have been proposed. Firstly, 'empowerment' is often used interchangeably with 'Employee Involvement' to encompass all the new managerial techniques aimed at the participation of workers (Collinson and Edwards, 1996; Rees, 1996). Marchington et al (1992) state that employee involvement varies according to the degree of involvement which employees are given. They illustrate this by use of an "escalator of participation" (1992: 7-8) with information giving seen as the lowest form of participation and control the highest. Interestingly, empowerment may

encompass a similar range of techniques for, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, some organizations introduce "empowerment" policies which offer little more than a culture change involving information and communication improvements, whilst others offer structural changes which alter the power base of the organization. However to draw the conclusion from these similarities that essentially 'empowerment' and 'employee involvement' are synonymous appears to be simplistic as it fails to take account of the fact that organizations often use the two terms to describe quite distinct human resource processes. Secondly, empowerment is seen as a new form of employee involvement, continuing the "waxing and waning" (Marchington et al, 1992: 554) characteristic of employee participation techniques. However, Ackers et al (1992) dismiss the theory of Ramsay's cycles of control, which was discussed earlier in this chapter, to explain this pattern, due to the fact that they see modern methods of participation as initiatives driven by unitarist organizations unlikely to be concerned with the balance of power between unions and management. They prefer the "waves metaphor" of Watson (1986) who wrote that, "we often find [ideas from the past] existing alongside their would-be successors...every wave both collides with its predecessor and combines with it...the pattern left is rarely a neat one and it is never predictable" (1986: 46-47). Thirdly, in other circumstances, Empowerment is seen as a product of employee involvement techniques (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Fenton-O'Creevy, 1996; Wilkinson and Willmott, 1995). Conger and Kanungo see delegation and participation as a set of conditions which may or may not empower the workforce, defining empowerment as, "a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organizational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal organizational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information" (1988: 474). The implication of this theory is that empowerment is an end product and that the "process" they describe is essentially a mixture of employee involvement techniques. Fenton-O'Creevy adopts this definition in his research stating that, "Empowerment will be used in Conger and Kanungo's sense of a motivational state - the individual's sense that they have the power to influence their environment and those around them" (1996:21). Finally, the fourth cited relationship between the two terms is the implication that empowerment is an advanced form of employee

involvement, "There is also an assumption that continuous improvement increases employee involvement in decision making...whether it is simply low grade task-centered involvement or a *more empowering form* of participation and shared decision making" (Hill and Wilkinson,1995:13) (my emphasis).

Empowerment Or Emasculation?

What appears to differentiate empowerment from previous initiatives, is the proposed importance of the management intentions behind the initiative. There is a natural cynicism which surrounds the introduction of many so-called employee involvement techniques, but the fact that "empowerment" appears to offer more than just involvement, appears to enhance this scepticism. Indeed, there are some who feel that, far from offering beneficial effects, empowerment is merely a 'Trojan Horse' disguising the further exploitation of workers. The title of this section is taken from an article by Sewell and Wilkinson (1992) which suggests that whilst, "empowerment and trust [are the] rhetoric ...the centralization of power and control [are the] reality" (1992:102). The view that empowerment represents an 'iron fist in a velvet glove' and hails a return to Tayloristic methods of control is well supported (McCardle et al, 1995; Kerfoot and Knights, 1995; McCabe and Knights, 1995; Claydon and Doyle, 1994; Panteli and Corbett, 1996) and proposes that, "empowerment results not in a power shift in the organisation, but in employees becoming morally bound to a system of management which enhances their own exploitation" (McArdle et al, 1995:161).

Whilst some argue that empowerment in itself is exploitation, others claim that management's lasting identity with direct control often undermines the potential success of empowerment. For instance, McCabe and Knights (1995), basing their views on a study of an insurance company endeavouring to empower staff through TQM, write that there appears to be a staff acceptance of TQM and that this is partially reflected by "the hierarchical power relations of staff vis-a-vis management which offers staff little choice other than to cooperate" (1995: 38). Yet, they argue against the assumption that this consequence is necessarily a conscious intention of management, as Kerfoot and Knights write, "we regard the management control of employees as an unintended consequence of the development of quality programmes,

rather than their direct objective" (1995:221). McArdle et al suggest that, if the above arguments are true, the solution must lie in not just implementing participation practices but accompanying them with "the appropriate developments in the structure of the organisation" (1995: 157). Others, however, are not as generous. They believe that management consciously use empowerment to subvert the workforce and exploit the ideas of employees, seeking their views and specialised knowledge about shop-floor issues with no returnable benefit. It is argued that the inevitable consequence of this is an increased workload with no accompanying discretion or authority. Indeed, in his study of empowerment within the information technology industry, Panteli writes that "In most of the cases, 'empowered' employees are given the responsibility of performing more operational tasks than before, while the standardised computerised procedures restrict to a great extent the amount of discretion that could be exercised" (1996: 7-8).

With the concept of hierarchical, bureaucratic management less overtly acceptable in today's climate, management need new ways of controlling their workforce. The 'black hole' debate regarding the relationship between unions and management will be discussed in Chapter Three, but more specifically the unions believe that empowerment, and other new employment practices are the answer which management seek and utilise to reassert their inherent control. "Some employers may use HRM language as a smokescreen for anti-unionism" report the TUC (1994: 6). They propose that management use terms such as empowerment to hide their continuing oppression and existing patterns of work intensification, "the workplace reality is characterised by a re-assertion of managerial control" (TUC, 1994: 5). This is said, by Ezzamel et al (1994), to be confirmed in the example of financial services organisations. Their study found that after restructuring caused by recession, most organisations set about reasserting the control of management as accountabilities became increasingly important. They allege that those who did not conform to the new management style were removed from the organisations so that only those who made decisions according to the 'right' criteria remained.

Overall, then, one can see that there is a powerful school of thought which does not see empowerment as the organisational utopia it is hyped up to be. Additionally they tend to regard it as a policy aimed at gaining the commitment, or compliance, of individuals rather than employees as a collective group, further weakening the influence of the unions. As Claydon and Doyle (1994: 12) write, "empowerment could be seen to result in both a greater sense of individualisation among workers leading to increased anxiety and stress, but also to subjective feelings of heightened self-esteem which ensure continued compliance". At a macro-level this might be seen to relate to the concept of organizational stress, and the contribution of occupational psychological literature in this area (e.g. Cooper, 1983) is acknowledged. However, in order to maintain a tight focus, this thesis will not enter the empowerment/stress debate at any more than a superficial level.

CONCEPTUALIZING EMPOWERMENT

As can be seen from the debate which surrounds the relationship between the terms 'empowerment' and 'employee involvement', one of the major contentions in the literature on empowerment is, quite simply, its definition. The approach discussed here contributes to the examination of HRM discourse and management rhetoric (Legge, 1995; Keenoy, 1990) which is discussed more broadly in the conclusion of this chapter. The term "empowerment" is used across a wide range of disciplines and each brings differing interpretations. An investigation into the etymon of "empowerment" exposes a basis for this subjectivity. The Oxford English Dictionary defines "empowerment" as "the action of empowering; the state of being empowered" and it was first used in this form in 1849. However, the verb "empower" from which this noun is derived was first apparent in the English Language some two hundred years before.

The word "empower" is of French and Latin derivation consisting of the preposition "em" and the noun "power". "Em" probably comes from the Old French for "en" - they were, at one time, interchangeable words meaning "in". The Latin source of

"em" is, however, more complicated. "Em" and "en" also held the same definition - to "look" or "come", this provokes interesting thought as to modern interpretations of the word "empowerment" but it is more likely that its origins lie with the preposition "in" which denoted space and was defined as "into; onto; towards or against". This form of the Latin would explain the emergence of another spelling of the word - "impower". The first recorded use of the word "empower" and its derivations was in the Seventeenth Century by Hamon L'Estrange in his book 'The Reign of King Charles' This first usage was synonymous with the idea of authorizing or licensing: "Letters from the Pope", wrote L'Estrange, "empowering them to erect this colledge". The idea of authorizing and licensing is one that the Oxford English Dictionary still sees as common and, indeed, this remains the legal and constitutional usage of the term in the present day. Additionally, it acknowledges the existence of a second definition which is to "impart or bestow power to an end or for a purpose; to enable, permit" which was first used in 1667 by Milton in his famous work 'Paradise Lost': "Thou us impow'rd to fortifie thus farr".

However, there are two original definitions of the word "empower" which the Oxford English Dictionary states are now rare or obsolete. These are "to bestow power upon, make powerful" and "to gain or assume power over". The apparent obsolescence of these definitions may surprise many modern theorists who rely solely or partly on these definitions to support their theories of empowerment. It seems that we must move away from the connection of empowerment to power per se and address its more indirect, and in the opinion of the Oxford English Dictionary, more common usage, that is the acknowledgement of power to achieve an end rather than as an end in itself.

As discussed above, power is an essential component of any interpretation of empowerment, not least because it remains its root word. The original usage of the word and its present definitions do not refute this, however there is a danger that over the hundreds of years which empowerment has been used the importance of power has been over-emphasised. Nowadays there is a constant need to remind the reader that empowerment is not "power" but is a process by which the latter is only bestowed

to an end or for a purpose. Lukes (1974) argues that power is the capacity not only to impose one's will but also to set the terms of agreement, in this sense one would see power as something which one has over another. The conception of power as "power over another" is predominant in the literature, indeed the interpretation of power in terms of domination and oppression emerges from a review of the use of empowerment across disciplines.

The Use of Empowerment across Non-Management Disciplines.

At first glance, the non-management literature might be summarised as defining empowerment through a notion of powerlessness and oppression. It is perceived as the use of certain techniques to transform those without power into equitable positions. This occurs due to the fact that the oppressed recognise that there is an alternative way of living and that oppression does not have to be tolerated. As West (1990) wrote, "it is because we have some idea of a more authentic identity, that we can condemn existing identities as formed under constraints, as unauthentic, but most importantly as replaceable" (1990: 130). This is illustrative of the inextricable links between empowerment and politics. Not only is the term politically loaded, used as it is to pertain to the revolt of the oppressed, but also politics is itself an area in which "empowerment" has taken affect.

West (1990), in his book "Authenticity And Empowerment", which challenges the assumption that we live in a "free world" and promotes a new theory of liberation, attacks traditional politics for failing to connect political problems to effective political practices and, hence, producing an apathetic and frustrated affluent majority who, unconsciously, allow oppression to continue. West argues that, according to theories of rationality, people are both individuals and social beings and that the culture within which an individual lives must be seen by them to be "authentic" - that is, consistent with their beliefs and values. If it fails to meet these needs, West contends that an alternative culture which holds greater authenticity will be sought and that through this "dissident" culture the individuals will seek the collective goals of their members in the face of indifference from wider society. This process, he goes on, requires a combination of emancipation and empowerment, "a culture which did

not in some way emancipate would not attract people to it. A culture which did not empower would not survive" (1990: 71). Emancipation involves attracting people to a culture for fulfilment, a culture empowers if it proposes, in the words of West, "forms of life which foster the collective strength and resolve of all those who belong (to it)" (1990:71).

Despite this explanation of rationality, West argues it is not always exercised due to the social system, political power, and other intervening factors which will be discussed throughout this review. He contends that although such concepts of authenticity and empowerment are useful in the politics of liberation, one important thing should be remembered - "there is no universally primary struggle, no justification for the hegemony of a particular class or category within society" (1990: 174). This conclusion reminds us that "empowerment" must not be defined as the giving away or the gaining of power, empowerment is not a revolutionary act, rather empowerment eradicates oppressive power and acts to enable the whole population in a free and fair world. However, this definition remains a wide generalisation and it adds little to our understanding of the term in management literature. For this, a closer look is required at the usage and interpretation of "empowerment" throughout the literature which is best segregated into five sections: women; minority groups; education; community care; and political orientation.

The Empowerment Of Women

It is the basis of the feminist literature that women are subject to oppression by men who, through the ages, have achieved domination through power. This power has been gained not only through individual qualities of men (for example, through physical strength) but also through the long-established patriarchal society in which we live (for example, through the legal system). This illustrates that, if women are to fight this oppression they must tackle it both on a personal and a wider social basis. Related to this is the definition of the term "empowerment" by Bookman and Morgen in their book "Women and The Politics of Empowerment" which states that it connotes "a spectrum of political activity ranging from acts of individual resistance to

mass political mobilizations that challenge the basic power relations in our society" (1988:4). Considering this, the literature generally covers those areas in which women are most subject to the abuse of male power: physical violence; sexual encounters; the workplace and the family. Within each of these areas of study, women seek different ways to conquer oppression and, therefore, empowerment methods vary. On a general basis, Bookman and Morgen (1988) see empowerment as the recognition of the forces which act to oppress women and the motivation to change those factors in each woman's life which allow them to act. This process is neither easy nor does it follow a linear pattern, contend the authors, instead "it takes twists and turns, includes both resistance and consent, and ebbs and flows as groups with different relations to the structures and sources of power came into conflict" (1988:4). Many have noted in the feminist literature that the empowerment of women does not involve the disempowerment of men. The assumption that this might be so is based on the concept of "power" which is ordinarily seen as a one dimensional term: that is, power is either a "good" or a "bad" thing. The fact that power can be mobilized in oppressive AND empowering ways must be recognised if one is to avoid the viscous circle of oppression. As Hall (1992) wrote "It is not women's purpose to take power from men; rather, the goal of women is to develop their own power while respecting men for who they are" (1992: 104).

Turning first to the empowerment of battered women, it is suggested that the superior physical strength of the male species puts women at an immediate disadvantage as regards violence. Male violence is seen by feminist writers as an abuse of their power to subordinate women into feelings of inferiority. Holland et al (1991), who looked specifically at women's negotiation of safer sex, drew up a network in the light of their case studies. Although not related to physical abuse by the authors, one can draw interesting parallels. They identified two components of female empowerment. The first is intellectual empowerment (which refers to the knowledge and expectations which a woman holds) and the second is experiential empowerment (the capacity to control behaviour). These two concepts are independent of each other and the authors argue that "empowerment at one level does not necessarily entail

empowerment at another" (1991: 2). The idea of these two concepts of empowerment is useful throughout this review. Additionally, and particularly relevant to physical abuse, was the addition of a third dimension of empowerment, the transitional level of the network. This relies on the idea that empowerment is context-dependent, where a young woman's intellectual empowerment (knowledge and expectations) is mismatched with her capacity to control her sexuality/ the violence in practice (experiential empowerment). The existence of this "transitional" level reflects the idea that empowerment is not a process which ends but that it is a continual struggle which constantly needs attention and reaffirmation. Indeed, the concern is that battered women often find themselves at the transitional level and that, however empowered a woman is intellectually, there is always a danger with physical abuse that experiential empowerment will fail. The superiority of male strength is something which women can do nothing about. The significance of this notion to organisational theory is meaningful. One might argue that no matter how authentic their enthusiasm and desire for empowerment, employees rely on management not to abuse their greater power and hence to experientially empower their employees. Returning to the fate of abused women, due to the physical superiority of men, women tend to have two immediate options in a violent situation - either to walk away or to risk fighting back.

It is considered essential that if a woman does walk away and leave her abusive partner that she not only undergoes therapy but that a certain amount of independence is instilled in her to prevent her returning to the abuser, a common problem with domestic abuse. "A therapeutic approach" writes Reinelt (1994) "..often reinforces dependency and does not improve the economic conditions of women's lives that may enable them to live independently" (1994:691). Women must take control of their own lives by talking to each other and transferring their problem from one which is intrinsically personal to recognising that other women are affected too and that the problem is not the woman, or indeed women as a whole, but the abuse of male gender structures. Once the problem is externalised, women can try and tackle it. As Schecter (1982) concluded on the topic of empowerment, "Its premise is to turn

individual defeats into victories through giving women tools to better control their lives and joining in collective struggle" (1982:109).

There are circumstances cited in the literature when, not only are women disadvantaged because of their gender but also because of their membership of minority groups. This "double jeopardy" (Gutiãrrez, 1990:149) suffered by Black women, in particular, pushes white women, whether consciously or unconsciously, into a position of superiority. Rather than merely seeing all women as oppressed by all men, Fowlkes (1992) requires that we go beyond that approach and give attention to the diversity within the female gender. White women must seek to challenge any underlying stigmas which they hold or which they perpetuate by their behaviours, in order to empower their black counterparts. Empowerment, states Fowlkes, involves looking for differences within the female gender so that one can identify any privileges and oppressions and work to destroy them. This is the essence of Progressive Formation which acts to reduce oppression through those that maintain it. There are many who are oppressed in one sense and yet who are the oppressors in others. Because of this identification, they deliver an empathy to the process which those who are in no way oppressed could not do. Hence, West and others have hypothesised that those who suffer from oppression in some way will more effectively reduce the oppressiveness in themselves.

In this way, empowerment could be seen as holding a different meaning and encouraging different empowering procedures when related to diversity within oppressed groups; that is that in this example all women, including those who may be responsible for the oppression, are involved in the empowerment process. This process might also be relevant when constructing a definition of employee empowerment. Organisational empowerment affects all those within an organisation and yet, like in the case of women, within this group there are many different sub-groups. Those that are empowered in a workplace come from, for example, different backgrounds, have different levels of education, work for different divisions of the organisation, have different roles, and are at different levels of the hierarchy. These internal divisions must be recognised and dealt with by ALL employees. As with the

case of women, all employees must search within themselves for any prejudices which they may hold and work to destroy them. This groupwork is important. Yet, groups are necessarily made up of individuals and naturally incorporate divisions, such diversity could threaten the group's unity, so West argues that this must be overcome by an effort to reconstruct the mind-set of the oppressors within the group. As West (1990) writes, "to avoid a destructive fragmentation of the group the members must, in the first place, be concerned with the progressive formation of those on the 'oppressor' side of these internal divisions" (1990: 134).

Empowerment, however, can also come from within the internal dissident groups, Gutiãrrez (1990) identifies ways in which women of colour can resolve their lack of power themselves. She isolates four associated psychological changes which she believes are crucial for empowerment: Increasing personal efficacy; developing group consciousness; reducing shared blame; and assuming personal responsibility. Again these proposed changes might also be carefully considered by employees in the case of organisational empowerment. Gutiãrrez goes on to describe ways in which social work practitioners can help black women overcome their oppression through the achievement of these psychological changes. She concludes, as many authors do, that empowerment can not be seen as a one off achievement but that it must be worked at on a continual basis - "rather than a specific state, it is a way of interacting with the world" (1990:150). This "struggle" for empowerment is often identified within organisations, who claim that employees must be continually empowered and that it is an ongoing process.

The previous discussion of the empowerment of women has confined itself almost entirely to the western world, where at least some changes can be seen to be occurring in individual attitudes and society as a whole. In developing countries, women are still faced with a strongly dominant and unchallenged patriarchal society within which any moves towards empowerment must be treated with caution. Much has been written about the plight of oppressed women in the Third World and the difficulties in overcoming this powerlessness without simultaneously causing them to lose status. For example, in Bangladesh, and other countries with Purdah systems,

women lose status if they undertake such work as requires them to leave the confines of their own household. If empowerment is to be a realistic option for these women, the recognition of oppression and encouragement for action must come from sources outside of the status system. As Batliwala (1994), who based her perceptions on the grassroots programmes of South East Asia, wrote, "empowerment must be externally induced, by forces working with an altered consciousness and an awareness that the existing social order is 'unjust" and 'unnatural"" (1994: 131) (sic.).

The primary method of economic empowerment for women in Developing Countries appears, by its prevalence in the literature, to be the formation of co-operatives. Abdullah and Zeidenstein (1982), who looked at the IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Program) Pilot Project in Population Planning and Rural Women's Co-operatives, described how through the buying of shares, the making of deposits, and the taking of loans, all available through the Co-operatives, women developed a new experience of economic autonomy and independence. The authors talk of one woman who had benefited through the Co-operative system "Her husband, she says, used to call her a fool. Now, he says, she is clever because she can talk and reply. He pays more attention to her" (1982: 181). Unfortunately, despite the pleasure of many rural men that their wives have become more empowered, resistance has been experienced particularly by educated, urbanized males. A series of quotes are given by Abdullah and Zeidenstein, which dismiss the idea of women having any economic opportunities for a number of reasons, particularly, it seems, the fear that women will take jobs away from men. "It is too hard to organise women" stated one resister, "They will not cooperate. They will be jealous and fight with each other" (1982: 205). This resistance clearly shows that in the remaining strictly patriarchal societies, there is a fear and ignorance of women by the majority of men particularly, and especially perturbing, by educated, powerful men.

The study of empowerment through co-operatives was also studied with relation to Japan, another country with strong traditional cultural values. However, unlike Bangladesh, women's empowerment is not being realised through their control of their own co-operatives. Rather, Japanese society's role playing is mirrored in their

co-operative system. Management is male dominated and women gain empowerment through the input and suggestions they make to management. Hence, Japanese co-operatives empower women in a similar way to the accepted notion of the empowerment of employees in modern organisations. Indeed Craig and Steinhoff (1990) describe the empowerment process in Japanese co-operatives through use of an adapted model by Conger and Kanungo (1988) which was designed to describe organisational empowerment. In this article on Japanese co-operatives, empowerment is defined slightly differently than in the previous literature discussed. Here empowerment is seen as "the granting of power or the delegation of authority to others" (1990: 50) and there is talk of a leader who "shares" his powers with others. The Japanese system resembles employee empowerment in that it is not a feeling generated by the women/employees themselves but a framework which is imposed by the dominant group and, in such situations, one must question the motives of the empowerment introduction. The importance of tackling all sources of oppression is reiterated by Mahmud and Johnston (1994) who looked at empowerment in terms of population control, "approaches that treat women's education and employment as instruments to reduce fertility are inadequate", wrote the authors, "What is needed are strategies for women's empowerment that lead to their increased autonomy and decision-making power, providing them with an alternative power base that is independent of the domination of men" (1994: 157).

There seems to be concern, then, that programmes which seek to empower women actually act to exploit them. This claim is examined by Moghadam (1990) and Greenhalgh (1991) who look at different strategies aimed at enhancing the status of women throughout the Third World. Greenhalgh claimed that two distinct patterns of change in the distribution of family resources by gender emerged: firstly, Individuation, which frees men from their family obligations and allows them to fall on the shoulders of their wives; secondly, Intensification, which reinforces the existing gender disparity. The first of these patterns puts women in a situation of constrained independence, the second makes women economically dependent. Hence, however women in the Third World are empowered, Greenhalgh concludes that patterns of change act to push women out of the work place, hence reasserting the

male patriarchy, just as some management theorists argue that empowerment is used to reassert the institutional control of management (Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992).

Empowerment and Minority Groups

Membership of a minority brings with it automatic powerlessness in a country led by a majority. Laws, rules and attitudes most commonly reflect those in positions of power and act against those that differ from the norm. Empowerment emerges, therefore, as a common theme in the literature covering the lives of minority groups in such areas as race, sexuality, disability and age. There is an assumption here that the oppressed are somehow "driven" to right the injustices which they have suffered. West (1990) attributes this to the fact that once a more authentic identity has been identified, "the existing culture is a place of frustration and low self-esteem for them" (1990: 73). The anger and resentment they feel towards this surrounding culture drives them to be proactive in their fight for equality. Such social movements, concluded West, combine the virtues of empowerment with the pleasures and fulfilment of authenticity.

Most prevalent in the literature are the references to the empowerment of a racial minority. Solomon (1976) discusses the source of oppression, in this instance, as the blocking of two sources of power: direct and indirect. The first relates to the specific restriction of access to resources which is a societal source and the second relates to the individual experiences of minorities and how these experiences are mediated by significant others. Soloman refers to the importance of social work in getting black people to recognise their value and their ability to meet self-determined goals through linking them with resources, helping them gain self-knowledge and completing certain tasks. In conclusion, empowerment is defined by Solomon as "the process whereby persons who belong to a stigmatised social category throughout their lives can be assisted to develop and increase skills in the exercise of interpersonal influence and the performance of valued social roles" (1976: 6). That similar processes with employees may be beneficial is plausible. The ability to meet self-determined goals, self-knowledge and the link with resources all appear to be important qualities of an empowered employee.

Perry (1980) highlights the socioeconomic impact of black empowerment in a political forum. Taking as an example a rural southern locality in Alabama, which became the first biracial political entity in the United States to be completely black-governed, Perry looks at the benefits received by Blacks and how these have changed since black political control. There were certainly a number of benefits to black political participation in Greene County but Perry states that "black political empowerment has not been without its shortcomings" (1980: 219). The problem seems to be that in ten years, blacks went from having no political power at all to dominance in the political arena. Perry classes this as empowerment, but many would argue that, although the process was an empowering one, the outcome is not one of empowerment because the attitudes and opinions which were created over a long period of oppression and disadvantage have not disappeared - indeed, Perry reported that the black public officials failed to bring about an integrated school system as "the resistance of whites to integration made the creation of an integrated school system unachievable" (1980: 220). In this sense, whilst the oppressed minority had gained 'power' and 'control' in a symbolic sense, underlying attitudes of the dominant group had not altered and, in this sense, the black community were not considered by Perry as truly empowered. Referring back to Marchington's escalator of participation, one might argue that employee control of organizations, which they translated as "employee-owned organizations" are not necessarily empowering unless management attitudes reflect this level of employee control.

Political empowerment is said to be largely symbolic for the Mexican-American population also. It is stated that although the population of Hispanics has grown, the mechanisms to allow them to participate equitably in the political arena have not automatically followed. Political empowerment, explain the authors Villarreal et al requires an integrationist give-and-take strategy and they seem optimistic that the growing multicultural nature of the United States may favour the Chicanos in the future. "If by empowerment is meant seeking and winning elective office, then the barriers are visible and surmountable" write Villarreal et al (1988) of Chicano empowerment, "if, however, what is meant is the eradication of illiteracy, poverty,

unemployment, and substandard housing, empowerment may be very difficult" (1988: 128). Here, as in the Greene County example, the social problems are more deep rooted than the political ones. Friedmann (1992) offers an explanation for this, he sees empowerment as evolving from three sources of power: social; psychological and political. Alternative development, he contends follows a certain sequence such that, "political empowerment would seem to require a prior process of social empowerment through which effective participation in politics becomes possible" (1992: 34) (sic). One might hypothesise that in the two examples outlined above, this sequence was not followed and, hence, empowerment could not truly be effective.

Rather than attempting to compete on the major political stage, aboriginal communities in the Northern Communities seek devolvement of power to the local level. Historically these communities have had little control over the social and economic conditions which affect them, but more recently there seems to be a rule of thought which suggests that a successful social programme owes much to the matching of the programme to local concerns and that this is best achieved through the placing of power into the hands of those who know - the people in the communities (similar policies in existence in the UK will be discussed later). This has not only occurred due to the decisions of those in power but because of the pressure being imposed by a newly assertive and politically aware community. However, there are those who, after years of domination, have lost the ability to act autonomously and who may feel that regaining a sense of control is beyond them. "Care must be taken", wrote Dacks and Coates (1988), "to avoid devolving power more directly or immediately than can be accommodated by some communities" (1988: 9). For this reason the authors suggest a long-term strategy with two tracks which allow the local service sector to be developed whilst at the same time developing economic stability.

Minority groups are also created by age. Over the last few years the idea of "ageism" both in the employment arena and wider society is causing us to recognise that discrimination is often made on the basis of age. More generally, one thinks of discrimination against the elderly but there is also a feeling of oppression amongst the youth. For this reason many countries have adopted Youth Advocacy services which

act to, "empower young people in their everyday lives" (Finlayson, 1985: 23). The feeling is that young people do not get the opportunity to translate their needs and feelings successfully into the adult world, that they are not taken seriously or that they are dismissed due to an adult attitude of "I know better". This predicament of the youth could be equated to that of employees in an organisation, whereby those employees at lower levels are subject to policies over which they have little or no say and which are supposedly made in their "best interest". Youth Advocacy aims to empower the young people by having more say over what affects them in their everyday lives. Enhancement of their self-worth and instilling more control over their lives should make the youth have more responsibility for themselves and their actions. Finlayson (1985) in his study of several Youth Advocacy schemes throughout the world, claimed that many people hold the assumption that as young people become adults they are automatically empowered and dismissed this as a fallacy. His argument being that even in adulthood empowerment is not assured, "however, if young people learn how to take control over their lives" he stated, "then there is every chance that they will become empowered adults" (1985: 24). From his search for a suitable Youth Advocacy model for Victoria, Australia, Finlayson concluded that the legal and schooling systems of many countries act to disempower young people and suggests that a policy of Youth Advocacy be adopted by the Victorian Government and that localised advocacy services be provided for young people to educate, inform, support and empower them.

Empowerment and Education

Empowerment is inextricably linked to education. Not only is education a crucial part of all empowerment programmes but it also acts to empower in itself. For those who are illiterate, have to adapt to a second language or are deaf, for example, education is crucial for them to develop a sense of self-worth and empowerment. In the educational literature, much is made of the substantive and symbolic concepts which the term "empowerment" encapsulates. The idea that empowerment can both refer to a substantive form of change at the individual level and a more symbolic form of change at the societal level. This encourages educational theorists to question who exactly education empowers - individuals or groups? Griffin (1992), in his study of

the links between empowerment and experiential learning, suggests that education empowers everyone through a respect for each individual and their personal targets of the programme. However, he seems at odds with the idea that a substantive change at the level of the individual will be reflected in substantive social change, "assuming that empowerment is intended to convey a sense of politics, I want to suggest" he wrote, "that whereas the capacity of experiential learning for personal empowerment is very real, as practitioners know full well, its capacity for social change or transformation is very limited indeed" (1992: 31).

In the educational literature, empowerment has tended to be focused either on the teachers, and to a much smaller extent, on the students. As it refers to teachers, empowerment describes the technique by which the delivery of educational services is much more "effective", as it concerns students the issue of empowerment is more complicated. Student empowerment was said to have been achieved by Patrick Courts (1991) at a time when, "they have begun to gain a sense of their own power as learners and meaning makers" (1991: 148). In the case of illiteracy the author states that language brings empowerment, "once the possibility of language becomes an operative fact in the human being's life" he wrote, "it becomes enormously significant..in the process of naming that which had no name, in the process of learning that there are names, the human begins to feel power" (1991: 13). The author, however, does not confine themselves to the illiterate, those that might be said to be oppressed, he also looks at the power of developing language and skills in reading, writing, listening and discussing amongst "normal" students in order to put them in a more powerful position in the world.

Education also helps those that are, as discussed in the previous section, members of a minority group. This is particularly true for those who are immigrants or a foreign speaking minority of a particular country. In this situation there is a struggle to maintain some sense of oneself whilst accepting that the norms, mores and language of the ruling country must be acknowledged. Bullivant (1995) discussed this dilemma with respect to immigrants to Australia. He talks of the power of the educational system to reproduce the interests of the ruling or dominant class and the need for

education to move away from this "power over" towards an empowerment of all schoolchildren. He bases his conclusions on a study of the evolution in Australia of language and culture programmes which aim to empower cultural minorities. He explains that prior to 1973 immigrants were expected to abandon their own backgrounds, culture and language and conform to the majority. Over the years this has changed, he explains, through various stages of multicultural involvement to the present day. Now the emphasis has moved away from the desire to incorporate minorities to a need for encouraging differences and diversity in order to remain economically competitive - in short, prominence has progressed from individual empowerment to macroempowerment. One might hypothesise, cynically, that economic reasons may similarly be the reason for empowerment within organisations. The desire to remain competitive drives management to look for ways to improve efficiency and concludes that one way is through the devolvement of responsibility. That empowerment only occurs as a result of economic difficulties drains it of its critical edge and reverts its meaning to one of superficiality. In Australia the need now exists for the minorities to exploit their diversity and for anglo-Australians to look outwards to the Asia-Pacific region which could eventually determine their economic success, "in this respect," writes Bullivant (1995), "acquiring a foreign language will lead to a level of empowerment that hopefully transcends narrow national concerns" (1995: 185).

Education can sometimes hold different empowerment potential for different people, particularly in situations of a dominant group and a minority, Al-Haj (1995) wrote of the Arab minority in Israel, "while Palestinians have seen education throughout the different periods as a source of empowerment, the dominant groups have utilized the education system as a mechanism of social control" (1995: 215). Education allows the dominant group to remove from impressionable minds any development of minority tolerance or national consciousness and enforce the official, ruling ideology, therefore oppressing the minority groups through the education of their children. Yet, on the contrary, the minorities see the education system as empowering in that they can improve their status in the wider society through educational achievement and that, by exerting public pressure and developing parallel informal education, they can force

the dominant group to allow some changes in the education system. Yet, true empowerment, it seems, is not really achieved through these means, as Al-Haj concludes, "it is, of course, a relationship carefully designed by the majority in order to maintain dependency and prevent the minority from determining the content of its own education" (1995: 223).

Empowerment and Community Care

Community Care is conventionally defined as involving those who are physically disabled; mentally ill; have a learning disability; or are elderly. It generally also includes those who suffer from alcohol or drug dependence. It is the predicament of these people, their carers, and their social workers that are discussed in this section with relation to empowerment.

"A new buzz word has entered the vocabulary of social work - empowerment", write Mullender and Ward (1991), "to be seen as progressive and credible, everyone is trying to jump on the bandwagon" (1991: 1). Like organisational theory, social work has been subject to a wash of literature on the merits of empowerment and the need for it to be central to any practitioner's mindset. However, the authors go on to say that there remains a concern that "unless it is accompanied by a commitment to challenging and combating injustice and oppression, which shows itself in actions as well as words, this professional Newspeak...allows us all, as practitioners, to rewrite accounts of our practice without fundamentally changing the way it is experienced by service users" (1991: 3). Hence, the authors see empowerment as not just some form of ideology but an operational term which can be most clearly understood in relation to oppression which they define as both a state of affairs and a process which acts to unjustly limit the lives of those with less power.

On this understanding, then, empowerment in community care works to enfranchise its users and those that care for them. This is done in a number of ways, indeed Stevenson and Parsloe (1993) see empowerment as relating to decisions not only over the larger issues which affect everyone but also over the much smaller, seemingly inconsequential matters. Here the dichotomy re-emerges between individual and

social factors. They explain that having the opportunity to make choices is not only about having the freedom of choice as to residential homes but also as to whether you can open a window without asking. "Small victories may have a significant impact on the morale and are intrinsically empowering" they wrote, but qualified this by reiterating that "they cannot be a substitute for choice over the major issues" (1993: 8). In this way oppression is being tackled both at the personal and group levels.

Another "buzz-word" which has emerged in Community Care literature with, and has been associated with, empowerment is "advocacy". Rose and Black (1985) propose that the two terms are inextricably linked in that they have complementary tendencies. Advocacy, they claim, is issue-orientated and objective, whilst empowerment, "is designed to reconnect the subjective responses..to the objective conditions which form the focus for advocacy" (1985: 18). Hence, in effect this could be said to resemble the dichotomy of the individual and the social. That is that advocacy acts to resolve the objective issues which affect a large number of people, whilst empowerment connects these objective factors to the attitudes and feelings of the user; in this sense they are interdependent. "Advocacy depends upon empowerment for its substance and validity, while empowerment relies upon advocacy for its transpersonal attachment" (Rose and Black, 1985: 18). Hence, through the work of advocates and advocacy groups, users of community care are more in touch with the outside world and more able to resolve their objective problems - hopefully, therefore, empowering them through their attitudes.

Empowerment of those that use the services of Community Care and those that care for them is itself reliant on the empowerment of the social workers themselves, hypothesises Stevenson and Parsloe (1993). They explain the need for a new culture which can lift the limits oppressing the workers and change not only the way they work but also how they feel about their work. Such commitment for change must come from the managers, they claim (resembling the recommendations made by management theorists) and go on to say that, "managers will be in a stronger position to require, but also to help with, this attitude change in others if they too are changing" (1993: 10).

The problem remains, however, as to how social workers can make users feel empowered and not even more powerless when they have to put them through the processes of assessing their needs, managing their care and other such patronising procedures. Smale et al (1993) suggest that this is best overcome through adopting a policy of "empathy" whereby, instead of just questioning and probing the user, the worker assumes the user is the expert of his particular situation and acts to develop their understanding of it. This recognition that those more in touch with a particular situation are more likely to be the expert in that situation is particular central to empowerment in community care. "It is crucial to avoid a split between those who are in day-to-day or frequent contact, and those who make decisions about what is to be done and the allocation of resources," wrote Smale et al, "splitting these two will inevitably be disempowering" (1993: 42). An example of a care organisation which has managed to avoid this split, and indeed which has encouraged cohesion, was illustrated by Kate Harvey. Nottingham MIND undertook a programme towards the empowerment of users under the guidance of Harvey who had always held a belief in personal worth rather than strict hierarchies and rules. She described the steps towards empowerment as "stormy" (1987: 10) because those involved seemed reluctant to enable people to take back the power and control of their own lives. Indeed, she commented that the mental health workers tried "to hold on to their professional status, approach and jargon" (1987: 11). She admitted there were risks in taking the course she chose but that without risk there was no responsibility. After much work, the committee shifted from being professionally dominated, "now almost all the committee members are or have been users of mental health services", she wrote, "professionals who remain involved are supporters rather than dominators. Users are calling the tune" (1987: 11).

It does seem that the adoption of empowerment within Community Care is making a real difference. Users of the service and their carers are having a real say in what happens to them. However, again their oppression is deep-rooted, attitudes are difficult to change and the inclusion of the physically and mentally disabled and the elderly, who are too often dismissed by society, in major decisions may still be a long

way off. However, Stevenson and Parsloe (1993)'s conclusion of the personal social services they studied is encouraging, "what we have seen and heard is deeply moving" they wrote, "it shows workers creating 'islands' of empowerment over matters in which they have influence, in the deep and turbulent sea of social disempowerment through poverty, racism, unemployment and homelessness" (1993: 14).

Empowerment and Politics

Political literature seems to embrace the term "empowerment" at three different levels. Empowerment is described at a national level as the result of a revolution whereby new leaders aim to reduce inequity; on a local level through the strengthening of mediating agencies which allow closer ties with individual communities; and on a personal level as a result of the customer revolution and the advent of consumerism.

On a national level, revolution is achieved through the mobilizing of a dissident group to overthrow the existing leadership. Such a revolution in China led to a communist victory under Chairman Mao's rule. That there was a resulting improvement in social welfare is without doubt, as Woetzel (1989) wrote, "most importantly, the social revolution achieved one of the most equal redistributions of wealth in history. The extremes of ostentation and starvation common under previous regimes were virtually wiped out" (1989: 162). However, problems remained; the "feudal economy" failed to be converted along with other changes and resource allocation became increasingly a function of personal connections. In fact, Woetzel claimed that rather than "empowering" individuals within China the cultural revolution " encouraged this trend by pushing more power into the hands of one man in the factory, destroying incentives and nurturing a cult of leadership" (1989: 163). This does not imply that empowerment is not possible through revolution, Woetzel agreed that the redistribution of wealth and the elimination of imperialism had removed two large stumbling blocks to individual empowerment, rather that empowerment is not in itself revolutionary. From this conclusion, one might hypothesise that, in the case of a worker revolution, if workers were to assume power over a factory, empowerment would not necessarily follow as it is independent of power per se.

Local empowerment is generally associated, on a political level, with the government and its attempts to bring customers and their requirements to the forefront of national policy. From an individual point of view, one might find this commendable as it reduces the feeling of powerlessness which Berger and Neuhaus (1977) attributed to "institutions controlled by those whom we do not know and whose values we often do not share" (1977:7). The principle of local empowerment is that the Government and public policy give more recognition, respect and involvement to satellite institutions. Yet empowerment, as assumed by Berger and Neuhaus (1977) and Bennett et al (1994) two writers in this field, has two interpretations in the area of local empowerment. The first, as stated above is the extending of responsibility and prominence to the local branches; the second involves, through the aforementioned process, the empowerment of the population. In effect this latter usage of "empowerment", as in the case of the North American communities discussed earlier, describes the way in which a pluralist society can reach out and touch all groups within it - empowering the minorities. As Berger and Neuhaus write, "the paradigm of mediating structures aims at empowering poor people to do the things that the more affluent can already do, aims at spreading the power around a bit more...and to do so where it matters, in people's control over their own lives" (1977: 8).

A recent example of local empowerment in Britain is the handling of training and enterprise. The Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs), and their Scottish counterpart the LECs, are local agencies which are part-funded by local businesses. Their initial aim was to empower business leaders by giving them responsibility for developing a strategy for Government training. They also potentially gave businesses the opportunity to play a major role in the wider economic development of local areas. The ideals were sound but Bennett et al (1994) report that the TECs had not received as much power as had been promised. The authors write that due to the economy and other overriding factors, the councils were trammelled to central targets rather than being empowered locally. Boards of the TECs found themselves working as fund allocators rather than developing training strategies. "Business empowerment has become largely a sham" (1994: 314) wrote Bennett et al on the situation and urged

that a rescue package was needed. The problem, here, seems to be one that will always face public policy and the devolvement of government. The use of public funds and the involvement of ministers creates a dependency that negates true empowerment, business flair is clipped by public accountability and there is little local flexibility. Perhaps one could equate this with empowerment of employees where the imposition of constraints within which employees must work limits their potential flair and reduces a true feeling of "empowerment". Yet, it could be argued that constraints are inevitable in business, as in other areas of life, and that through a clear understanding of why these constraints are imposed, the disempowering factor is removed.

The final level of empowerment in the political literature is that of the individual. In recent years in the United Kingdom, and other Western countries, the power of the individual has become central to many Government policies. The advent of consumerism has instilled a "right to choose" ethos into the British public and this is reflected in, for instance, the Citizens' Charter whereby every public service must reach certain standards of service or the customer's money is returned. This power of the consumer has most recently been reflected in the introduction of a voucher scheme for Nursery School places and a Patients' Charter for Children (proposed on 15th August 1995). The example of Patient empowerment is an interesting one. It potentially creates a system of accountability and leads to an improvement in the patients' situation within service delivery procedures. Saltman (1994) focuses on the issue of empowering patients within public health systems, basing his research on those in northern Europe. He contends that empowerment is a continuum which is "characterized by the change from moral suasion...through formal political control...to countervailing power" (1994: 203). This final point of the continuum is defined as the ability to control one's own destiny and differs greatly from the request to be heard which is moral suasion. Saltman claimed that it requires changes at the most concrete stage to transform the role of patients to anywhere close to this furthest position on the continuum.

The real need is to create a system of accountability, argues the author, which will improve the quality of care which a health service provides through the achievement of shorter queues; punctual appointments; provision of information and education; and direct participation in treatment patterns. How this system of accountability is achieved caused some problems for Saltman. He sees that there are two choices but that neither will improve accountability, in fact he argues that both will reduce it. The first alternative is the privatisation of the service which may lead to improved profitability but which, as in the United States, turns a social good into a private commodity. Saltman rejects this idea and insists that whatever is done to improve accountability it should be done in the public sector. The second alternative is the use of vouchers, which Saltman does sees as neither accountable nor practical as the health service would be motivated to provide fewer services to get a higher net return on fixed-price voucher payments. What are needed, concludes Saltman, are more sophisticated mechanisms to bring budgets in line with patient decision making. Rather than directly empowering the individual patient, the present system in the United Kingdom of "National Health Service Trusts" might be seen to more closely resemble the second level of empowerment. That is, the introduction of Trusts which work autonomously with NHS grants are locally empowered. They are still essentially under Government control and, hence, face all the problems of TECs which were highlighted above.

Overall, the use of "empowerment" in the political literature can be seen to relate to the existence of, and problems with, Governmental control within a pluralist society. In a modern society there are many tensions and oppressions which must be tackled but not through the politics of resentment. As has been emphasized throughout this review, empowerment is not the shifting around of a constant amount of power rather it is the creation of more power, as Saltman wrote, "empowerment is not a zero-sum game." (1994: 8). Such an approach would mirror the positive-sum, 'win-win' approach which was proposed by Dunlop (1958) in his Industrial Relations System model. Dunlop perceived power as an exogenous variable to the system rather than Traditional Labour Process theorists who considered power to be endogenous to the relationship between unions and management. This perspective, which centres around

a common interest of survival, is reflected in the new unitarism (Provis, 1996) of which the contemporary empowerment initiatives is argued to be a part.

Conclusion of Empowerment in Non-Management Disciplines

From a comprehensive review of the use of the term "empowerment" across disciplines, it would seem that the underlying interpretation of the word is one of mobilising the oppressed by helping them believe in themselves, increasing their self-efficacy and, hence, motivating them to work towards equality. However, it was surprising to read that Yeich and Levine (1992), despite actually adopting this definition themselves, believed that the more typical definition described empowerment, "as a process of helping people adapt to the existing culture" (1992: 1895). They justify this claim by stating that the majority of empowerment literature focuses on the individual which does not take into account the wider structural forces, and involves a "component of victim blaming" (1992: 1895).

This dismissal of the role of the individual in empowerment is short-sighted. The literature reviewed here talks of the importance of individuals who through their changing attitudes become more receptive to social action. Indeed, one might further conceptualise that empowerment is both objective and subjective and that the level of the individual is essential for personalising the wider, objective issues (labelled 'advocacy' in the Community Care literature). Indeed, Craig and Steinhoff (1990) write that unless individuals perceive a change in their environment then empowerment can not be seen to have taken place: "Individuals or groups that do not perceive that real power has been delegated are not empowered. They may hear the words but...when they see that the behaviour is not consistent with the words they rarely believe that empowerment has occurred" (1990: 50). Throughout this review, empowerment has been portrayed as a proactive process or a goal for equity. Hence, the definition claimed by Yeich and Levine (1992) as typical is not reflected in this literature nor, in conclusion, is it accepted as accurate.

From this review, some interesting aspects of empowerment have arisen. Firstly, the literature on women brought forward the theory that there are two concepts of

empowerment: intellectual and experiential. This is demonstrated in the literature by the examples of Bangladesh and Japan whereby the women feel empowered but their social status is somewhat static due to the forces of resistance. Finally, the plight of black women, reminds us that within any oppressed group there is diversity and that this must be addressed.

Secondly, the case of minority groups demonstrated that, even if skills are gained and goals are met through self-knowledge, there is always the danger that attitudes are so deep-rooted that any attempt at empowerment will never be more than superficial. This also appears to follow the theory of a dual concept of empowerment which arose in the women's literature, and which is discussed above. It is the idea that those in positions of superiority need to encourage the creation of power in the oppressed and not block empowerment through an abuse of their dominant position. The tendency to do otherwise may occur out of fear, indeed in the case of organisational empowerment many managers seem fearful of allowing employees greater freedom. In essence, it is a matter of trust in the intentions of all those involved in the empowerment process. As Friedmann writes, the search for empowerment amongst the oppressed is not a mission to take over but rather to gain equal treatment. "The empowerment they seek is not to seize the state. Their demand is for social justice and a respectful treatment as citizens with equal rights" (1992: 760).

The educational literature returns to the idea that empowerment is both an individual and social process. At the individual level empowerment is said to be substantive, as demonstrated in the case study of the illiterate, "in the process of learning that there are names, the human begins to feel power" (Courts, 1991: 13). Yet, on a more social basis, the fear is that education which is said to be empowering is often manipulated to reassert the control of the dominant group and is, in that way, symbolic.

Empowerment has been adopted frequently in the Community Care literature. The linking of the term with advocacy reminds us again of the objective and subjective nature of this process. The need for empathy was also emphasised here. Rather than merely questioning the users, workers were encouraged to make the user feel that they

are the expert of the situation and to ask them what they see as the best way forward. This has particular applications for the case of employee empowerment. If managers demand answers from their employees with the intention of drawing their own conclusions anyway, this process has to be disempowering. If, instead, managers treat the employee as an expert and genuinely seek their advice, the outcome is likely to be far more satisfactory. However, yet again the literature addresses the problem of external barriers to empowerment. Stevenson and Parsloe refer to the "islands of empowerment" (1993: 14) which are created in a much wider sea of oppression.

The final discipline considered in this review was politics. It was claimed that although revolution could bring a dissident group to power it was not necessarily empowering. Again, this reiterates the objective and subjective nature of the term. The literature also supported the idea that power is not a zero-sum game and that by helping the oppressed assume power, the oppressors are actually creating more power in the environment rather than losing any themselves. This is a theory often brought to the attention of apprehensive mangers who fear and resist the concept of empowerment.

Overall, the impression which exists and which might best form a starting point for the consideration of organisational empowerment, is that empowerment is both a process and a goal which acts at the individual level to increase self-efficacy. It allows the formation of dissident groups which individuals, through their increased self-knowledge, have recognised as holding a greater authenticity for them than the dominant culture. In this sense, the aim of empowerment appears to be the gaining of equality through these groups rather than ultimate power and control and, yet, it faces resistance from a fearful and untrusting dominant culture.

Under this assumption, Trade Unions would appear to be the dissident groups which strive for equality in the workplace. But the relationship between the Unions and "empowerment" are more complicated. Since 1979, Trade Unions have undergone dramatic change. As previously discussed, the legislation brought in by the Conservative Government has sought to individualise the workplace, placing power

more firmly in the hands of management and decreasing the power of collective labour. In response, the Unions have been forced to alter their strategy. The mere changing of the law back to its position pre-1979 is not the answer according to Green (1986), unions must look elsewhere to change their current position, which might be termed as one of oppression. In the view of Boreham and Hall (1994) this change will not come from individual empowerment, which they tend to see as another management practice aimed at invidualising the workplace but through "political unionism". "The hypothesis upon which our analysis focuses" they wrote, "is that the collective empowerment of labour, through trade union strength, is much more likely to be able to be effectively deployed in political institutions than in the direct empowerment of individuals at the level of the enterprise labour process" (1994: 314).

It is worrying, considering the case studies of Greene County and the Chicanos, that Trade Unions are being advised to seek empowerment in this way. These examples demonstrated that political empowerment tends to bring only superficial results failing to tackle the more rigid problems such as attitudes. The Unions might do well to adopt the model proposed by Friedmann (discussed earlier) which seeks empowerment from social, political and psychological sources.

Overall, the issue of empowerment in the workplace involves the consideration of objective and subjective, individual and collective issues. Firstly, is the aim of management really one of empowerment or of oppression? Indeed, Willmott (1993) argues that management secure control of employees through "double-think", that is that organizations lead employees to believe that by adhering to corporate values they will enjoy greater autonomy. Hence, if management are not truly altruistic in their motives and resist 'real' empowerment, will initiatives only achieve results at the transitional stage, where intellectual empowerment does not equal experiential empowerment and employees are not, in terms of the definitions used in the non-management literature, empowered?

CONCLUSION

"When I hear the word empowerment, I reach for my gun. It's like new bottles for old wine"

Bernard Taylor, a Professor at Henley Management College (Osbaldeston, 1993)

This statement echoes the many sighs and eyebrow raises which occur when "empowerment" is mentioned. Through its association with management gurus (Byham, 1988; Peters, 1989), "empowerment" has aquired a buzz-word quality which leads many to use it superficially or ignore it altogether (Clutterbuck, 1994).This chapter has set out the arguments which surround the conceptualization of empowerment and whilst the researcher wishes to avoid being constrained by developing a boxed definition of the term, which is seen as "impracticable and probably undesirable" (Clutterbuck, 1994: 9), it is hoped that this conclusion will set empowerment in its management context and allow the reader to appreciate, based on this context, the theories and debates which lie behind the definitions of empowerment which individual organizations choose to make. For, as will be evident in the next chapter, there are almost as many definitions of empowerment as there are organizations who adopt it, and for employees, the only definition which is meaningful is that which is ascribed by their organization (Clutterbuck and Newmark, 1995). Yet, similarly, employees will draw on their own experience when interpreting empowerment and their expectations are likely to be framed by the wider social usage of the term.

The discourse which surrounds Human Resource Management and "Empowerment" may further confuse the definitions which are adopted by the organizational players. Recent philosophising (Legge, 1989; Keenoy, 1990) by management academics, has suggested that whilst empowerment and HRM are essentially modernist approaches to work, they are postmodernist in their use of discourse. Essentially, therefore, it is argued that the "brilliant ambiguity" (Keenoy) which surrounds HRM and the binary oppositions which the language possesses indicates a postmodernist approach. Indeed, in the discussion of empowerment across non-management disciplines, it appears that

'empowerment' has revolutionary connotations, that it is a process by which the oppressed may become free. In this way it transfers an almost Pentecostalist dimension to the term (Ackers and Preston, 1995) in that it suggests that, through the adoption of some intangible spirit, utopian dreams can be realised. It must be seen as interesting that much of the 'evangelical' work in recent management literature, uses these somewhat left-wing, radical terms such as "Liberation Management" (Peters, 1992) and "empowerment" to describe right-wing management practices. Hence, the use of such terms presents inherent contradictions which are embedded not only in discourse but also in practice (see Chapter Three).

So, is empowerment new bottles for old wine? To answer this, one must return to the discussion of the relationships between "empowerment" and "employee involvement". In this research, the two terms are not considered synonymous because empowerment appears to be more directed at culture/attitude change than employee involvement per se and is introduced as a distinct policy in many organizations. Nor, in this research, is empowerment seen as some advanced form of employee involvement - the ultimate goal of participative techniques. Indeed, this fails to take into account the failure of many empowerment programmes to make a difference to employee attitudes (Rothstein, 1995). However, it is common to see empowerment introduced into organizations which have existing quality and employee involvement programmes or who tie in empowerment initiaitives within existing quality frameworks (Lowe, 1994; Forrest, 1995). Hence, it appears that there may be some support for Watson's wave theory which suggests that initiatives clash and combine, leaving ambiguous distinctions between the policies.

The fact that empowerment is more than just a programme introduced by managers is important in the development of empowerment as a concept. In the consideration of the use of empowerment across disciplines, the researcher noted that empowerment is related to a bottom-up feeling of enhancement amongst individuals. However, this research will not treat empowerment solely as some form of psychological product of ordinary employee involvement techniques (Conger and Kanungo, 1988; Fenton O'Creevy, 1996). This is due to the fact that, as the subsequent chapter reveals,

"empowerment" initiatives involve the use of different forms of training; require different results; and face some very different problems from such existing involvement programmes. Hence, for the purposes of this research, 'empowerment' will relate only to those initiatives which use the term directly or, if the term is intentionally avoided, where management claim that the programme is derived from empowerment principles. However, it is unlikely that the effects of other policies can be eliminated from this research and that a psychological 'feeling' of empowerment may well result from traditional employee involvement techniques.

The motivational definitions of empowerment, suggested by Conger and Kanungo (1988), imply that the initiative may well be old wine in new bottles, but that the wine may not be Quality Circles or other forms of employee involvement but the ideals of the Quality of Working Life movement which has a very humanistic appeal. In this sense, the rhetoric of empowerment appears to represent a move away from defined specific techniques, which acted as mere add-ons to other management policies (Marchington et al, 1992) towards something which is more far-reaching and deeper. Indeed, the belief that empowerment is directed at feelings of enhancement and self-efficacy implies that management are introducing such policies for the benefit of employees. However, there do appear to be aspects of both empowerment and the Quality of Working Life movement, which cast this assumption into doubt. Firstly, as was mentioned earlier, the quality of working life programmes were not purely altruistic, the intentions of such programmes were to reduce the absenteeism and labour turnover characteristic of 1970s Britain and were directed at problematic work groups. The initiatives of the 1990s are more strategic and follow large structural changes in organizations, such that the aim of empowerment policies in this sense is to make workers more autonomous partly because they have no choice, as the organization becomes more streamlined and the prevalence of middle managers declines, and partly so that reactions to customers can be made more quickly and effectively. So, whilst both policies may be targeted at the development of positive feelings of employees, this is not necessarily for the primary benefit of employees. The use of "evangelical" terms which represent the "hyper-real" (Legge, 1995 referring to Baudrillard, 1981, 1983) can, through the use of imagery, shift people's

perceptions from the mundane reality - the 'hard' side of HRM to the 'softer' more acceptable side. In this way, actors throughout the organization could use empowerment and HRM as a rhetoric to represent a shift in thinking whilst mundane reality covertly continues in much the same way. This returns one to the importance of management intentions, and the radical zero-sum perspective on power which would imply that empowerment is not intended to make workers more autonomous or more satisfied in their work but that it is a form of exploitation.

In this research a contingency approach will be taken to empowerment (Hill and Wilkinson, 1995). This supposes that empowerment will differ across sector, organization and even within organizations depending upon the context within which it is introduced. As discussed, whilst some organizations may be introducing empowerment to improve employee satisfaction, others will not be and, those who do introduce empowerment for seemingly altruistic reasons, may have their own further motives for boosting employee perception scores et cetera. Hence, whilst it is not accepted in this research that empowerment is primarily a form of exploitation, there is an acknowledgement that contextual factors may create organizational circumstances which resemble such exploitation and that, therefore, one can not draw a general view but consider the policies only as they stand in their own context.

In conclusion, then, the term "empowerment" might be treated in this research as a unitarist attempt to remove oppressive techniques within organizations with the intention of instilling some feeling of enablement amongst workers but not necessarily with that end. Indeed, if one takes a post-modernist stance to empowerment, then the importance of "empowerment" lies not with the intentions of those who introduce it (except to the extent that it affects their perceptions) but with those who receive the policy and the meanings which they place upon it. Moreover, it is likely that this is affected by orientations to work and other life experiences as well as personality characteristics. In this case, then, the actual management programme of "empowerment" will differ from employees' perceptions of what it is "to be empowered" and that these will further differ between employees. Therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, "to be empowered" and "empowerment" will remain distinct.

The former will refer to the belief of individuals that their expectations of empowerment have been met, whilst the latter will be attributed to the actual management programme itself. The conceptualizations here remain broad and unspecific to allow for the contingent effects of both individual employees, organizational context and their relationship with each other. For, these are seen as contributing to the fact that, as Walsh writes, "rhetoric is often at odds with the reality of management change" (1995:83). It is to the contextual factors, which affect this relationship between rhetoric and reality, that this literature review now turns.

CHAPTER THREE: The Organizational Concept of Empowerment

"The whole idea of empowerment means easing back on organisational and hierarchical controls but being tougher on failure to discharge given responsibilities. This is not a comfortable way of organising or working"

Sir John Harvey Jones (1994) All Together Now p149.

INTRODUCTION

The following chapter looks at the characteristics of empowerment in the workplace. It seeks to question why organizations introduce empowerment and what form the policies take. In doing so, the chapter examines the common features of empowerment across organizations, such as the role of middle managers as "coaches", and at some of the reasons for differences, like the effects of organizational sector. Having considered empowerment in this somewhat rhetorical form, the chapter examines the identified barriers to empowerment, concluding that the success of empowerment will, in part, be contingent on how well organizations overcome these barriers in the implementation and maintenance of such programmes. Hence, this chapter looks at the more structural and sociological aspects of empowerment focusing primarily on the collective organization, preceding the consideration of individuals' perceptions of empowerment in Chapter Four.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ORGANIZATIONAL EMPOWERMENT

Research conducted by *The Industrial Society* in late 1994 (The Industrial Society, 1995) found that 55%, of the 580 HR directors surveyed described their organization as "traditional" with only 19% describing theirs as "empowering". However, they found that there was a clear shift occurring towards empowerment-style policies with only 24% of the respondents stating that they thought their organization would be "traditional" in two or three years time and 56% believing they would be "empowering". In the same survey it emerged that the majority of organizations actually used the term empowerment to describe their initiative. 50% of HR directors

stated that empowerment was actively used in their organization whilst 23% either stated that empowerment was merely something they did but did not actively label or that they used another term to describe it. So, from this research, the question emerges, why are companies moving towards this new style of management and what are its characteristics? Of course, it is worth noting here that the majority of the literature which follows is based on management views and, therefore, this may tell us more about the management ideology they are trying to present than the reality.

Introducing Empowerment

The Industrial Society's findings, outlined above, suggest that there is an increasing shift towards the adoption of empowerment policies in the UK and, this is confirmed in a more in-depth study by Lowe (1994) who found that 97% of his sample of 33 HR directors saw empowerment as being of high importance to their business success. Reasons for this move towards empowering policies are varied. In his same study, Lowe found that customer focus, employee satisfaction and global competition were driving the need for change and this was confirmed by Kinsley Lord (1992) who published a monograph which stated that command organizations were too centralised, less quick and less effective than modern empowering forms of decision making. This viewpoint was further reiterated by Johnson (1992) who wrote that the true function of management must be, "to help companies respond to the real imperatives of global competition - responsiveness and flexibility...these imperatives are achieved by companies that empower employees to solve problems and to improve constantly the output of processes" (1992: viii). Osbaldeston (1993) acknowledged that the effects of customers and competition were important but also stated that he believes the decreasing acceptance by staff of command and control methods and the need to develop and reveal management talent also contributed to this shift towards empowerment policies. Indeed, *The Industrial Society* found that 68% of those surveyed stated that empowerment was introduced to make better use of people's skills; 51% for better customer service; 39% to react quicker to change and 38% to save money/ increase productivity.

These drivers are not universal, however, and organizations will differ over their reasons for the introduction of empowerment. For some organizations it appears that this new organizational thinking is part of a long-term strategic change which involves transformations of the hierarchical structure, rather than a short-term reaction to immediate problems. Lowe found that 78% of the empowerment initiatives he studied had followed reductions in employee numbers and, whilst this is the case for many organizations, it is seen by some, such as Thresher, as a proactive rather than reactive move. Arkin (1995) in her discussion of the drinks retailing business, which sought to become more responsive to their customers in order to remain competitive, quoted the human resources controller as saying of its empowerment programme, "unlike a lot of change programmes, this was not a reaction to a downturn in financial performance. So the project was strategic and long-term rather than a quick fix, because no quick fix was needed" (1995:35). For others the move towards empowerment may be more reactive to organizational pressures, as the owner and President of the Cin-Made Corporation, Ohio stated, "I had no choice because the company was close to failure, and I was overwhelmed and exhausted" (Frey, 1993: 80), he went on, "the workers...were better qualified to plan production for the next day, the coming week, the month ahead. They had more immediate knowledge of materials, workload and production. They were ideally placed to control costs and cut waste" (1993: 84). This imperative to 'involve' employees at a time when organizations are threatened by market forces has been termed "lifeboat democracy" (Cressey et al, 1985).

There is evidence that a substantial number of empowerment initiatives are introduced following the appointment of a new Chief Executive. In the study by *The Industrial Society* 29% of initiatives followed the employment of a new Chief Executive, a phenomenon which the authors call "the new-broom factor". However, for 63% this was not the case and there is additional evidence that such policies may commonly emanate from "internal champions" in the personnel function (Marchington et al, 1993). A slightly different picture is derived from the HR directors surveyed by Lowe, of whom 63% identified empowerment as a board-level or senior management initiative whilst the remaining 37% stated that the initiative

was a board/ senior level initiative combined with demands and/ or suggestions from those at lower levels of the organization. It also appears that moves towards empowerment, as with other Employee Involvement initiatives, are heavily influenced by external consultants (Pickard, 1993) who offer various courses and training programmes directly related to the new phenomenon of empowerment. As Nixon (1995:38) writes, "In starting things off, it may be particularly helpful to have the guiding hand of an external consultant who has travelled this route before, made most of the worst mistakes, who can help avoid pitfalls, and who is able to convince the organization that the time and resources devoted to this work will bring an enormous pay off".

Clutterbuck and Newmark (1995) write that it is essential that, from the outset, everyone is clear of the objectives of the vision which the organization has and how empowerment contributes to it. They list seven "golden rules" which should apply to the introduction of empowerment which include being clear what the organization means by empowerment, and being honest about why. They state that it is important that, from the launch of the initiative, there is an acceptance that some resistance may occur, a viewpoint shared by Kahnweiler who writes that, "Before efforts begin, ...people should alert everyone in the organization that there probably will be a dip in performance at first. A warning can help to mitigate negative reactions" (1991: 74).

Managers as coaches

"Perhaps the most distinctive feature of empowerment is that a fully 'empowered' organization requires a fundamental shift in the day-to-day job of the line manager or supervisor" (Lowe, 1994: 45). This section analyses the nature of the changes which Lowe talks of in the statement above. The researcher acknowledges the large amount of literature on this subject, particularly on the "manager or leader" debate (for example, see: Burke, 1986), but since the behaviour of managers is just one factor in the contextual framework of empowerment, only the central issues of managers' empowerment roles will be covered here. For the purposes of this research, the researcher uses the term "middle managers" to encapsulate a range of roles from first-line supervisors to department managers. This distinction has been made for two

reasons. Firstly, the decision to include first-line supervisors in this broad category is due to the fact that, although first line supervisors and middle managers are often treated separately in the literature, there is evidence that their roles are being affected in similar ways by empowerment (Fenton O'Creevy, 1996). Additionally, the loss of many levels of middle management in recent years, means that organizations will have less distinct management levels and that they will vary greatly in terms of size and structure. Secondly, middle managers are separated from senior managers, an assumption which goes against both orthodox labour process theory and classical economics which see management as a single, unified agent. The concept that management goals may differ from each other was highlighted by Dahrendorf (1959) in his work *"Class and Class Conflict in Industrial Society"* where he described the salaried management stratum as having its own distinctive interests and values. However, in the 'Enterprise Culture' since 1979 senior business executives have become more unitarist (Fox, 1966) in their outlook and, hence, less tolerant of managers (and employees) having separate interests and representation. One might hypothesise that in this move back towards an overtly united management, the differences in status, values and loyalty have merely become more covert, driven beneath the surface. Indeed, there still remains a clear range of roles within organizations which might be termed "middle management" and it is these which the researcher encapsulates under this heading.

It is likely that the background and status of these middle managers will vary according to the organization. There are those, like supervisors and colliery deputies (Ackers, 1994), who have risen from the shop floor and 'hit a glass ceiling', whilst in larger, more complex organizations there are those who enter at a middle management level with ambitions for promotion. In both cases, however, the role of middle management as a "filter" (Foy,1994) between senior management and employees remains. Indeed, the importance of middle management involvement is highlighted by Partridge (1989) who wrote that, "the uniqueness of the supervisors' position is that they are located at the interface of the management control system and the shopfloor: they are the ones who have to translate plans and policies into action" (1989: 213). This is accentuated in the case of empowerment where middle managers

have a pivotal role as, not only must middle managers interpret policy, but they must also create an atmosphere whereby empowerment is able to take place. It has been hypothesised that such an atmosphere can be created by changing middle management behaviour, indeed London (1993) and Parker and Price (1994) demonstrated that relationships exist between supervisors' empowering characteristics and career motivation in staff.

As Lowe concluded, in the opening statement of this section, the success, or otherwise, of empowerment relies heavily on line and middle management attitudes and behaviour. Yet, he found that only 43% of the organizations surveyed involved middle/line managers to a very large extent in their empowerment policy with 32% involving them to a moderate extent and 25% to a small extent. Hence it seems that, as in the case of employee involvement practices (Marchington et al, 1992), empowerment is effectively being "dumped" on middle managers who then have to almost create their own role (Denham et al, 1997). As to the type of management involvement which empowerment necessitates, Lowe found that 89% of organizations saw managers' roles as involving "coaching"; 86% as involving "sponsoring subordinate projects" and 57% as "facilitating suggestion programmes/Quality Circles". In the study conducted by The Industrial Society (1995), a distinction was made between changes involved in the jobs of team leaders/supervisors and middle managers. However, with the exception of "involvement in day-to-day matters" - which saw 33% of middle managers perceived as lessening this involvement as opposed to only 7% of supervisors - the results were fairly similar. In both cases the three most important changes were: "more emphasis on supporting staff, rather than controlling"; "more emphasis on training and developing staff"; and "more emphasis on communication".

The new role, therefore, of the manager in empowerment is outlined by Block (1990) who states that, "If we want to empower people - to get them to take responsibility for their own actions and the success of their own units - we have to give up some control, de-emphasize the power we have over people under us and acknowledge that while the captain may set the course, the engines drive the ship" (1990: 52). Hence, as

the studies by Lowe and The Industrial Society show, managers must move away from their previous role as a "prescriber" and a technical expert to that of a "coach", defined by Evered and Selman as "creating, by communication only, the climate, environment and context that empowers individuals and teams to generate results" (1989:18). Indeed, in her discussion of empowerment within Ciba UK, Pickard states that, "There are still 'workers' and 'supervisors', but their relationship has changed. As in other empowered workplaces, the supervisor no longer commands and checks: he or she coaches, discusses and assesses training needs" (1993: 31).

Overall, it seems that managers should change not only their behaviour but their attitude too. As Peters (1988) claims, empowerment is the difference between "letting go" and "really letting go" which involves a distancing from tasks geographically and psychologically. Additionally, the need for a change in attitudes is exemplified by the much cited "Pygmalion Effect" (Oddey, 1993; Nicholls, 1995) which states that people behave in accordance with others' expectations of them. If managers attitudes towards workers are positive then it is more likely that employees will, in turn, work positively to meet such expectations. This is the basis of McGregor's theory of managers, whilst the old command and control manager (Theory X) assumes that the average human being has an inherent dislike of work, Theory Y suggests that managers have positive expectations of their workers, "its underlying assumptions emphasize the capacity of human beings for self-control" (1960:56). There is evidence that gender may affect the ability of managers to succeed in such a role, and that women make more empowering managers (Bass and Avolio, 1994; Jenkins, 1994; Denmark, 1993). These findings centre on two arguments: firstly, that women possess leadership styles that are more compatible with empowerment; and/or that women redress their feelings of inequality in the workplace by devoting time to empower others. In conclusion, then, empowerment requires managers to both change their role to one of coaching and delegating whilst acknowledging that their staff are capable of making positive changes themselves. As Scott and Jaffe wrote, "It takes more than a few meetings or a crash programme to develop employee involvement and empowerment. It involves both managers and employees rethinking old ways and learning new ones" (1991: 9).

Training

In their study, *The Industrial Society* found that empowerment training was not as high on the agenda for organizations as one might suppose. 48% of the organizations studied had given training to first line supervisors; 42% to middle managers; 37% to senior managers; and only 34% had given empowerment training to front line staff. At all levels they found that this training was likely to last 2-3 days with 19% of front line staff being given "up to one day" for training. This reality clashes with the rhetoric for, as Lowe wrote, "it is incumbent upon any organization seeking to empower individuals to ensure that those individuals each have the skills and knowledge needed to carry out their new responsibilities. As such one would expect to see regular and targeted training carried out in organizations who take empowerment seriously" (1994: 29).

Empowerment training may take many forms. Lowe talked of one organization which runs a two year development programme for new employees, training them in all aspects of the business, such as finance and marketing, in order to give their employees a wider understanding of the implications of their jobs. Other organizations train senior managers and then cascade the responsibility for training the lower levels downwards. For instance, in Rover Group Power Train, teams are trained in job skills, team interaction, and problem solving techniques. "It is important that the production managers take the responsibility for the training of their teams", wrote Mike Arthur, the personnel planning manager at Rover, "to be effective training has to be provided close to the point of time that the skill is required, and the local manager is in the best position to make this decision" (1994: 63). In Ciba UK a similar process of training occurs, whereby senior management seminars are held to transmit the vision and these ideas are cascaded downwards. The approaches to empowerment within Ciba UK can, therefore, be quite different, "the process of dissemination has had the effect that, two years on, empowerment can differ between business units and even between different production or marketing centres" (Pickard, 1993: 30). Whilst this is true of other Quality initiatives and employee involvement techniques (Marchington et al, 1992), the devolvement of responsibility to units,

which is inherent to many policies, accentuates the differences between operating units.

Oddey argues that training is not the answer to creating an empowered workforce, "empowered people....are competent and committed", he wrote, "training directly enhances only competence (knowledge and skill)" (1993: 8). However, although training is clearly not the total answer, some form of training staff to take on the skills needed at every level for empowerment is needed. "Nothing is more demotivating or disempowering", wrote Caudron, "than being stopped in your tracks because you either don't know how to proceed or lack the tools necessary to do a good job" (1995: 32). Overall, then, it would seem that some form of training is crucial to empowerment but not to the exclusion of other practices, and that some form of strategic form of training programme to support such other aspects of empowerment might be the best solution. Two writers on empowerment who have set about devising frameworks for empowerment training are Nixon and Nicholls but they differ quite dramatically in their methods and objectives. Nixon (1994) advocates a top-down training method which seeks to facilitate empowerment through workshops and problem solving rather than teaching a menu of skills. However, although not totally ignoring the plight of front line staff, Nixon merely states, "if the initiative is to really work, it has to go right down to the core workers at the 'bottom' of the organization. We are a long way from achieving this" (1994: 11). Nicholls (1995: 2) takes a bottom-up approach to training suggesting that, "setting more modest objectives and getting the basics right first, before going on to the big picture" might work better. He sees the manager as trainer and envisages a three-stage framework where the manager enables the workers to reach their potential and then creates commitment through involving the workers in their success and creating a sense of excitement which will infiltrate throughout the organization. Despite the fact that Nicholls's framework is attractive, it does not seem to reflect the practice of training which has been highlighted in this section. One has to presume that it is a top-down approach which is the more common training programme adopted in practice, in part because of the evidence that most initiatives are devised at senior levels. In this sense, empowerment

resembles the direction of Total Quality Management implementation rather than the more "bottom-up", voluntarist approach of Quality Circles (Wilkinson et al, 1992).

Changes to work methods and orientation

In their study, The Industrial Society found that the most general change (identified by 64% of the respondents) which has occurred amongst organizations during the process of empowerment is "the clarification of vision/values". 60% reported that better employee communications had been set up; 54% that they had reduced the layers of management; with only 37% indicating the introduction of self-managed work teams (the sole participative technique mentioned). In the same study, questions regarding the main constituents of the organizations' empowerment programmes brought similar results: 60% identified clarification of goals, 59% changing structure, 57% reported conducting a communication exercise, with 37% tying it in to a total quality programme and 34% tying it in to *Investors In People*. Indeed, the Industrial Society concluded that, "the replies suggest that a typical empowerment initiative will have these basic elements: vision/value setting; restructuring [possibly involving job loss]; training; employee communication; evaluation [such as a customer survey]" (1995: 13).

However, in his study, Lowe found that training needs analysis and skills training are the most prevalent constituents of empowerment policies (94% and 82% respectively) with job guarantee schemes the least prevalent, in fact they were not included by any of the organizations sampled. Other important factors identified by Lowe are performance management; continuous improvement; and competency assessment. These all identify how the organization might best work effectively and in which ways employees can contribute to maximum effect. Suggestion programmes, Quality Circles and self-directed work teams were all less prevalent (55%, 36% and 31% respectively). One exception to this priority given to more cultural changes, is the finding by Cunningham et al (1996) that in their study of 13 "empowering" organizations: "in each case the suggestion scheme forms a substantial part of the organization's empowerment programme" (1996: 148). Hence, it would seem from these two studies that, empowerment in the UK is more tied in to organizational

strategy and less concerned with participative management techniques than typical forms of employee involvement, perhaps sharing more in common with TQM and Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) than employee involvement per se. Additionally, it would appear that it is openly portrayed as such. It appears to be more about sharing information (Foy, 1994) and reducing barriers than industrial democracy and getting one's voice heard. This ties in with Kinsley Lord's discussion of empowerment which states that, "the key is that people must understand not merely the rules, but the purpose behind them. Then rules are no longer rules but best practice, gladly embraced and improved daily by the valued experience of those who operate them" (1992: 5). In this sense, employees are able to make informed decisions and to take initiative whilst harbouring an awareness of the consequences, both positive and negative, for themselves and the organization.

Teamwork appears to be central to the changes being made to the jobs of front line workers, 60% of the organizations sampled by The Industrial Society stated that more teamwork was a major change to employees' jobs since empowerment and this is mirrored in the management literature (Byham, 1988; Pickard, 1993; Arthur, 1994; Forrest, 1995; Caudron, 1995). Forrest writes that, "employees have to work as teams. In an empowered organization, the team becomes the natural focus for much of the work" (1995: 12). However, Plunkett and Fournier (1991) argue that it is the individual who is central to empowerment not the team and that teams might best be appropriate only in manufacturing jobs where multi-skilling and quality checks are most salient. The fact that the majority of organizations (48%) in the Industrial Society survey were in the manufacturing industry may explain why increases in teamwork were prevalent in their study (Millward et al, 1992) although it is acknowledged that teamwork is central to many non-manufacturing empowerment policies as well (e.g. Harvester as discussed by Pickard, 1993). The perspective taken by the researcher is that teamwork is a well-established and proven, but not essential, part of the empowerment process. As the Industrial Society wrote, "the average organization will typically be trying to empower individuals and teams simultaneously, rather than concentrating on one option or the other" (1995: 10).

Other changes to jobs at the front line which were identified in The Industrial Society survey were, in order of prevalence: a wider variety of tasks; better communication with management; more decision making authority; less close supervision; and better communication with other teams with 23% reporting that empowerment means more work at the front line level. It seems that the nature of empowerment differs according to the sector and type of organization which adopts it. In service industries, like Harvester, staff take on accountabilities including recruitment, drawing up rotas and keeping track of sales targets (Pickard, 1993); whereas in manufacturing industries, like Cummins Engine Company (Forrest, 1995) and Rover (Arthur, 1994), staff work on line based issues in order to improve productivity. In general, from this discussion, it seems that empowerment takes many forms in organizations with the general link being a greater degree of decision-making and ownership over the employees immediate job through a sharing of information and clarifying of organizational goals.

Working within Constraints

There appears to be a fear amongst many managers that empowerment is being interpreted as some form of anarchy, where employees can make their own decisions regardless of the cost. Indeed, Bowen and Lawler (1992) write of a doorman at the Four Seasons Hotel who took an overseas flight to return a briefcase left behind by a guest. Such stories might strike fear into managers who, after all, appear to be introducing empowerment in order to save money not spend it. For this reason, empowerment is often introduced within constraints, or, as Waterman (1988) terms it "directed autonomy". Waterman writes that, "In directed autonomy, people...are empowered...within a context of direction. People know what the boundaries are; they know where they should act on their own and where not. The boss knows that his or her job is to establish those boundaries, then truly get out of their way" (1988: 75). In a sense this concept of responsibility within constraints represents an identification of the tension between Friedman (1977)'s concepts of Direct Control and Responsible Autonomy. Moreover, this idea was analogized by Handy who states, "that ugly word 'empowerment' could better be interpreted as the doughnut principle at work" (1994: 67). The Doughnut principle, he explains, is characterised by the core of the doughnut

which is the necessary jobs which have to be done and the ring around it which represents an open flexible space where discretion can be used: "this dimension of job flex describes that area of the job where initiative is not only possible but, within an empowered environment, actively encouraged" (sic.) (Burdett, 1991: 26). It is important, Handy (1994: 68) stresses, to set these boundaries clearly for, "empowerment, in a sense, has gone too far. Without a boundary it is easy to be oppressed by guilt, for enough is never enough". Hence, he implies that constraints on empowerment are not only in the best interests of the organization but for the well-being of individual employees as well.

In Peters' (1988) distinction between "letting go" and really letting go" he stated that managers must impress, on those who do the tasks, the high standards held by the organization and the belief that they will complete the task well. He argued that really letting go differs from delegation in that, "the authority granted is real and significant, but it is matched by the psychological pressure to perform up to one's limits and to the highest standards" (1988: 453).This psychological pressure, to which Peters refers, coincides with one of the control levers identified by Simons (1995). Simons speculates that, in an age of empowerment, managers can not spend all their time making sure everyone is doing what is expected of them and that they must adopt four levers of control which harness employees' creativity. These levers are: diagnostic control systems; beliefs systems; boundary systems; and interactive control systems, each is directed at different aspects of employee potential: to achieve; to contribute; to do right; and to create, respectively.

It is 'belief systems' which resemble the core of "really letting go" as it is propounded by Peters (1988). Simons suggests that without managers' beliefs systems being explicit, employees will make assumptions regarding what constitutes acceptable behaviour rather than adopting the values of managers. He writes that organisational values and direction must be articulated clearly and should be deeply rooted in the actions of senior managers, a move which, the previously presented, Industrial Society research suggests is occurring. Using this form of control, along with feedback (diagnostic control), minimum standards (boundary systems), and paying

frequent attention to potential vulnerabilities (interactive control), allows management to maintain authority and prevent expensive mistakes without constant attention and surveillance.

So, it seems that many theorists agree that not only are constraints an acceptable part of an empowerment programme but that they can, in fact, be advantageous. In practice, however, there are some who do not agree with this assumption. David Crabtree, a warehousing and distribution manager at Ciba UK told Jane Pickard, "If you tell people they have the authority and responsibility to act on their initiative and pursue improvements as far as they can and you establish that within a rigid framework, then you don't really have empowerment do you?" (1993: 31). What is important, therefore, is that the constraints which are placed on empowerment are not "rigid" but are suitable for the individual and their tasks. For these to be set properly, Plunkett and Fournier suggest that it is the manager who should set the framework for his team, "the manager's job is to clearly define the arena of discretion and the arena of discretionary failure" (1991: 45).

Organizational Sector/Structure

This research looks at two organizations which both have their 'roots' in the Public Sector and, for this reason, the role of organizational sector is particularly important. Empowerment, as has been demonstrated in previous sections, is not a universal policy which can be implemented into every organization in more or less an identical form. It requires an understanding of the arena within which the organization works and the customers, both internal and external, to which it answers. Perhaps most interestingly over the past few years has been the adaptation of the Public Sector to market values and issues of quality. The distinction which can be drawn between Private and Public Sectors is particularly enlightening as it not only involves contextual issues of organizational sector but also of structure. Whilst most Private Sector organizations had rid themselves of bureaucratic structures during the competitive 1980s, Public Sector organizations have, more recently, been undergoing massive structural overhauls as well as introducing new management initiatives such as empowerment.

Several studies have looked at organizational change in the public sector and acknowledged that public sector organizations differ from private sector organizations in their features and purposes (Kirkpatrick and Lucio, 1995; Hartley et al, 1996; Benington and Taylor, 1993). Most notable of these differences, perhaps, are the significantly higher levels of unionisation in the Public Sector and the 'political' aspect to their work. Moreover, the necessary bureaucracy which remains in the Sector (even after recent changes, see below) means that the translation of private sector change initiatives such as quality, empowerment and HRM are not easily transferable (Storey, 1989). Indeed, Kinston (1994) stated that the "foundation of stability" on which the Public Sector is based means that, if relevant management cultures are not sustained to permit flexibility, the values of the culture can "degenerate into a bureaucratic nightmare". Storey, in a later work, states that often the mere "weight" of the existing values of the Public Sector leads to any new initiatives to be pushed to the fringes (Storey, 1992). The 'hard' side of recent changes in the Sector (see below) often mean that those in the Public Sector simply do not have the time or resources to invest in new management "fads", as Hutton writes, "there has been a considerable number of initiatives over the last decade with staff, inevitably, seeing them as an interference in their every day job" (1995: 149).

Indeed, over the past decade, public sector organizations have undergone radical changes, responding to the market system and becoming increasingly aware of their customers (especially since the introduction of the Citizen's Charter, 1991). Associated with these changes has been the de-centralization of some of the Central Office's power. Public bureaucracies have been disaggregated into agencies which have clarified the lines of accountability and responsibility. 70% of Central Government employees now work in these executive agencies set up by the "Next Steps" initiative and the current aim is to increase this percentage to 90%, with only the policy makers remaining in the Departments (Hutton, 1995). As a result of these changes, senior managers have become as focused on management and performance appraisal, new business tools which challenge the Public Sector's cultural values of hierarchy, as on policy (Hood, 1991). In response to such changes in the public

sector, the Treasury has, over the past five years, taken steps to transform their rules into guidelines and, as Lovell writes, "central departments are also willing to consider representations from departments and agencies on further delegations they might require" (1994: 163). Additionally, accompanying these changes during the 1980s and 1990s, the public sector has adopted notions of quality reflecting a belief in the superiority of the values and assumptions of private sector management (Keat and Abercrombie, 1991). The Citizen's Charter brought with it, not only a direct focus on customers, but also a way of measuring performance within the public sector and successful public organizations who meet or exceed their performance standards are awarded a Chartermark quality award on an annual basis. With this move to quality, several public sector organizations have introduced empowerment-type policies which aim to decentralize decision making, and in some cases budegetary control, to the lowest possible level. Yet empowerment, might in many ways, be seen as the antithesis of traditional public sector management. Firstly, it was epitomised by a classic Weberian bureaucracy (1947) which was highly graded, with a strong command structure answering to the centralised constraints of Whitehall and, secondly, its culture has long been associated with predictability, risk aversion and continuity.

Hence, as was demonstrated in previous sections, empowerment will differ according to the existing environment into which it is introduced. Particularly relevant must be the organization's previous culture, for this will shape the opinions and possible reactions of those who have to implement it and those who have to receive it. Despite the lessening of many of the constraints which characterize the civil service, there is still an awareness that it is run by tax payers money which necessitates more stringent financial constraints than are likely in the private sector and also more public scrutiny. This appears to have implications for the amount of discretion which can be devolved to lower levels. In conclusion, the success of empowerment is dependant, not only on how it is introduced, but also on the organizational context of the organizations which introduce it. Although this section has concentrated on the public/private sector dichotomy, the researcher is aware that there are numerous other distinctions between organizational context which may affect the success of

empowerment (e.g. geographical location, local employment situation, market share et cetera). However, the fact that both of the case-study organizations in this research originate in the Public Sector and the increasing movement of such organizations to adopt 'private sector' practices such as empowerment, makes this analysis of organizational sector particularly relevant.

BARRIERS TO EMPOWERMENT

> *"There are assumptions that supervisors can wave magic wands to effect change, and that these actions are not incompatible with other organizational decisions. Moreover, it is assumed that empowerment, involvement and teamworking are necessarily and unequivocally "good things", in which everyone in their right minds will want to participate. Unfortunately for the story, many of these assertions can not be taken for granted, and indeed some are built upon rather shaky and questionable foundations"*
>
> Mick Marchington, (1994: 3)

This section looks at the barriers to empowerment which contribute to the 'shakiness' of the assumptions that empowerment is necessarily a 'good thing' and, in doing so, explore the implication by Marchington that there is a clear gap between empowerment rhetoric and reality.

The Meaning Of Empowerment

It would seem from the discussions of subjectivity which emerged in Chapter Two that empowerment is a contested concept (Lukes, 1974) which gains its interpretation from the interests and goals of those who use it. For employees it promises a re-balance of power and a way of fighting the oppression which they see as existing in organisations, for management it promises a more committed and involved workforce who will take initiative within set constraints and see this as important to the profitability and success of the organization. The fact that the meaning of empowerment is open to misinterpretation was found by Claydon and Doyle who wrote that, "in our interviews with managers and employees it became clear that empowerment had not been articulated explicitly as company philosophy and it had not been presented in a programmatic way. Indeed, there was a reluctance on the part

of managers to employ the word in every day discourse. This reflected a feeling that its use might be a hostage to fortune due to a lack of precise definition, different meanings were attached to it by different individuals and a worry on the part of some about what it might be *seen* to mean" (1996: 17) (sic.). The innate subjectivity of empowerment allows these differing expectations to co-exist and to survive. Mintzberg (1978) found a similar problem when discussing the word "paradigm" which he described as "too vague to be pinned down so it pops up everywhere" (1978: 635). It would appear that this is occurring in the case of empowerment, its ambiguity causes it to be used liberally in different ways to mean different things. Yet, Keenoy and Anthony (1992) argue that a universal definition is not needed as, in the case of HRM, the ambiguity of policies are their strength, "the messages carried...are more important than the specific devices employed" (1992:235) and that to explain the messages, which are hypothesised as postmodernist discourse, would be to destroy their strength. This may be particularly true if one considers the literature on religious metaphors (Ackers and Preston, 1995; Kerfoot and Knights, 1995; Hopfl, 1992) which would argue that destroying the mysticism which policies like empowerment hold would lessen their power of conversion - "belief...is not based upon deconstructing theory or looking for proof, but on faith" (Noon, 1992: 29).

However, the literature suggests that if initially the ambiguity of empowerment is of benefit, this may be short-lived. MacInnes, in his study of consultation procedures, found that, in their early stages, many policies are "usually ill enough defined to command widespread support" (1985: 104) but that gradually it becomes apparent that they are not meeting the expectations of any of the parties involved. This was reiterated in an article in *The Financial Times* which read, "gather together any group of managers, shop floor workers or front line service employees. Plant the concept of 'empowerment' and stand well back. Wait for a burst of enthusiasm followed by clouds of confusion" (Lorenz, 1992). If we reconsider the analogy to religion, Ackers and Preston (1995) state that evangelical religion faces problems of 'backsliding' and 'routinisation' as spirits ebb. So, one might conclude, if empowerment offers little more than a vague culture change with no permanent or measurable benefits it, too, will fall victim to ebbing spirits. Empowerment in organizations ultimately comes up

against wider employee expectations of empowerment and of work which are based on previous experiences (see Chapter Four). Hence, the introduction of empowerment, unless clearly and precisely defined and unless it is backed up with action in the company, may well, on the basis of this evidence, build and reinforce differing expectations of the work relationship which will result in strong feelings of resentment and disappointment. As Plunkett and Fournier write, "attempts made on such a foundation of misunderstanding are unlikely to succeed and may well justify the sceptical attitudes that are embodied in the examples given of employee criticisms" (1991: 16).

Many organizations are recognizing this dilemma. For example, Microsoft's first empowerment programme failed because no clarity was given to the meaning of the term and it was replaced by a low profile programme which identified areas in which management felt they could realistically give employees responsibility and authority (Arkin, 1995). Moreover, a significant number of companies have now decided not to use the term empowerment at all for fear of misinterpretation (The Industrial Society, 1995; Lowe, 1994) or, as Clutterbuck (1994) implies, because many people perceive it as a sugar-coated disguise for tough interventions like down-sizing (as suspected by the labour process school). Overall, it seems that the assertion, that the vagueness of human resource management policies is their strength, is strongly contested by the practical evidence of empowerment policies in the long run. The literature suggests that it is not ambiguity but clarity of definition which is required when introducing empowerment initiatives. Yet, it must be recognised that clarity has its risks as well, in that organizations will have to live up to the promises which they make.

Middle Management Resistance and the Effects of Management Fads

The Industrial Society's study of empowerment found that of the different agents within the organizations studied, senior managers were those most likely to be perceived as welcoming empowerment (46%); followed by employees generally (40%). Middle managers were most likely to be perceived as having a negative response to empowerment (32%); followed by first line leaders/supervisors (27%). As discussed earlier in this chapter, middle managers have a pivotal role in the

introduction of empowerment, yet in Lowe's study, he found that 62% of respondents claimed that middle managers in their organizations felt threatened by empowerment. Qualitative comments which were volunteered as reasons for this resistance were clustered, by Lowe, under four headings: Fear; Role Clarity; Clinging To Established Ways and Threat of Responsibility. Indeed, further results of Lowe's study found that 50% of respondents cited "managers not letting go" as an impediment to empowerment. Clearly, then, middle management resistance to empowerment is a large barrier to effective empowerment. This is not a new phenomenon, interestingly, from 1945 to the present day the majority of arguments as to how and why managers resist new employee involvement policies have remained the same (Roethlisberger, 1945; Whyte and Gardner, 1945; Collard & Dale, 1989; Marchington et al, 1992; Fenton O'Creevy and Nicholson, 1994; Foy, 1994).

Klein (1984) questioned 139 supervisors about their employee involvement programmes. She found that, although 72% of supervisors saw the programmes as being good for their companies, only 31% saw them as beneficial to themselves. In an attempt to explain these results, Klein states that job insecurity, work overload and fear of loss of status were major contributors to the resistance of middle managers. More recently, Marchington et al (1992) state that resistance to employee involvement programmes fall into one of three categories: opposition to the concept of employee involvement; lack of training and resources such as time; and/ or the belief that they lacked the skills to make it work. Such fear of empowerment might not be unexpected for, as Kinsley Lord write, managers have been trained and promoted on the basis of the command and control structure, "now we are asking them to reassess radically those very qualities, values and behaviours that have got them there" (1993: 4).

The loss of many middle management jobs in recent years, and the consequent stagnation of careers, suggests that middle managers are facing increasing job insecurity, creating a need for "career defence" defined as "to protect oneself against the threats of redundancy, stagnation and obsolescence" (Jackson et al, 1996:29). With the rationalisation of layers of management, promotion is becoming less

realistic and, therefore, middle managers share with non-managerial employees, "growing feelings of cynicism as well as a heightened sense of estrangement from the predominant goals and values of their employing organizations" (Scase & Goffee, 1989: 29). The streamlining of organizations, and the introduction of empowerment has also meant that the role of the middle manager, as discussed earlier, has moved from one of technical expert to that of chief coach. Yet most, especially in traditional hierarchical organizations will, as Scase and Goffee write, "have been promoted on the basis of their *technical* competencies and personal compatibility rather than their expertise in *managerial* skills" (1989: 31) (sic.). As empowerment becomes established, more and more of the technical tasks are being devolved to lower levels, whilst middle managers become more preoccupied with targets and efficiency. The fact that there is a risk of technical expertise being lost in this way instils in the middle manager a fear of becoming redundant to the point where their jobs will be the next to go (Collard and Dale, 1989; Klein, 1984; Manz et al, 1990). Storey (1992) found a similar concern amongst supervisors in Ford Motor Company regarding the introduction of teamworking. Over and above this, middle managers may feel that devolving these tasks relinquishes their status (Manz et al, 1990; Parnell et al, 1992), they "view the sharing of tasks with workers as a reward that has not been earned - and that diminishes their own standing in the eyes of fellow workers" (Klein, 1984: 89). This was also found to be the case with Quality Circles, as Legge (1995: 217) writes, "First-line supervision was concerned that QC's, if they fulfilled their aspirations for shop-floor democracy and critiqued established working methods, might result in calling into question the need for supervisors at all".

The position of middle managers is a difficult one for, as Block writes, "the difficult thing about being in the middle of an organization is that the amount of power we have is often ambiguous" (1987: 17). Indeed, Ackers (1994) in a study of colliery officials writes that they, "occupied a contradictory and overlapping position on both the bottom rung of the management hierarchy and the top layer of the underground workforce" (1994:390). This position of "piggy in the middle", of having to manage at the sharpest point of conflict in employment relationships, is likely to be conducive of stress and worry. The need to communicate with both management and workers,

claims Roethlisberger, "encourages them to talk out of both sides of their mouths at the same time - to become masters of double talk" (1945: 288). Additionally, often the messages which the middle managers must pass on are not discussed with them first (Whyte and Gardner, 1945) so they have little or no say in the formulation of the initiative. This can erode motivation and commitment to both the policy and the organisation as a whole with belief in empowerment consequently not established at that crucial level. The scepticism of middle managers has been further accentuated by the recent procession of fads which have been implemented, of which empowerment is increasingly being seen as the next in line (Moon, 1995). As Marchington et al write, "there has been a multiplicity of EI techniques over the last few years, each of which may have risen to positions of centrality and prominence before lessening soon after" (1993:573). For some, the idea of management fads equates to "chasing rainbows" and directs attention away from the complex task of running a company (Byrne, 1986). Whilst for others the experimentation of new ideas and the catalysts for change which characterise management fads are optimistic and encouraging (Lee, 1971; Moon, 1995). Indeed, the concept of "Thriving on Chaos" introduced by Peters (1988) suggests that learning to adapt to continuous change is one of the keys to organizational success. Yet, for middle managers the constant stream of new initiatives can be most frustrating and disheartening (Byrne, 1986). Watson (1994: 122) confirms this in his study of ZTC Ryland, quoting one middle manager who said, "we try to bring too many things on too quick...we keep going off on yet another bleeding track...Half-way down there someone will change direction again". Another is quoted as expressing concern about the way in which many initiatives are introduced, "we over-egg the pudding with launches and posters and pamphlets and glossy brochures and pocket-cards" (1994b: 902). The middle management level is probably affected the most by this 'fad fatigue' because, due to career stagnation, they remain in the same place, amassing longer service than the "executives", witnessing and tackling a procession of fads whilst the more senior managers, who bring them in as a means of personal advancement or to develop momentum behind change, 'cut and run' (Huczynski, 1993; Marchington et al, 1993).

Despite the arguments set out above, it must be recognised that not all middle managers will resist empowerment, for as The Industrial Society wrote, "some managers will readily accept the benefits of empowering the workforce" (1995: 3). Indeed, Hegarty tells of managers who welcome the changes and the chance to step back from the front line and actually manage. For those that she interviewed, empowerment has brought benefits to their jobs, "it used to be that I just had to come up with solutions. It was up to me to investigate new tools and equipment. But now the lads in the yard help me to do my job. Now they come to me with ideas and I get involved with strategy. It makes my job more interesting" (1995: 27). That managers do not generally resist empowerment is further suggested in research by Fenton O'Creevy (1996) who found that firstly, there was only weak evidence that middle management resistance was related to the success of employee involvement and, secondly, that there was strong evidence that middle and senior managers did not differ significantly in their attitudes to employee involvement. He found that attitudes to employee involvement were most likely to be related to recent downsizing and to the existence of a climate of common purpose. Hence, it would seem that although resistance to empowerment by middle managers is common and is likely to be a barrier to the success of the initiative, this is not universal and may actually, as Fenton O'Creevy claims, be a function of the restrictions placed on their own jobs. That is that middle managers are not actively resisting empowerment policies but that they are, in fact, being constrained by organizational subsystems themselves.

The Effects of Down-sizing On Employees

The introduction of empowerment in the 1990s has, as has been discussed elsewhere, meant that it has taken place in an age of downsizing. Introducing an initiative aimed at gaining worker's commitment in such an atmosphere has led to cynicism in many staff, who are experiencing the so-called "survivors syndrome", as was illustrated in the case of Harvester (Pickard, 1993). Foy (1994: 79) states that an ambivalence has occurred within organizations due to this paradox, "at the same time as they are downsizing, letting go of long-term, loyal employees, they are also trying to achieve the open, trusting, flexible, communicating, empowering, people-orientated culture we all say is necessary for their future survival". Not only are these dual policies

sending mixed messages to employees, but they also risk damaging the relationship of trust which, many argue, is central to the implementation of an empowerment programme and risk souring working relationships generally (Andrews, 1994; Handy, 1995). In addition the loss of a substantial number of the workforce has meant that employees must necessarily take on new roles and tasks rather than being given the freedom or option to do so. The idea that empowerment is synonymous with work intensification (Edwards, 1979; McArdle et al, 1995; Waddington and Whitson, 1996) might, therefore, be expected and the labour process view would argue that empowerment is directed at compliance to new working methods rather than commitment. Yet evidence from McArdle et al's study suggests that some employees welcomed this new way of working even if they have to work harder, "the acknowledgement that the work is harder reveals that they are aware of the increased work intensification, but do not see it as something to resist" (1995: 165). It would appear, therefore, that empowerment has been accompanied by decreases in the numbers employed and a consequent increase in workloads for those that remain. Whether this affects the attitudes of employees is difficult to ascertain, for whilst Waddington and Whitson (1996) argue that grievances are high, McArdle et al (1995) state that they are becoming increasingly committed to their own exploitation, "their willingness to resist increased intensification of work is therefore displaced by a solidarity with the interests of management" (1995: 166).

Monitoring and Surveillance

A further aspect of some empowerment programmes which threatens to damage trust is the increased surveillance and monitoring of staff targets. Whilst empowerment appears to reduce the amount of control held by management, the use of performance measures (or the more overt "traffic light" cards reported by Sewell and Wilkinson, 1992) provides an indirect method of surveillance which, it has been argued, is somewhat at odds with a culture of trust and empowerment. Sewell and Wilkinson (1992) related these surveillance techniques and the discipline which management imposes on employees as a result, to the Panopticon (Foucault, 1977). They state that the growth of information technology has allowed for the emergence of an "information panopticon" (Zuboff, 1989) which has "created the opportunity for the

disciplinary power of the Panoptic gaze to be exercised in the context of job enlargement and 'empowerment'" (1992: 109). Indeed, this is reflected in a study of supermarket chains which emphasised the monitoring and surveillance which took place not only through information technology and video cameras but also because of the highly visible nature of checkout staff's work (Ogbonna and Wilkinson, 1990). In a similar sense, the performance measures, employee surveys, quality targets, and appraisal schemes which operate in 'empowering organizations' act to maintain the control which they have superficially devolved to employees. For example, Pickard states that, at Harvester, "every waitress at the Dulwich restaurant is expected to sell a side order to every table. If they don't do this, the team want to know what went wrong" (1993: 29). Hence, it should be expected that such forms of surveillance may create cynicism and put constant pressure on employees to reach high performance standards and avoid mistakes, causing stress rather than increased self-efficacy.

Trade Unions

In the study conducted by *The Industrial Society*, trade unions were not seen to be a major factor in empowerment on either the positive or negative side. This finding reflects a more general relationship which has been identified between Trade Unions and new management techniques. There has been a weakening of trade union power over the last fifteen years due to the anti-union stance of the Conservative government. Whilst it is rare for organizations to actually have de-recognised their unions, membership has declined both in terms of actual numbers and density. Moreover, the de-centralisation of bargaining in many places has meant that the number of employees covered by collective bargaining has declined. Hence, the dilemma exists whereby unions are striving to maintain their membership whilst also protecting existing members from exploitation by management.

The relationship between Industrial Relations (IR) and Human Resource Management has only recently become an issue of interest to management researchers (Storey, 1992). Generally, it has been assumed that HRM's unitarist and individualistic approach is at odds with traditional industrial relations and that IR is "typically viewed...as a threat" (1992: 243) to HRM. Yet, in reality, whilst unions still remain

involved in traditional areas such as pay and working conditions, Storey (1992) suggests that this has been sidelined from involvement in the introduction of new management initiatives. With few exceptions, Storey found in his study of fifteen 'mainstream' organizations that management now sets the agenda on issues of employee relations. He argues that unions' exclusion was due, in part, to the fact that these initiatives rarely originate in the Personnel Department, the traditional negotiator in IR, but from Chief Executives and the senior board. Moreover, whilst unions tend to openly oppose 'hard' initiatives such as Performance Related Pay, which affect pay bargaining procedures, opposing 'softer' policies which, on face value, seek to involve employees in the organization causes ambivalence, "they found it difficult to challenge the logic of management's programme, and indeed saw many developments as benefiting individuals in the long run, but at the same time saw the possibility of a clear diminution in the unions' role in the company" (Wilkinson et al, 1993: 32). Additionally, on a more local level, the contingent nature of empowerment, which relies on the ability and intentions of individual managers, proves difficult for unions to police. Indeed, Bacon and Storey (1996) argue that there are a wide variety of responses to individualist practices not only between, but also within, trade unions. Some unions will react to individualism by reorganization, other representatives will actively participate in managerial techniques in order to monitor them whilst others will negotiate in a traditional manner. The actual reaction which is achieved at the local level will, argue the authors, depend on the traditions and political orientations and the nature of the management initiatives themselves. Essentially, however, in order to prevent the unions becoming redundant, they should attempt to maintain traditional bargaining methods whilst also becoming involved with more individualistic, direct involvement at the lower level.

The lack of any formal opposition to human resource techniques by most unions may reflect a belief that it does not directly threaten themselves or their members. Indeed, Guest (1989) has argued that, even if management's intentions for empowerment were more sinister, HRM is rarely implemented in its pure form in reality and, as such, it never seriously challenges the unions. This concept is taken one step further by Kelly and Kelly (1991) who contend that, what they term, 'New Industrial Relations'

(NIR) rarely has little impact on the underlying attitudes of employees, as they write "it is impossible to avoid the conclusion that institutional, i.e. management, support for NIR is both instrumental and superficial. Managements are willing to implement and support NIR initiatives only so long as they yield profitable results and do not impinge on their own power and status" (1991: 41).

Hence, it appears that, even in organizations with a strong, pluralist history, it is rare for unions to take part in negotiations regarding HRM policies and empowerment. Storey (1992) did highlight one organization - Ford- who had engaged in a policy of 'relationship building' with the recognised trade unions, but, elsewhere, it seems that a "dualistic" structure (Storey, 1992) is emerging in modern organizations whereby traditional IR is kept "ticking over" whilst managers devote more energy and enthusiasm to HRM techniques. Hence, the role which trade unions would like/ are able to play is contextually specific, depending not only on the Union policy makers but also members, local representatives and, most specifically, management.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown that there is an increasing move amongst organizations to adopt empowerment policies. In most cases this is a response to global competition and the need to change out-of-date structures in order to become more flexible and competitive. The literature tends to suggest that organizations which introduce empowerment for proactive reasons such as these have more chance of making the initiative a success than those who introduce them on the back of downsizing or other negative issues. The provision of information appears to be a key to empowerment, and many organizations list clarifying their vision and mission as their 'number one' empowerment issue. This appears to distinguish empowerment from the more ad-hoc employee involvement policies with which it is often associated for although direct communications with employees are a central part of employee involvement techniques, empowerment appears more connected to value and culture change. Yet, in general there seems to be a surprising lack of training to support these initiatives, particularly at the front line level. Moreover, a major feature of empowerment

appears to be the role of managers. Whilst in rhetoric their new role is one of a coach, there is evidence that, in practice, they are becoming jealous guardians of their status and authority. Organizations need to reassure managers that the change to their role which empowerment brings, "results not so much in the loss of authority over staff as in the exercise of a different kind of authority, generally of a much more satisfying kind" (Stewart, 1994: 3).

Concluding, the trend towards empowerment has brought with it the promise of widespread changes to organizational culture and climate, yet there is evidence that the differences in practice are often little more than cosmetic due, in part, to the economic situation within which it has to be operationalised. With the exception of a few positive views expressed in McCardle et al's research, rationalisation of labour, job stagnation, and the need for constraints on empowerment indicate that external factors have the potential to damage the ideology of empowerment, leading to cynicism and internal blockages. For, as was highlighted in Chapter Two, there appears to be a psychological dimension to empowerment which incorporates the subjectiveness and unpredictability of human nature. The following chapter looks at how the characteristics of empowerment, outlined in this chapter, are processed by individuals by drawing on both sociological literature pertaining to orientations to work, and the role of cognitive psychology, in understanding the individual differences in employee reactions to this managerial phenomenon.

CHAPTER FOUR: Empowerment as a Person-specific Concept

"Here then is the crux of the dilemma of how to empower people. It's the old proverb about leading a horse to water. Since it is ultimately up to an individual how committed he/she chooses to be, it follows that you are unlikely to be able to empower everyone to the same degree. Some employees simply do not want more responsibility or additional skills"

Oddey (1993: 8)

INTRODUCTION

The above statement by Oddey recognises that empowerment, whether introduced in teams or not, is ultimately an individual experience (Ripley and Ripley, 1992). This reflects the conceptualization of "being empowered", which was introduced in Chapter Two. Hence, it becomes clear that empowerment is not only a phenomenon based on the contextual factors, outlined in Chapter Three, but that it also depends on how these factors are interpreted by individuals. Thus, the two key issues which arise in the literature are the practice of empowerment and the feeling that one is empowered. By devoting separate chapters to these two issues, the researcher hopes to emphasise the distinction which exists between them. The following chapter bases itself around the cognitive model of empowerment devised by Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and discusses, whether on the basis of this model, and other psychological literature, there may be a particular type of person who is likely to be more "empowerable" than others. However, in doing so, this chapter will not ignore the crucial role which is played by sociological expectations in this arena. The sociological debate of expectations and orientations to work, which largely derives from the Affluent Worker thesis (Goldthorpe et al, 1968), takes the view that wants and expectations are not psychological constants but that they are culturally determined and that, as such, they vary as other aspects of an individual's life change.

EMPOWERMENT AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENON

The fact that individuals will differ in their attitudes to work was illustrated by Sheridan's 30-60-10 philosophy (cited in Zuidema and Kleiner, 1994) which stated that 30% of employees will always give more than their job requires, 60% will

respond to the way that they are treated and 10% will always give less than their job requires. Hence, it would seem that the target of empowerment policies must be to change the attitudes and gain the commitment of this middle 60% of employees by altering the way employees are treated. As discussed in Chapter Two, Conger and Kanungo's (1988) approach to empowerment is defined as "a process of enhancing feelings of self-efficacy among organisational members through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal organisational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information" (1988:474). Self-efficacy is a psychological term which is becoming increasingly popular to describe a person's belief in their own effectiveness and Bandura (1977) suggested that these efficacy expectations will determine how much effort and how long people will persist in the face of adversity. Hence, in Conger and Kanungo's (1988) view, empowerment will enable people to feel that they are competent in their work through the removal of those processes which induce a feeling of powerlessness. In this sense they conceivably allow for the fact that powerlessness may remain if the critical factors are not identified. However, they do not dwell on this contingency and instead see empowerment as a process, with assumptions being made about the relationship between objective conditions and psychological reactions, rather than a model of several interacting factors.

The effect of interacting factors is, however, tackled by Thomas and Velthouse (1990) who develop the ideas of Conger and Kanungo (1988) through the theoretical development of a cognitive, interactive model which sees the external, contextual factors of empowerment as dependant on the interpretations of individuals, as they write, "we view such judgements as subjective interpretations (constructions) of reality so that task assessments are also influenced by individual differences in interpretive processes" (1990: 667). This reinforces the belief of Klose (1993) that empowerment is a person-specific concept which relies upon the extent to which employees feel that they can be both proactive and reactive to the situations surrounding their job. In this sense, feelings of being empowered are generated from the "psychological environment" (Lewin, 1951) and the orientations which employees bring to their work.

This chapter will employ Thomas and Velthouse's model as a useful basis for a wider consideration of the importance of individual employees in the empowerment process. In doing so, it will highlight interesting areas which can be further explored in this research. However, the focus on Thomas and Velthouse's model should not necessarily suggest that the researcher considers the model to be flawless nor that it will be heavily relied upon throughout this thesis. Rather, a model of empowerment which specifically addresses the role of the individual allows the researcher to explore this aspect through the consideration and expansion of these basic concepts.

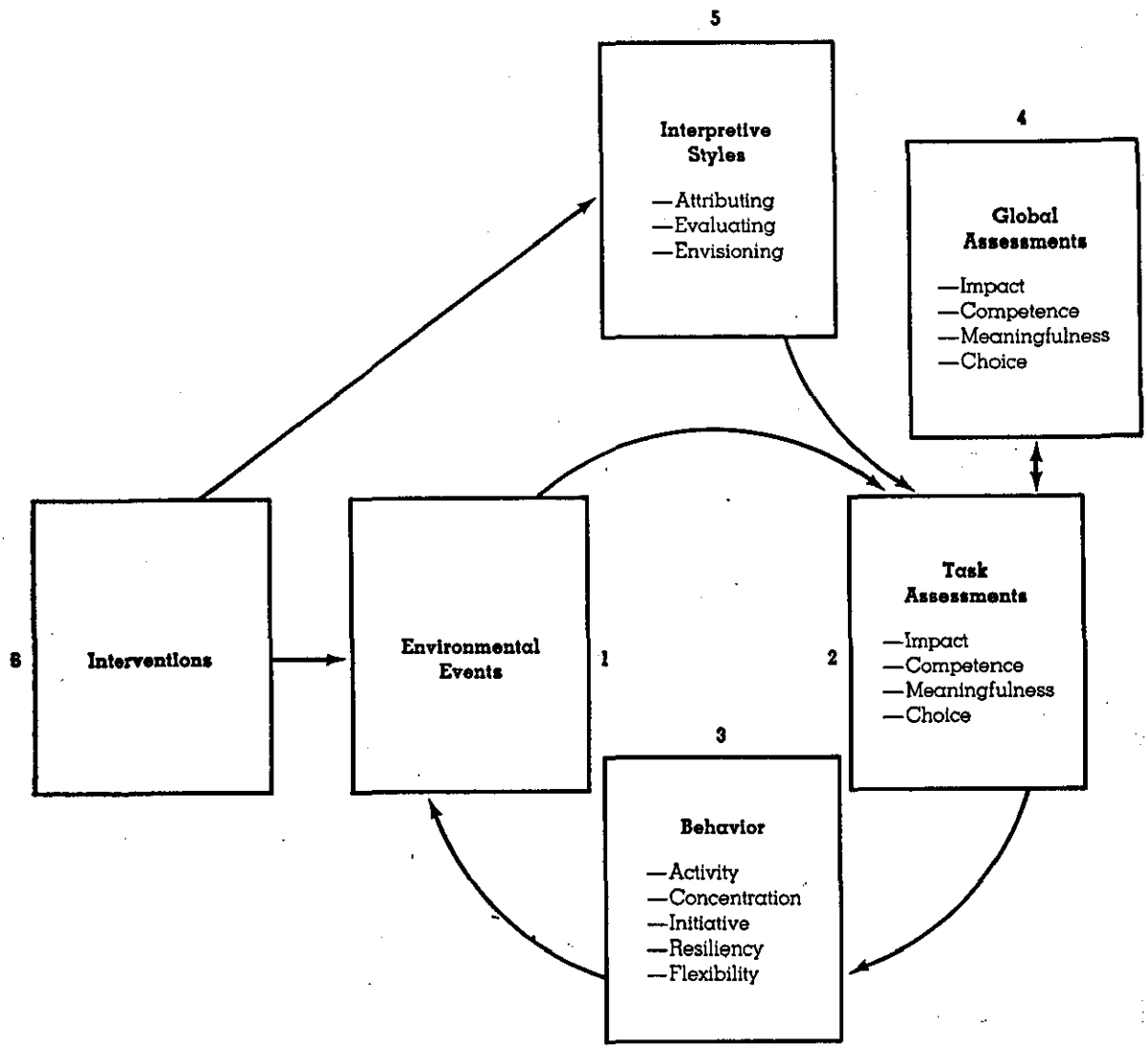
THE COGNITIVE MODEL OF EMPOWERMENT

Thomas and Velthouse see empowerment as "intrinsic task motivation" and, as such, they interpret 'being empowered' as something which is produced from the 'pull' of the task rather than the 'push' of management policy. Hence, they imply that the sense of empowerment which individuals feel can not automatically result in a set of techniques which management 'do' to workers but on the evaluation of these techniques by the employees themselves. They argue that this is not a simple input-output relationship but that it, as Marchington et al found in their study of employee involvement, "is affected by the prior expectations which people bring with them to work" (1994: 887). Sociological literature suggests that people's orientations to work will vary throughout their life cycle as various aspects of work and home life become particularly important to individuals. The issue of orientations will be discussed throughout this chapter, where at particular stages of the model they are felt to be relevant. In this way, it is hoped that by drawing on evidence from both disciplines, a broader understanding of individual differences to empowerment will be established. Indeed, rather than merely looking at particular, objective variables when designing a model of empowerment, Thomas and Velthouse quote Roberts and Glick (1981) who identified the need for "alternative theoretical perspectives that distinguish between situational attributes...and incumbent cognitions about those attributes" (1981: 193). Hence, Thomas and Velthouse argue for a far more complex model of empowerment than previously devised and they suggest that no matter how objective external events

are, "individuals' judgements and behaviour regarding tasks also are shaped by cognitions that go beyond verifiable reality" (1990: 669).

The cognitive model which Thomas and Velthouse propose consists of a loop - "ongoing cycle" - between environmental events which derive from interventions (defined here as the characteristics of empowerment proposed in Chapter Three); task assessments and behaviour. This model is shown in Figure One, below:

FIGURE ONE: Cognitive Model of Empowerment (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990)



Essentially the authors claim that environmental events "provide data to the individual about the consequences of ongoing task behaviour and about conditions and events relevant to future behaviour" (1990: 669). This process resembles what sociologists would categorise as social meaning (Grint, 1991), defining meaning through interpretation of external cues rather then mere observation. These environmental events impact on task assessments, which impact on behaviour, which impact on environmental events and so forth. External to the loop are two intrapersonal elements which, in the main, will account for individual differences, these are: interpretative styles and global assessments. Each of these model constituents will be discussed in the following sections and other more group orientated factors, such as orientations to work, which were not considered by the authors but which are considered relevant to the model, will be examined.

Task Assessments

Task assessments are defined by Thomas and Velthouse as occurring, "within the individual and refer to the task itself, rather than the context of the task" (1990: 668). Hence, these are impinged upon by the intrapersonal elements of the model. They define four dimensions of assessment in their model which resemble the characteristics of the expectancy model of motivation (Vroom, 1964): impact (relating to the degree to which behaviour is seen as making a difference), competence (relating to a people's level of skill if they try), meaningfulness (the value of the task goal or purpose) and choice (relating to whether individuals perceive that they have a choice about doing that task).

Before turning to the impinging factors of global assessments and interpretative styles, it is worth discussing how these elements of task assessments might be seen to relate to other literature on participation and empowerment. The degree to which people see their work as making a difference may be dependant upon the amount of feedback they receive from their manager (Bennis, 1989), the visibility or task significance of their job (Hackman and Oldham, 1980). Secondly, relating to competence, Hepse and Wall (1976) found that there were pockets of people, in their study of participation, who did not desire participation but who had a high need for autonomy, they found

that these were people who were in occupations which might be considered as "expert" such as midwives who "have a legally recognised position, and may treat their patients without the presence of a doctor, thus giving them a high perceived status level" (1976: 423). Hence, it might be suggested that such "experts" or people who perceive themselves as "competent" do not require any environmental interventions to empower them as the knowledge and use of this competence is enough to "empower" them. Indeed, the concept of ability and its relationship to empowerment must not be overlooked. Such people may be considered to belong to Sheridan's 30% of employees who will always do more than their job requires. Thirdly, the meaningfulness of tasks might also rely on the feedback of managers but, additionally, it could be dependant on how challenging the task is (Locke, 1968) and the level of information the employee has received as to how the goal fits in with the organization's wider aims (Foy, 1994). Finally, choice might be seen as being contingent on the enhancement or exploitation debate discussed in Chapter Two. In this sense, one must consider whether empowerment really offers the opportunity to exercise initiative and this will rely on the ability of managers and organizations as a whole, to genuinely accommodate the autonomy of the individual. Kelly and Kelly (1991) dwell on the issue of choice as it relates to the social psychological theories of cognitive dissonance and self-perception. They argued that if employees are not given a choice about participating in "New Industrial Relations" schemes imposed by management, then a change in employee attitudes is unlikely to occur. Applying these theories specifically to empowerment, if employees are always used to a hierarchical structure and then they are offered more discretion, then the simplest way to resolve the tension between old attitudes and new behaviour, is to alter attitudes accordingly. Attitude change may also occur purely because they see themselves taking on more tasks and infer from this that they must be more empowered. However, if employees do not perceive that they have a choice in being empowered, or that their unions have not participated in its introduction, they are more likely to be able to distinguish behaviours from attitudes. Hence, they will see the extra work that they are doing not as attributable to empowerment but to the imposition of a policy by management.

Global Assessments

Global assessments are defined by Thomas and Velthouse (1990: 673) as, "generalized beliefs about the four [task] assessment dimensions, aggregated across tasks and over time". They are beliefs (but not necessarily underlying, stable aspects of personality) that are based on past experience and which allow an individual to make an assumption about new stimuli. Hence they are labelled: Global Impact; Global Competence; Global Meaningfulness; and Global Choice. Thomas and Velthouse state that if an individual's global assessments are high on each of the four assessment dimensions then they will be more optimistic about undertaking ambiguous task assessments.

Global Impact is related, by Thomas and Velthouse, to Locus Of Control. Rotter's locus of control (1966) is a model about whether people believe that they are responsible for things that happen to them (internal locus of control) or whether their fate is generally decided by external events (external locus of control). Rotter (1966)'s construct has been used to a wide extent in evaluating how people behave at work (Renn and Vandenberg, 1991; Spector, 1982; Dailey, 1978; Andrisani and Nestel, 1976; Kimmons and Greenhaus, 1976; Broedling, 1975; Mitchell, Smyser and Weed, 1975; Gemmill and Heisler, 1972). The majority of this research has claimed that "internals" are happier at work, Gemmill and Heisler (1972) found that "internals" reported less job strain; more job satisfaction; and positional mobility than "externals", a finding confirmed by Andrisiani and Nestel (1976) who found "internals" to be more satisfied at work. The research also suggests that "internals" prefer a participative, autonomous working environment (Kimmons and Greenhaus, 1976; Mitchell, Smyser and Weed, 1975) and are more likely to be motivated to work than "externals" (Broedling, 1975). It might be suggested, therefore, that those who have a more "internal" profile in this research are more likely to welcome empowerment. If one has an internal locus of control (high global impact) then one might assume that they will have a stronger desire to be empowered as they will feel that proactive behaviour is more likely to be rewarded (Joe, 1971). Yet, locus of control is not necessarily a static belief and should be a target of change for managers, rewarding and reinforcing employees' 'empowered' behaviour may give them a more

internalised sense of control through coaching and targeting empowerment at different individuals' needs. This in turn is likely to increase an employee's global competence which represents their level of confidence and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977).

Global meaningfulness relates to the "aggregate extent to which individuals psychologically invest in the tasks in which they are involved" (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990: 674). It is the belief of the researcher that this variable may be affected by a person's needs specifically for autonomy and achievement (McClelland, 1985). If an employee has a high need for achievement and autonomy, one might assume that empowerment policies will hold more meaningfulness for them. However, the effect of n(Autonomy) may be contingent on whether empowerment is introduced in an individual or team context. Yet, more widely, the meaningfulness of events may depend on the social meanings which individuals give to their work and organization.

Taylor in his theory of Scientific Management based his studies on the assumption that employees' primary driver for work is money. Gordon O'Brien (1992) suggests that writers still tend to believe that orientations are largely instrumental but that employees do have some desire for skill at work. He suggests that if workers' attitudes are still largely instrumental, then the de-skilling of tasks, which some theorists see as accompanying empowerment, will have little effect on employee attitudes which will be far more concerned with pay issues. To gauge the instrumentality of workers' attitudes, researchers have tended to rely on responses to the "Lottery Question". This generally asks employees whether they would continue working if they won the lottery (for example see Morse and Weiss, 1955; Kaplan and Tausky, 1974; Mannheim and Rein, 1981). Responses to this question, set to employees for over 40 years by different theorists, have generally ranged from between 60-80% of employees who would continue working. Further findings suggest that younger people are more likely to continue working than older and that men are more likely to continue working than women (Campbell et al, 1976; Warr, 1982; Hakim, 1992, 1995).

Focusing on gender differentials Hunt (1975) found that employers perceived women as less committed to their work and more unwilling to take on responsibilities at work which compete with their domestic responsibilities. These results are generally interpreted as an indication of the prejudice of employers and male-dominated organizations. Hakim (1992, 1995) found that, when asked the lottery question in 1984-5, two thirds of women would still prefer a paid job compared to three quarters of men, whereas this differential had all but disappeared when Gallie and White (1993) conducted their research in 1992. However, Hakim argues that this differential still exists because the fact that one third of women choose not to work at all is not taken into account by these figures, and that working women are a self-selected sample who one would expect to have above average work commitment. In essence, Hakim concludes that the adult female population divides into two fairly equal sectors: those who work full-time, are committed to their careers and personal development and generally achieve higher grade occupations, whilst the second group, "give priority to the marriage career, do not invest in what economists term 'human capital', transfer quickly and permanently to part-time work as soon as the breadwinner husband permits it, choose undemanding jobs 'with no worries or responsibilities' when they do work, and are hence found concentrated in lower grade and lower paid jobs which offer convenient working hours with which they are perfectly happy" (1995: 434). Interestingly Adler (1993), basing her findings on an American survey, states that women have less job autonomy than men, even when gender composition of occupation and authority position have been controlled for. However, these attitudes to work and the instrumentatility orientation which some employees, particularly older employees and women according to the research, hold, are not necessarily stable and will tend to alter according to an individuals work-family interface. Goldthorpe et al (1968) found that workers with heavy family responsibilities tended to be more concerned with extrinsic rewards than with skill use or satisfaction, "the role obligations of the worker with a young family may also come into conflict with....any high degree of participation in union affairs or work based clubs and societies. The demands made on him as husband and father are at this stage likely to be given relatively high priority on his time and energy outside of work" (1968: 148). However, as children grow up and the responsibilities decrease, one

might suggest that both women and men's orientations to work will become less instrumental. Longtitudinal studies of work orientations would help distinguish the extent to which expectations and desires can change over time. Moreover, age is suggested to have a positive relationship with job satisfaction (Ang, Goh and Koh, 1993; Mottaz, 1987; Rhodes, 1983) and, hence, such effects must be taken into account. Related to age is the effect of tenure for, whilst it is argued that younger people are more easily disappointed in the absence of intrinsic rewards (Mottaz, 1987), the reinforcing effect of remaining in a job for a long time may actually decrease job satisfaction. As Kohn and Schooler argue, "we believe that, in industrial society, where occupation is central to men's lives, occupational experiences that facilitate or deter the exercise of self direction come to permeate men's views, not only of work and of their role in work, but also of the world and of self" (1983: 33).

Not only are work orientations expected to differ according to neutral demographics such as age and gender, but also according to the actual nature of one's job. Kohn and Schooler (1983) argue that people often become what they do, and this view is supported by much of the work surrounding orientations to work. Goldthorpe et al suggest on the basis of their Affluent Worker thesis that semi-skilled workers are more instrumental in their orientations than skilled workers. Indeed, Fox (1976: 37) wrote that "the lower we direct our attention within the occupational status scale, the more likely we are to find people deriving little conscious meaning from their work apart from the pay and security it offers". O'Brien suggests that education is related to the orientations to work which people possess, with those with higher levels of education having a desire for "intrinsic or expressive work values" (1992:55). Indeed, Kohn and Schooler, 1983 found that, education directly affects values and orientations, by researching the effect of "social stratification" which they defined as a combination of education and occupational status (i.e. grade). They found that, in terms of social-stratification, "the higher men's positions, the more importance they attach to how interesting their work is, the amount of freedom it provides, the chance to help people, and the chance to use their abilities. The lower their positions, the more importance they attach to pay, fringe benefits, the supervisor, co-workers, the hours of work, how tiring the work is, job security and not being under too much

pressure" (1983: 15). Hence, it could be argued that, those with lower educational levels and those in lower grades may be less interested in being empowered. This then would suggest that people self-select themselves into a particular job, organization or occupation on the basis of their values and orientations. For example, it might be hypothesised that those who stay in education for longer, do so because of an intrinsic enjoyment of work and mental stimulation. These more highly educated individuals then qualify for, and require jobs which stretch them and satisfy them intrinsically. Meanwhile, those who leave school early are likely to do so, either because they want to earn money from an early age or because they do not intrinsically enjoy the tasks involved in school work.

On the basis of this rather lengthy discussion of orientations to work issues, and particularly from the argument set out above, it might be suggested that not all employees actually desire more autonomy or the opportunity to demonstrate their skills at work. As O'Brien writes, "not all people seem to want work that allows expression of personal needs for skill use and autonomy. Many want work because it relieves boredom, structures time and maintains social contacts" (1992: 55). Hugh Willmott in his examination of empowerment discourse, suggests that BPR advocates such as Hammer, derive their meaning of empowerment from a discourse which Willmott calls "functionalist humanism". He states that this approach centres around the idea that "human beings are essentially desirous of greater freedom from the restrictions of mechanistic governance" (1995: 92). By taking this approach, Willmott believes that organizations ignore the possibility that some individuals do not desire empowerment. This belief is further advocated by Eccles, who states that many employees do not desire empowerment and "would simply prefer to be told what the company's goals are, how it intends to pursue those goals, what that means for them and their jobs and what, in consequence, they will be required to do" (1993: 16).

Work Orientations are also likely to be affected by job insecurity. In many of the organizations which are introducing empowerment, there is also a threat of job losses as organizations "downsize" and rationalise their workforce. Hence, many employees are placed in a dilemma where they are expected to take on more responsibility whilst

facing the threat of redundancy. In such circumstances, Willmott argues that commitment to the organization and therefore incentive to take on extra responsibility is diminished, as he writes, their "commitment to the organization is likely to remain partial and conditional, if not narrowly instrumental" (1995: 96). This belief that employees become more instrumental in their orientations when faced with job insecurity was also asserted by Etzioni (1961). However, the effect of job insecurity is discussed more critically by Klandermans et al (1991) who state that people react differently to job insecurity depending on their causal attributions. Whilst some feel less motivated to work and be involved in organizational life, others' effort will be contingent on the extent to which they feel that performance will be reflected by job losses, whilst others will turn to collective action such as union involvement. Hence, in an atmosphere of job insecurity, it appears that some employees will psychologically withdraw from their work and become purely instrumental in their orientation. Such employees are likely to be unwilling to participate in empowering activities or to take on extra responsibility. However, van Vuuren et al (1991)'s detailed look at reactions to job insecurity, suggests that if employees see the possibility of keeping their job as within their control, then they will alter their behaviour accordingly. In such situations, then, employees will feel obliged to take on extra work and responsibility in order to maintain their status quo. Indeed, Greenhalgh and Sutton argue that this is likely to occur, even if it means competing with one's peers, "when positions are scarce, a co-worker's survival in the organization might mean one's own demise. Thus trust diminishes, and people become more guarded in what they share and disclose, which further erodes trust and changes the nature of interpersonal relationships" (1991: 170). Employees might also be expected to be conscious of their self-image and the perception of self by others, and this is likely to affect the way in which they react to empowerment policies, for instance those who resist empowering activities may be seen more positively in the eyes of threatened workers. Essentially, then, individuals may be driven by parochial self-interest, rather than a pure cognitive process. Hence, on the basis of this, one must conclude that employees are likely to differ considerably on the global meaningfulness which they attribute to the empowerment process. As well as differing psychological needs, and different reactions to external factors such as job insecurity, the different cultural and

social backgrounds of individuals are likely to affect the extent to which they will psychologically invest in the 'empowering' tasks in which they are encouraged to be involved.

Global choice is defined by Thomas and Velthouse as, "a person's generalized tendency to experience him/herself as origin or pawn" (1990: 674). The authors quote the work of Deci and Ryan (1985) to describe this variable, stating that the construct "leads individuals to interpret situations in terms of greater or lesser degrees of self-determination" (1990: 674). It might be hypothesised that the psychological concept of perceived control could be of importance here and also, to some extent to global competence. Burger (1989) stated that perceived control applies to the perception that one can control one's performance, and that the interaction between giving people a choice and feelings of competence may well result in more positive affects. There have been several psychological studies on the effects of perceived control (Glass and Singer, 1972; Langer and Rodin, 1976, White, 1959), a number of which have demonstrated that giving people a choice of task materials often results in better performance on that task (see Monty and Perlmuter, 1987) and Patchen found, in the case of participation at work, that, "people will value more highly goals which they help set for themselves" (1970: 239). The work of Parker and Price (1994: 913), claims that empowerment is merely a perception of control and should be defined as "the belief that one has control (i.e. the belief that one can influence decisions)". They readily adopt perceived control as an interchangeable term for empowerment enforcing their view that empowerment is more a factor of an employees emotional reactions to it as to the managerial process itself. Thomas and Velthouse have developed this concept further by arguing that perceived control is just one aspect of their cognitive model and allows for the effects of other contingent variables.

Interpretive Styles

Thomas and Velthouse state that the interpretive styles influence how other messages are perceived. They list three styles: attributing, evaluating and envisioning which contribute to whether people construe events in an empowering or disempowering way. Causal attributions relate to how we understand and explain our own behaviour,

and research by Lefcourt (1976) and Seligman (1975) has found that employees do have different dispositions to the attribution of events to internal/ controllable or external/uncontrollable factors. If stable, global judgements are made there is an assumption that the thing that has caused the behaviour is a permanent feature. If the attribution is negative (I am unable to make my own decisions; my manager does not allow me to be empowered) then one is less likely to be empowered, according to Thomas and Velthouses's model, than if they are unstable (I wasn't able to get the information I needed to make the decision today; my manager was busy today and, didn't get the chance to support me). Similarly stable, external attributions are more motivating in positive situations (I am empowered; my manager is "empowering"). Klandermans et al (1991) argue that, whilst causal attribution has been linked to objective circumstances and personality characteristics (e.g. the effect of depression, hypothesised by Seligman,1975), it is essentially a social process, stating that "attributions are formed, transformed and strengthened in social interaction" (1991:55). Applying causal attribution theory to job insecurity, the authors explain the uncertainty which exists in such circumstances, a situation which might equally be applied to culture change and empowerment, "situations that generate job insecurity are in many ways ambiguous; employees may receive cues or hear rumours, sometimes even announcements....but they do not know for certain.....this uncertainty gives rise to multiple, and divergent, interpretations of the situation" (1991: 56). They continue by arguing that people make sense of their situation through interaction with others in the same circumstances, creating shared beliefs among groups of employees (Hewstone, 1988). If this is the case, it might be hypothesised that those who are members of specific groups, such as the recognised trade unions, will shape their attributions on the basis of union communications about empowerment and that shared beliefs and definitions among union members will be created. Whilst this theory is attributable to employees in the same office, same work team, or social group, the aspect of union membership is interesting due to the more "official" nature of communications and the present employee relations climate.

If one considers the effect of union membership, it might be most useful to consider why employees join trade unions in the first place and, hence, what kinds of people

would be likely to be members. Taking a social psychological perspective, Hartley (1992) considered that structural factors of wider society and the organization will affect whether unions are actually recognised and , hence, whether union membership is actually available. Yet, she considers psychological aspects of the individual such as social networks, social and instrumental beliefs, and aspects of job satisfaction, as more likely to affect whether employees join a union in a recognised workplace. In doing so she dismisses the effect of personal and social characteristics, a finding borne out by a number of studies (eg Bain and Price, 1983). Overall, negative job attitudes have been found to be, at least, a "trigger" (Hartley, 1992:170) for joining a trade union whilst the belief that the union will be more instrumental than management in helping employees achieve their needs (Van der Vall, 1970) and the social influences of significant others also appear to have an effect. Union membership, therefore, is triggered by a number of different structural and psychological processes which in turn affect the causal attributions which one might make about empowerment.

Evaluation will depend upon the expectations which a person has of him/herself. For example, a perfectionist will never be satisfied with less than a 100%, hence any outcome below this target is evaluated as a failure and will not be motivating (Ellis, 1980). This has possible implications for the effect of educational qualifications, since those who have a high-level of education may expect more from themselves than those who have few, or no, qualifications. The third interpretive style: Envisioning, is defined by Thomas and Velthouse as, "the cognitive imagery of future events" (1990:676). Research has shown that high-performing individuals work at creating positive images of success (Harrison, 1983). Indeed, Miller and Prichard (1992) found, in line with previous studies (Fenwick and Olson, 1986) that people who expressed an interest in becoming a member of a problem-solving group were younger, more ambitious (in terms of job advancement) and were more positive in their expectations that the planned employee involvement programme would have beneficial effects for both themselves and their organization. They stated that their findings, "generally support the view that workers' interests in employee involvement and career development tend to reflect a search for self-expression and personal achievement" (1992: 426). In this study by Miller and Prichard, optimism was related

to age and ambition so it is plausible that the contribution of demographics to this cognitive model of empowerment should, therefore, be considered. Thomas and Velthouse (1990) do not explicitly refer to demographical variables such as gender, age or tenure in their paper, although they may have considered that such variables would unconsciously impinge on all aspects of the model.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE COGNITIVE MODEL OF EMPOWERMENT AND CONCLUSION

It is the view of the researcher that Thomas and Velthouse's model explains the cognitive process of empowerment in a fairly comprehensive manner, explaining in some detail the internal psychological processes which occur when empowerment is introduced to a workforce. Yet, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, the model was primarily presented to give structure to a consideration of the relevant literature through analysis and expansion of the core concepts. Indeed, possibly due to the fact that it is a theoretical model not based on any original qualitative or quantitative data, it is considered to be rather detached from organizational reality and does not specifically account for more sociological variables such as previous exposure to empowerment; orientation to work; trade union membership, tenure, age or gender or for reactions to wider social issues such as privatization and job insecurity. A discussion of some of these factors and their hypothesised relationship to the model, has demonstrated the need to take both psychological and sociological factors into account when considering an individual's reaction to organizational reality.

Despite these omissions, the concepts derived from the cognitive model make a valuable contribution to any evaluation of empowerment, by highlighting the importance of individual characteristics when introducing an organization wide programme. There are clear personality constructs, such as locus of control, which Thomas and Velthouse believe lead to greater intrinsic motivation and empowerment, with the implication that such differences could identify an "empowerable" employee. This would clearly hold an interest for many organizations, as would the contribution of socially derived orientations or reactions to work or the work environment. However, it should be considered that there may be characteristics of the actual

empowerment policies themselves which impinge on this model of "empowerability" and supersede any effects of individual personalities. Indeed, this brings into question the truth behind the proverb of leading the horse to water which Oddey used in the opening statement of this chapter. He implies that the most an organization can do is introduce empowerment to its workforce, and that it is up to the employees to do the rest. Yet, rather than assuming that the horse does not want to drink, the challenge should be, to discover if there is something in the water that is stopping them.

This, then, should be a central question of any empowerment policy: what is it that makes people feel empowered, and are the individual differences, which Oddey talks of in the opening statement of this chapter, due to some groups of employees or individuals being more "empowerable" than others or are they due to the failure of managers to target the roots of the subjective interpretations which people make? In essence, then, the success of empowerment might be seen as contingent not just on the individual, their occupation and social group, the organization or the wider industrial situation but on the interplay of all these factors. In conclusion, for those organizations who have introduced empowerment, the time has now come to evaluate their success or, as Byham wrote, they must take a walk into the 12th Dimension to discover, "how people feel, what's going on in their minds, what it's like for them on the inside" for, as he argued, "most of the light around here comes from people" (Byham, 1988: 19).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Hence, from a consideration of the previous literature in this area, the main research questions which emerge are listed below. Question Six relates to the contingency approach which this research will take. As discussed in Chapter Two, contextual factors will be taken into account to consider whether they account for any differences between the organizations. Hence, each of the research questions will ultimately be considered in the light of how contingent they are on organizational reality and circumstance.

1. Is there a universal underlying interpretation of empowerment throughout the organizations studied?

2. Do personality and biographical factors, including the wider social factors such as orientations to work which may interact with them, impact on the feelings of empowerment amongst employees?

3. To what extent do organizational factors, such as management behaviour, impact on the feelings of empowerment amongst employees?

4. Do characteristics of empowerment programmes impact on the feelings of empowerment amongst employees?

5. What variables best predict positive reactions to empowerment?

6. How do the organizations, and operating units, differ in respect to the above and can this be explained by the culture of these workplaces?

The following chapter will detail the research methods which were used in the light of these research questions, the limitations of these methods and how these were minimised or overcome.

CHAPTER FIVE: Method

"A man may be very sincere in good principles, without having good practice"

Samuel Johnson.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at the methodologies used in this research, from the general methodological approach - Triangulation, to the specific methods used to collect and analyse the data. The chapter is divided into four main sections: Approaches To Methodology; Previous Approaches to Empowerment; Research Questions and Research Methods.

APPROACHES TO METHODOLOGY

The long standing debate over the value of quantitative (White and Mitchell, 1976) and qualitative (Silverman, 1970) methods has treated the two approaches to research methodology as discrete and dichotomous. Whilst quantitative methods are seen as advantageous in that they can cover a wide sample, are relatively fast and economical, and provide relevant data for policy decisions, they are attacked for being inflexible, artificial and unable to take into account the social meanings that people place on their actions. Likewise, whilst qualitative methods have their advantages, such as being able to study situations over time and understand their context, their time consuming nature, both in terms of implementation and analysis, and problems of generalisation cause many to avoid their adoption. Gradually, however, there is an emergent recognition that a bridging of the gap between these two methodologies is beneficial, particularly in the study of organizations. As Easterby Smith et al (1991: 26) remark, "increasingly there is a move amongst management researchers to develop methods and approaches which provide a middle ground, and some bridging between the two extreme viewpoints". By combining quantitative and qualitative approaches one can develop ideas and theories through induction from exploratory, qualitative data and then formulate and test hypotheses using quantitative data. Whilst much of the case-study Industrial Relations research uses the WIRS surveys as quantitative background

(McCarthy, 1994), this research includes a questionnaire, which was drawn up, in part, on the basis of issues arising from the management interviews and employee focus groups. Hence, rather than comparing the case-studies to a national norm, this research focuses much more on the contextual differences within and between the two organizations.

In the study of empowerment, a hybrid of these two approaches is a particularly fruitful way forward. The lack of literature in the area, and the fact that organizations tend to implement empowerment in different and individual ways, provides strength to the need for qualitative, exploratory techniques which allow an appreciation of, "the different constructions and meanings that people place upon their experience" (Easterby Smith et al, 1991: 24). The qualitative stage of this research will, therefore, be focused upon the context in which the organizations under study are implementing empowerment and the attitudes which people have towards this process. This approach is enhanced by the use of 'real', named organizations. Emergent themes will hence provide a "grounded" theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) which can then be tested using quantitative techniques.

The positivist/ quantitative approach to methodology argues that research should, amongst other characteristics, be independent, value-free and that the results should have the ability to generalize to the population. The independence of the researcher from the organizations studied has been assured throughout the fieldwork in that, "the thing under study is separate from, unrelated to, independent of, and unaffected by the researcher"(Evered and Louis, 1991:11). The independence of the researcher perhaps reduces the possible richness and comprehensiveness of the data obtained but, the trust gained within the organization by the autonomy of the researcher was seen to outweigh this, debatable, loss. Value-freedom is a difficult phenomenon to prove, let alone adhere to in a research context. The selection of a topic (in this case, empowerment) is in itself a value judgement, in that the researcher must have found the topic interesting and relevant in order to select it as a topic of study. Moreover, in defining how well empowerment is being received in organizations by those people in it, one is having to make a decision between what is a desirable and, conversely, an

undesirable effect of empowerment. Although some of these value judgements will be borne out in the exploratory research, the nature of interviews and focus groups automatically necessitates data reduction (Miles and Huberman, 1994). That is that those questions and target areas which the researcher chooses to concentrate on in the process, and the themes that the researcher perceives as emerging from these qualitative techniques, necessarily incorporate some degree of subjectivity. Although the selection of two organizations for study which will 'flag up' particular themes through their inevitable contrasts and similarities, it will also buffer the effect of subjectivity to some extent. For, Easterby Smith et al warn that such value judgements should not affect the analysis of the data, "it is important for them to resist the strong temptation to look for data that confirms whatever position they are currently holding" (1991: 40). Yet, even in the case of quantitative, so-called positivist, techniques some value judgements must be involved in the selection, formatting and positioning of items in a questionnaire although these should be minimised. The generalizability of quantitative techniques is dependent on the correct sampling techniques (see later in this chapter) and clear knowledge of the parameters within which the research is set. Even then, the existence of correlations and discrepancies between individuals cannot be fully explained by these methods. Although qualitative research is often criticised for having only situational relevance, it is also able, in a hybrid situation, to take account of those external factors that may cause such discrepancy or correlation. As Mitchell writes, "the analyst may, therefore, take account of the unique circumstances surrounding the event in the case being analysed in order to show these circumstances obscure the simple and direct way in which the general principles are operating" (1983: 206).

The preceding argument justifies the researcher's decision to study more than one organization in the analysis of empowerment policies and to make internal comparisons within each. By retaining the individuality of each case and by identifying differences between the two case studies in terms of background context, implementation of and reactions to empowerment crusades, one may use these special features to help explain discrepancies between the organisations' results and, hence, this adds to both the validity and reliability of the research and its findings. Such a

technique was adopted by Collinson and Edwards (1996) who stated that, although they were not assuming the generalizability of their study, the fact that their organizations were all undergoing major restructuring; were selected from a range of product markets and technologies; and were not "leading edge" exemplars, helped to create a context within which their results could be interpreted.

Hence, it would seem that, although philosophically the two methodological paradigms of quantitative and qualitative are distinct, in practice they can be combined to create a wider and convergently valid perspective on the phenomena under study. As Crompton and Jones wrote, "in organizational research it is not a mutually exclusive decision between quantitative and qualitative methodology. In reality it is very difficult to study organizations without using both sorts of methods. In any event quantitative data always rests on qualitative decisions" (1988: 72). A concern about combining these two methods remains, that is that the two methods will not provide convergent results. In this case, it may be that the nature of the concept is too complex for these methods to allow for. It is in this situation that opportunities for further research may emerge.

PREVIOUS APPROACHES TO EMPOWERMENT

It is apparent from the literature review that the subject of employee empowerment is a relatively new and unresearched one, dominated by prescriptive and anecdotal literature. Those who have written in this area tend to be consultants who are either telling the story from the inside and primarily concentrating on the plight of managers in this process (Arthur, 1994; Foy, 1994; Nixon, 1994) or trying to create definitions, models or processes from general overviews of previous literature and unspecific case studies (Nicholls, 1995; Hopfl, 1994; Bowen and Lawler, 1992; Thomas and Velthouse, 1990; and Conger and Kanungo, 1988).

Those who have conducted surveys (Waddington and Whitson, 1996; The Industrial Society, 1995; Lowe, 1994; Parker and Price, 1994) and case studies (Collinson and Edwards, 1996; Claydon and Doyle, 1996; Cunningham et al, 1996; Rees, 1996; McCardle et al, 1995; and Panteli and Corbett, 1995) have looked at the opinions of

"empowered" employees, with the exceptions of the Industrial Society; Lowe; and Cunningham et al who merely looked at management views, but have tended to take narrow definitions of empowerment or concentrate their studies on the objective changes occurring in the organization for their conclusions of empowerment. This is a limitation of surveys which was highlighted by McCarthy (1994) who argued that surveys are generally limited to closed questions which take little account of the historical background or contextual factors. As such, surveys on empowerment will reveal broad patterns indicating the incidence of "empowering" organizations and the content of their initiatives but they will fail to capture the depth of meaning which would allow one to understand exactly how and why such initiatives are introduced, and the impact of this on different actors within the organizations. Indeed, in the case of empowerment and HRM techniques the appropriateness of survey techniques might be lessened further by the ambiguity which surrounds them, "given the range of claims made for HRM, and the problems of distinguishing between its impact and the multiplicity of techniques its advocates borrow and use, no standardised set of responses....can hope to capture its essence" (1994:321). The limitations of de-contextualised surveys are further investigated by Morris and Wood (1991) who followed up a large-scale survey with in-depth interviews to see if the results produced were similar. In fact they found that the results produced varied considerably with the latter revealing "a good deal of what might be called subterranean activity below the institutions" (1991: 278). Yet, whilst it is clear that the use of qualitative data such as interviews and focus groups enhance findings in this area, the use of survey-type methods allows these more localised findings to be generalised to the larger population.

Therefore, what appears to be missing from the literature is a study of the subjective notions of empowerment within organizations, particularly at the employee level, which incorporates both questionnaire data and a more in-depth case study approach. The nature of empowerment with its contextual and psychological dimension makes an interdisciplinary qualitative and quantitative approach especially valuable. From the literature on the etymology of empowerment, it appears that the subjective, psychological aspect of empowerment is an area that merits further research. Indeed,

Cunningham et al (1996) state that most organizations are merely evaluating the success of empowerment with measures which are "predominantly concerned with the effect empowerment has on the bottom line of the organisation and not upon its impact on employees" (1996: 151). Firstly, one might ask, do people interpret empowerment differently and why?, because the variety of definitions discussed in Chapter Two indicate that interpretations may well vary. Moreover, the occupational psychological literature, most particularly the model of Thomas and Velthouse, suggests that one might be able to isolate those factors that contribute to making a person feel empowered as the literature on management fads implies that the mere presence of the policy may not sufficiently convince employees of its merit. To investigate this subjective nature of empowerment, an exploratory, qualitative methodology, in the form of managerial and employee interviews, is needed to probe for those factors which are perceived as attributable to whether or not a person feels empowered and in order to empathise with the organizational context of the cases. A questionnaire can then be designed to test for the generalizability of these attitudes and of other aspects of the empowerment process that the exploratory research raises as interesting.

RESEARCH METHODS

Choosing The Sample Organizations

The researcher wanted to choose established organizations for this study which claimed empowerment was crucial to their further development and which saw the programme as integral to the profile of their organization. The aim was to avoid those organizations considered as "high profile empowerers" such as Nissan, Rover and Xerox due to the danger of duplicating other research and the fear that the researcher may be denied access due to the "overloading" of such studies. Keeping clear of such organizations would also allow the researcher to get a more general view of how everyday organizations were implementing, and coping with, empowerment policies. This rationale is similar to that undertaken by other authors looking at Employee Involvement and HRM techniques (Storey, 1992; Marchington et al, 1992). The earliest stage of identifying these organizations involved reading practitioner

magazines; newspapers; conference flyers; and through word of mouth. Ideally one organization would have been researched from each of the Public, Private and manufacturing sectors as it was thought this would cover all the main sectoral sources of variation that occur in the population. The researcher found, like Crompton and Jones (1988), that gaining access to manufacturing organizations was particularly difficult. Although preliminary access was gained in two organizations from this sector, industrial relation problems in one and the fact that the other already had a research student examining the empowerment process raising problems of duplication, meant that no further research was conducted in these, or indeed any, other manufacturing organizations. However, the problem of representativeness that this might raise was, to some extent, mitigated by the inclusion of a largely engineering department, Payphones, in BT and the use of internal comparisons within the organization. Despite this, the fact that only two organizations have been studied in this investigation, suggests that the sample is not of a truly cross-sectional nature. Indeed, initial interviews held with manufacturing organizations, and indications from the literature set out in Chapter Three, imply that such organizations may be introducing empowerment for different reasons (for example, to enhance the quality of products) and further research in this area may produce different predictors of feelings of empowerment. Some of these possible differences are outlined by the differences in the experience of BT Payphones, a largely engineering Directorate. The more common use of multi-skilling in this Directorate and the belief that, by improving quality, engineers may, effectively, be doing themselves out of a job are issues which emerge here and which might best form a starting point for research into similar manufacturing environments. However, it should be noted that it is not necessarily anticipated that these general issues are the sole preserve of such organizations.

Negotiating Access

Having selected organizations from the sources outlined above, the researcher wrote letters to a contact within the organizations. This contact would usually be the Personnel Director unless a specific name was given in any of the sources used. The letter (see Appendix A) introduced the researcher and the nature of the study planned, explaining why the researcher had chosen to write to the organization concerned and

why the area of research had been selected, including the value of the research to the organization. Buchanan et al suggest that "when negotiating access it is helpful to offer a tangible product in return for co-operation" (1988: 58) and the researcher included a reference to previous research which had been conducted in another organization and wrote that "I have provided written reports with a wealth of statistical data, providing findings which have consequently been followed up by the organization due to their importance and interest to those involved" (Appendix A). The letters were followed up by telephone calls approximately two weeks later, as stated in the initial letter, and this gave the researcher the opportunity to explain in more detail to the contact or "gatekeeper" (Buchanan et al, 1988) the nature of the research and the time it would require from managers and employees. Those organizations who still expressed an interest at this stage were visited and discussions were held with the "gatekeepers" regarding the viability of the research. After these initial meetings with the "gatekeepers", research plans were drawn up (See Appendix B) so that others within the organization could be informed of the research and give their approval. At this stage the researcher was left with two very large organizations who were clearly interested in the research and required a way of evaluating the success of their empowerment initiatives: The Benefits Agency and BT.

Selecting Operating Units

Due to time and resource constraints, it was decided that studying the entirety of both the organizations was not a viable option (Hickson, 1988). Hence, it was decided to choose two operating units on the basis of their initial reactions to empowerment. The selection of these units, by choosing those which were seen to differ most in their attitudes towards empowerment would, it was believed, potentially enhance the validity of the findings (Patchen, 1965) by considering whether these differences were reflected in this new research. Selection of such a sample involves "purposive sampling" (Morse, 1989). A major disadvantage of purposive sampling is that "making an informed selection of cases requires considerable knowledge of the population before the sample is drawn" (Singleton et al, 1993: 160). In the case of BT this weakness was to some extent overcome because the selection of the units was based on attitudes expressed in the annual staff survey that is analysed by Directorate.

From an analysis of these results the Personnel and Marketing directorates emerged as those directorates which expressed the most positive and negative attitudes towards empowerment, respectively. However it was felt that as the Personnel Directorate was the driver of the initiative, the results may be misleading and, hence, the second most positive directorate was chosen: Payphones. As stated earlier, the inclusion of this Directorate was also useful in that it allowed some examination of the introduction of empowerment to a more manufacturing based organization.

In The Benefits Agency, identifying two operating units was more difficult. Whereas in BT the operating units are organised on the basis of function, in The Benefits Agency they are divided by geographical area - Districts. The initial contact, who worked at Head Office on the Quality Team, advised the researcher that the best way to isolate operating units was on the basis of their quality status i.e. whether or not they had received the organization's quality award. He referred the researcher to one of his team who travelled around the country evaluating Districts on their moves towards quality. Basing the selection of the units on the advice of this contact clearly incorporates a degree of subjectivity, and while a quality district is not necessarily one which advocates empowerment, because The Benefits Agency claimed that empowerment was necessary in order to meet quality status, it was nevertheless considered likely that this relationship did exist. Moreover, the contact's greater knowledge of the population increased the likeliness that an informed selection of cases was made. The districts were: Preston, a quality award winner and regarded by the contact as the "best example of an empowered workforce" and North Leicestershire, who had yet to apply for the award and were considered to be "a bit behind the times".

Purposive sampling relies upon the accuracy of the information on which the sampling is made. As discussed above, whilst it could be relatively safely assumed that the Staff Perception Survey used in BT was truthful and accurate, the reliance of 'gate-keepers' knowledge in The Benefits Agency is open to subjectiveness. However, the fact that this selection was made on the basis of progress towards the Quality Award reduces this subjectiveness to some extent. It is interesting that, whilst these units

were chosen on the basis of their differing attitudes towards empowerment, there was no conclusive evidence of these differences in the results. This may be due to the inaccuracy of selection methods, as discussed above; the failure of the questionnaire to accurately measure feelings of empowerment (this is unlikely due to the convergent validity suggested by the qualitative data); or may just reflect the consistency of attitudes across operating units. Research into other operating units within these organizations may prove interesting for comparative purposes and may give some indication as to why this phenomenon occurred.

Once these operating units had been selected, contact was made with a "link" person in each unit through whom the remainder of the research was arranged (Buchanan et al, 1988: 60). The establishment of a "link" who is then able to act as a 'middle man' between the researcher and the 'gatekeeper', facilitates the research in that he/she becomes "a useful administrative mechanism, but is also a valuable source of information".

Data Collection

Data were collected from three separate sources in an attempt to answer the research questions. Firstly, background information about the Organizations was gathered through internal documentary data, annual reports and union newsletters and through observation of the offices at work. Secondly, management views were gained through semi-structured interviews and, finally, employees perceptions were obtained by employing two methods: focus groups and questionnaires. Each of these different sources and methods are discussed below. Ideally, interviews with the Unions would have added a further dimension to this research and they were invited to participate. Only Union representatives from one operating unit took the opportunity to meet with the researcher whilst others sent letters briefly outlining their standpoint on empowerment. This feedback is outlined in Chapter Six and, whilst it adds to an understanding of the context of empowerment, further research might focus more strongly on the Union view of empowerment. The methods used to obtain data from managers and employees will be discussed generally at first, and then will specify the selection of the sample and other practical details.

Background Research

Documents

To give a contextual background to the attitudes expressed by managers and employees in this research, it was considered useful to gain as much documentary data about the two organizations as possible. The fact that the organizations were so large meant that Annual Reports and other 'public' information was easily available. Other documentary evidence was obtained through the "gatekeepers", such as management training manuals/videos, minutes of team briefings and management meetings, and employee perception surveys. The breadth of this data, however, is relatively limited as organizations are reluctant to release such sensitive information for fear it may end up in the wrong hands or that a competitor will recognise the identity of the organization concerned. Such problems were overcome, to a large extent, in this research both by a development of trust between the "gatekeepers" and the researcher and an agreement that sensitive information would be returned after use. Information was also obtained from the Unions represented in these organizations both as a direct request to their Head Offices and through published newsletters and documents.

However, in all cases, Rummel and Ballaine (1963) suggest that five questions should be asked before the authenticity of such documents is accepted: (1) Where was it produced? (2) When was it written? (3) Is it a valid document? (4) Who was the author? (4) May the document be accepted as true?. In this research, it was acknowledged that much of the attitudes expressed in the documents obtained, would be affected by the authors' positions within the organizations. For instance training documents and other background to the empowerment initiatives was likely to contain much optimistic management rhetoric whilst union newsletters and booklets were likely to take a more pessimistic approach. However, this subjectivity remains integral to the contextual background within which these empowerment initiatives were introduced and, as such, these documents create a good contextual backdrop for the interview, focus group and questionnaire data. The majority of the documentary data obtained is discussed in Chapter Six.

Non-participant Observation

Whereas all other techniques used in this research are secondary sources, participation allowed the researcher to investigate the organizations at first hand. As Rummel and Ballaine (1963: 92) write, "there are many aspects of human behaviour which can be studied satisfactorily in no other way". The researcher spent a day in both Benefits Agency districts and a day, which involved a team briefing about the empowerment initiative, within BT Payphones. Unfortunately, no such opportunity for observation was available in BT Marketing, due to the time constraints on staff. Non-participant observation maintains the image of the researcher as an outsider, and in all cases the researcher was introduced as such to staff. It is possible that accurate observations are made more difficult in this situation because the presence of an outsider may affect the behaviour of those being observed. However, although this was a disadvantage, non-participant observation was not being used in this research as another form of data collection (Rummel and Ballaine, 1963). Instead, the chance was taken for the researcher to learn more about the organizations, the way they operated, working conditions, and the day to day activities of staff. In this sense, the observation periods in both organizations were included as part of the research methodology primarily so that the researcher could both gain a greater appreciation of the organizational contexts and ask more relevant questions in the interviews, focus groups and questionnaires.

Managers

Although this research focuses on the effect of empowerment practices on employees, omitting management from the research would lessen its validity and reliability by ignoring vital information particularly as management construct the nature of the empowerment programme as it is experienced by employees. Moreover, the fact that organizational factors such as culture, climate and management behaviour will not be assessed independently but merely through the eyes of employees suggests that results may form part of an employees' global assessment rather than an evaluation of independent environmental events. Hence, it was felt that by considering the views of managers in addition to those of employees, such perceptions could be placed in context. For both these reasons, it was decided that a selection of managers be

interviewed from the most senior level to line managers in order to form the context for the research.

Management Interviews

The interview provides the best opportunity to gather data about managers' orientations to empowerment and their empowerment programme as it provides, "...the opportunity for the researcher to probe deeply to uncover new dimensions of a problem and to secure vivid, accurate inclusive accounts that are based on personal experience" (Burgess, 1982: 107). Interviews are based on the basic natural form of conversation, that is asking questions and giving answers. However, Mischler (1986) argues that interview research is directed at "making sense of what respondents say when the everyday sources of mutual understanding have been eliminated by the research situation itself" (1986:3). Mischler wishes interviews to be seen as the natural discourse that they are, rather than as a set of stimuli and responses which have no meaning other than themselves. Instead of the continual standardising of questions and interviewer behaviour so that all interviewees receive the same "stimulus" (an approach advocated by Miles and Huberman, 1994), Mischler argues that questions should be directed to the particular people being interviewed, changing the way the questions are asked, or the order in which they are put, according to the nature of the interpersonal encounter. In the case of the interviews in this research, such flexibility was necessary as the managers' duties and proximity to policy-making altered.

Easterby Smith et al argue that researchers are likely to be more successful if they are "clear at the outset about the exact areas of their interest" (1991: 75) and, hence, this need for structure, particularly to allow comparison between the two organizations and to enhance the validity and reliability of the research, had to be balanced with the flexibility needed for exploratory investigation. This is the intention of semi-structured interviewing that reacts to the individual situation but which follows a general outline of research questions. Semi-structured interviews also allow the respondent to answer the questions in some detail until their response is considered to be irrelevant to the main body of research. At this point the researcher can bring the subject of the conversation back to the point without interrupting the informality of the interview.

The semi-structured interview schedule used in this research can be found in Appendix C and the questions were primarily used as prompts to direct the conversation. The interviews covered the reasons why empowerment was introduced and the ways in which it had been implemented; individual's interpretations of their personal style of management; and opinions as to the success of the initiative.

Selecting The Sample

Choosing the sample for management interviews necessarily involves quota sampling but also incorporates some measure of convenience sampling due to the problem of obtaining access to busy managers. Again this sampling reduces the width and comprehensiveness of data collection but, as Singleton et al (1993: 165) remark, the use of non-probability sampling for the collection of qualitative data is not a problem, "in fact," they argue, "under these circumstances generalizing to a specified population and estimating sample precision are usually unimportant or irrelevant".

All the management interviews lasted about one hour and managers seemed happy to answer all questions. Initially the 'gatekeepers' of the organization were interviewed so that the researcher could gain basic, factual information on the setting up of the empowerment initiatives and preliminary attitudinal data. These interviews were held in closed offices in both organizations so the views expressed by both 'gatekeepers' were unaffected by the presence of others. Within the operating units, the District Managers of both Districts of The Benefits Agency were interviewed, again in closed offices. In BT, the Director of Payphones met with me in his office but the, then, Director of Marketing would not meet with me and referred me to his "direct reports" (those who worked directly for him), who were subsequently interviewed in their offices. The remainder of interviews were held in open plan offices so it might be suggested that, the fact that members of the managers' teams were within earshot, may have affected the attitudes expressed.

In The Benefits Agency the interviews were arranged by the 'links' in each District, after the researcher had asked to speak to a selection of managers of differing grades. In BT the size of the Directorates; the fact that managers were spread over a wide

geographical area; and the unfamiliarity of the 'links' with all managers made a similar sampling technique impossible. Instead the researcher chose to look at chains of command, that is that each manager interviewed was asked to select a couple of managers who worked for them. To avoid bias, the researcher asked them to choose one manager who they felt was positive about empowerment and one who had more negative attitudes. One problem which occurs in a large proportion of research studies carried out in organizations, is the limited availability of organizational members for interviews. This is partly reliant upon the degree of access to the organization, which in this research was quite good, and the interest of organizational members in the research proposal. For managers the degree of interest is often the most salient factor and, for this reason, once the managers had been selected in each organization they were sent a letter introducing the researcher and explaining the nature of the interviews (see Appendix D), as well as a copy of the research plan. The number of managers interviewed in each operating unit is shown, in Table 1, below. Interviews were not tape-recorded but notes were taken during the interviews (for rationale behind this decision, see below).

TABLE ONE: Number of Managers Interviewed by Operating Unit

	Total Number
THE BENEFITS AGENCY	
Preston: The District Manager 2 department managers 3 line managers	6
N. Leicestershire: The District Manager 3 department managers 2 line managers	6
BRITISH TELECOMMUNICATIONS Plc	
Marketing: 2 Direct Reports (of Director) 3 middle managers 2 line managers	7
Payphones: The Director 2 Direct Reports (of Director) 1 middle manager 3 line managers	7
OVERALL TOTAL INTERVIEWED:	26

Taking Of Notes

The taking of notes during a one-to-one interview is generally seen as a matter of choice; whereas long pauses to write extensive notes is not desirable during an interview, if the researcher is able to combine meaningful note-taking with the maintenance of a conversational aspect to the interview, this is particularly useful. In this situation not only is transcription of the interviews likely to be more accurate but also, as Rummel and Ballaine write, "it allows the interviewer, at times, to take his eyes off the subject without appearing to let his attention wander; this is advantageous as the interviewee may become disconcerted if he feels constantly regarded" (1963:103). Before the interviews began, the managers were asked if they minded notes being taken and were assured that what they said was confidential and that anonymity would be preserved. No members of management objected to the taking of notes.

Miles and Huberman (1994) remark that "raw field notes are usually fairly illegible and contain private abbreviations.....field notes taken during an interview usually contain half or less of the actual content.....but a write-up usually will add back some of the missing content because the raw field notes, when reviewed, stimulate the field worker to remember things said at that time that are not in the notes" (1994: 51). To try and keep the data from the management interviews as accurate as possible, the notes were written up straight after each interview. Some may argue that not tape-recording the interview introduces bias, in that the researcher will necessarily exclude some parts of the interview from the notes. The researcher believes that, in the case of exploratory interviews, and particularly when developing a "grounded" theory, such subjectiveness is, to some extent, desired. Indeed, tape-recording has disadvantages of its own. The intrusive nature of being recorded, particularly for people in positions of power, suggests that the managers may have been less likely to be fully candid if they knew their comments were being made 'on the record'.

Employees

The main focus of the research is how empowerment is received by non-managerial employees and both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed to provide

data in the light of the research questions. Firstly, groups of employees were invited to take part in focus groups where more detailed, contextual data could be obtained; secondly, following on from these focus groups, questionnaires were sent to non-managerial employees in the participating operating units, to investigate more closely the impact of the individual and the possible interaction between the issues raised. Therefore, the methods used for gathering data on employees' perceptions, are discussed in two separate sections below.

Focus Groups

The purpose of the initial employee focus groups is to gain an insight into the attitudes, cognitions, experiences and perspectives of those on the receiving end of empowerment. This is to be done both as an interesting exercise in itself and as a preliminary tool to explore topics and generate hypotheses for later quantitative research. One regularly ignored, but valid, method of qualitative research, that might be best employed in these circumstances, is the use of focus groups. Focus groups are used most widely in marketing, but are less commonly used in all other areas of social science research. They are essentially group interviews but differ in that it is the interaction between the members of the group that is most important. Indeed, the central ethos of focus groups is "the explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group" (Morgan, 1988:12). This method is particularly useful for preliminary studies as it ensures that, "issues which might have been ignored in an outsider's inventory of the topic are included" (1988:34).

Focus groups are practical in many ways too. They allow a relatively high number (6-12) of people to be interviewed at one time which saves time and resources for both the researcher and the organisation involved. The participants also, essentially, have control of the interview situation so they require less prompting and tend to direct the conversation to what they feel is important. This method is particularly good for identifying themes because if a point is seen as particularly relevant by other participants it will be elaborated and, if not, it will tend to be ignored. However, there exists a disadvantage in that the presence of dominant others may restrain the

reporting of accurate experiences and perspectives. It was found that the topics of conversation tended to follow the views of the majority. Whilst this is beneficial, in some respects, due to the fact that emergent themes were those which the general population are most likely to identify with, the failure of those who held a minority opinion to voice it openly may affect the more precise details of feelings amongst employees. This limitation was overcome by the researcher, to some extent, through the probing of exceptional comments and the direct questioning of those participants who kept quiet. However, it is still probable that the views of the majority are those which emerged. To overcome this it was decided that any sensitive areas which were raised were done in such a way that they seemed instantly acceptable, for example, "People often feel stressed and overwrought in a situation such as the one which you've described, how does it make you feel?". However, it should be noted that members of the focus groups still seemed reluctant to talk about their personal opinions, instead saying things like, "I think that people generally feel that..".

The amount of involvement needed by the researcher in a focus group interview is a matter of choice but tends to relate to the size of the group. In this research 5 or 6 people generally took part in each focus group. In this instance the interview was limited to about 3 or 4 main topics with pre-planned probes under each topic (see Appendix E) but it was only loosely referred to, as the group, as is the purpose of focus groups, tended to cover these points in their general discussions. Indeed as Walker (1985) writes, "the task of the group interviewer...is not to conduct interviews simultaneously but to facilitate a comprehensive exchange of views in which all participants are able to speak their minds and to respond to the ideas of others" (1985: 5).

Easterby Smith et al (1991: 93) state that the setting for focus groups is important and that they, "....should take place in surroundings within which the participants feel relaxed and unfrequented. This can often be on their home ground, for example in their office". In this study, all focus groups were conducted at the participants' place of work, normally in a meeting or training room with the exception of one focus group at North Leicestershire, where the only available room was the District Manager's

office. Although the District Manager was not present, it might be suggested that the location may have had some effect on the attitudes expressed by employees. The focus group interviews were recorded due to the fact that taking notes during a discussion between a group of people was impractical, likely to be inaccurate, and possibly distracting. On no occasion were the interviews disturbed by other members of staff passing through, or entering, the room being used. There was evidence that the presence of the tape-recorder inhibited some participants at first, but most relaxed after a few minutes and seemed to forget that it was there.

Selecting The Sample

Due to heavy workloads and the reluctance of the organizations to release 6 or 7 employees from their work for a couple of hours, the selection of the sample had, to a large extent, to be organized by the 'links'. In all cases it was emphasised that the researcher required non-managerial employees from a cross-section of departments and, as far as it was possible to ascertain, with a variety of attitudes towards the empowerment initiative. The reliance, particularly in BT, on the permission of managers to allow employees to take part in the focus groups, may be hypothesised as having some effect on the results. Selection bias may have occurred due to the fact that those managers who allowed such focus groups to take place may have been more open-minded to the idea of empowerment and those who refused may have been afraid of what their staff would say. However, the refusal for focus groups to take place was rare and, when they did occur, genuinely appeared to be due to lack of time or available staff. Despite this, the following problems did arise:

1) One of the Benefits Agency focus groups in North Leicestershire was unusually small (4 employees) due to the fact that the remainder of employees who were to take part were 'off sick' or taking part in training courses. Additionally, one member of the group had just been promoted to line manager level. Clearly this created problems of confidentiality for the remaining participants. As Buchanan et al (1988: 61) write, "this kind of interference demolishes the permissive atmosphere which the researcher has to create, but can be difficult to avoid". Due to the fact that it was considered unlikely that the number of participants would increase if the interview was

rescheduled, two actions were taken to prevent the loss of reliability and validity of interview: a) The 3 non-managerial participants were asked whether or not they wished the manager to be present. They stated that his presence would make little difference as he was only recently promoted and was really 'one of them' b) A further focus group was held at the smaller Loughborough office in the District to increase representativeness and to check the first interview's reliability and validity. Indeed, the mixture of optimistic and pessimistic comments which emerged suggest that the manager's presence had no significant effect.

2) One Benefits Agency focus group was held on a Friday when a lot of people were 'off sick' so a number of the chosen participants did not appear. Further participants were, therefore, opportunistically chosen from those non-managerial employees available. Luckily this convenience sampling actually gathered a cross-section of ages, departments and attitudes.

3) Access to employees for focus group participation is often prevented by workloads or resistant managers. For example, in the case of Payphones, focus groups had to be held with staff in the Support Offices who liaise with the engineers rather than with the engineers themselves, as the latter had already had time out to participate in the organization's own focus groups and BT were reluctant to release their staff for any similar, duplicating exercises. Whilst this may have had an effect on the focus group responses (Payphone engineers were considered to be more positive about empowerment than those in the Support Offices), the fact that engineers were included in the Questionnaire Sample means that these two forms of data could be compared to test for such effects. Moreover, some participants had previously been engineers and this mitigated the discrepancy to a large extent. Due to the size of the BT directorates, it was decided that two focus groups be conducted in each of Payphones and Marketing in an attempt to make the findings more representative. The profiles of the focus group participants are shown in Table 2, below.

TABLE TWO: Profiles of Focus Group Participants

	Total
THE BENEFITS AGENCY	
Preston: 7 participants: 5 women and 2 men 2 AAs; 5 LO2s Average Tenure: 4 years & 3 months	
N. Leicestershire:	
(1) 4 participants: all men 1 AA; 2 LO2s; and 1 recently promoted line manager (LO1) Average Tenure: 6 years, 11 months	
(2) 5 participants: 4 women and one man 2 AAs; 3 LO2s Average Tenure: 7 years, 5 months	16
BRITISH TELECOMMUNICATIONS Plc	
Payphones:	
(1) 6 participants: 5 women and one man 5 clerical staff and 1 senior technician Average tenure (BT): 8 years, 3 months Average tenure (Payphones): 2 years, 8 months	
(2) 4 participants: 1 woman and 3 men 2 senior technicians, 1 technical officer & one clerical officer Average tenure (BT): 15 years & 6 months Average tenure (Payphones): 9 years & 8 months	
Marketing:	
(1) 6 participants: 2 women and 4 men 2 agency staff and 4 Commos Average Tenure (BT): 10 years Average Tenure (Marketing): 9 months	
(2) 8 participants: 2 women and 6 men All Commos Average Tenure (BT): 9 years & 2 months Average Tenure (Marketing): 7 years & 7 months	24
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:	40

Before the focus group was to take place, those taking part were sent a letter (see Appendix F) which explained the independence of the research and the fact that, although the proceedings would be recorded, no-one from within the organization would have access to the tape. Again they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The tape recordings were transcribed with no cleansing of the dialogue except to protect the anonymity of the individuals participating, or referred to, in the discussion.

Analysis of Qualitative Data

As previously discussed, instead of developing pre-set ideas as to which themes would emerge from the interviews and focus groups, the researcher took more of a "grounded" theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) approach. As Miles and Huberman write, "a more inductive researcher may not want to precode any datum until he or she has collected it, seen how it functions or nests in its context, and determined how many varieties of it there are" (1994: 58). By reading through the interview and focus group transcripts, certain themes began to emerge which were then coded and compared across operating units and organizations. Coding the transcripts after completion of the qualitative research is considered a better method for there is a danger that, otherwise, as Miles and Huberman (1994) state, "new data collected to verify the pattern are being sought out selectively" (1994:70).

The approach that the researcher took was one of "pattern coding" (Kaplan, 1964) which looks for repeatable regularities between the transcripts. Pattern coding is advantageous in that it is able to reduce large amounts of data into a smaller number of analytic units; makes later fieldwork more focused; and lays groundwork for cross-case analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The danger remains, however, that the researcher will see confirmatory instances far more easily than disconfirmatory instances (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). In order to overcome this, Miles and Huberman suggest that "patterns need to be subjected to *skepticism* - your own and that of others - and to conceptual and empirical testing" (1994: 246)(sic.). Hence, by combining such research with quantitative analysis, much of the suggested bias of this approach is mitigated.

Validity and Reliability of Qualitative Data

Easterby Smith et al (1991) state that the validity of qualitative research can be evaluated by asking the question: Has the researcher gained full access to the knowledge and meanings of informants? This is elaborated by Miles and Huberman (1994) who separate internal and external validity. Internal validity is measured, they argue, by first ascertaining whether or not events have been uncontrolled and unmodified by the researcher's presence and action - "natural validity" (Warner, 1991). In this research the confidentiality of the participants and the independence of the researcher was accentuated at every opportunity (in letters, at interviews and focus groups), however it is impossible to state unequivocally that the researcher's presence did not affect the data. Additionally, the problem of subjectivity involved in the analysis of qualitative data, as discussed above, must be acknowledged. A further test of internal validity which Miles and Huberman advocate is an examination of whether the triangulation of methods (i.e. quantitative and qualitative approaches) produces convergent conclusions. If they do not, as previously discussed, this is not necessarily a sign that the methods are not valid, but that an explanation for these differences should be sought (Mathison, 1988). External validity, state Miles and Huberman, is related to whether or not the results can meaningfully be transferred across cases (Kennedy, 1979) and compared to prior theory. These questions will be answered in the final discussion chapter.

Reliability of qualitative data is centred around the question, "Will similar observations be made by different researchers on different occasions?" (Easterby Smith et al, 1991: 41). The organic process of initiatives such as empowerment may damage the reliability of studies, for example once the initiative is well established, it is possible that attitudes may change towards the process. Additionally, external events such as redundancies and, particularly in the case of The Benefits Agency, new work processes may affect people's attitudes. Clearly the researcher can not allow for these changes but, an acknowledgement that these changes may affect the reliability of results is important. Instead the researcher must consider that the study has been done with reasonable care (Miles and Huberman, 1994). That is, for example, was the data collected across the full range of appropriate settings and were the research questions

clear and the methods used congruent with these research questions? These points have already been discussed, to a large extent, previously in this chapter. Reliability and validity have been of prime concern to the researcher throughout the research but may have been weakened by the need to fit in with the practicalities of organizational life. As Buchanan et al (1988) write, "whatever carefully constructed views the researcher has of the nature of social science research, of the process of theory development, of data collection methods, or of the status of different types of data, those views are constantly compromised by the practical realities, opportunities and constraints presented by organizational research" (1988: 54).

Questionnaires

The advantage of using questionnaires in this research is that it allows the researcher to test those themes that emerge in the qualitative research amongst a wider, more representative sample whilst also investigating the responses of individuals. Additionally, the questionnaire format allows links to be made between supposedly factual data regarding factors such as biographical data, job grade and participation in various employee involvement techniques, and attitudinal responses through the use of regression analysis, so that the impact of various factors can be measured. However, the use of questionnaires requires consideration of a number of factors, as discussed below.

The use of questionnaires as a way of selecting data will mean that, inevitably, some factors which may contribute to employee empowerment will have been omitted from the questionnaire format. However, the fact that: the questionnaire was based on themes emerging from the qualitative data and previous literature; was piloted extensively; and included open questions and "other" categories, meant that these problems were negated, to a large extent. Despite possible omissions, the success in identifying common issues; the few factors entered into "other" categories; and the relatively high variance accounted for by the multiple regressions suggests that the questionnaire covered all the main factors which make people feel positively towards empowerment.

Sampling

The questionnaires were sent to non-managerial employees in the four operating units being studied in this research. Those who took part in the focus groups were sampled from the same population and the managers interviewed also belonged to these units, which means that the qualitative research can provide contextual knowledge which will help to interpret the quantitative data. In the case of The Benefits Agency the need for sampling did not occur, as all of those included in the population of non-managerial employees were sent a copy of the questionnaire. In Preston this population totalled 230; in North Leicestershire it totalled 216. The Marketing directorate of BT has a relatively small number of non-managerial employees, so all members were sent the questionnaire, totalling 135. However, in the case of Payphones, the number of employees was considered too large to include in the sample. In this case, systematic sampling was employed to select a sample, "whenever the population list is very long or the desired sample is large, it is usually much easier to draw a systematic sample than to draw manually a simple random sample" (Singleton et al, 1993: 158). To keep the number included in the systematic sample relatively similar to the other operating units, a ten per cent sample was taken from an employee database (using the sampling software: "Merit"), this sample totalled 213. However, taking a systematic sample has its dangers, "the available population listing may have a periodical or cyclical pattern that corresponds to the sampling interval. This can create serious sample biases (Singleton et al, 1993: 158) but, the fact that the BT database was listed in alphabetical order, meant that the sampling avoided such bias.

The Questionnaire Package

Dillman (1979) argues that three things can maximise survey responses: minimising costs; maximising rewards; and establishing the trust that these rewards will be delivered. In regard to the first of these suggestions, the researcher included pre-paid envelopes for the return of the questionnaires to each member of the sampled population. Herberlein and Baumgartner (1978) state that, "...high return rates are due in part to lowering the costs involved in completing and returning a questionnaire. Hence investigators regularly include post-paid return envelopes to directly reduce

costs for the respondents" (1978: 458). However, cost does not necessarily only refer to monetary spending and the cost of returning questionnaires in terms of time and privacy may also be in the forefront of a respondent's mind. It was thought that the questionnaire used in this research may appear long to respondents so it was emphasised in the cover letters sent, and at the beginning of the questionnaire, that it should only take about 15 minutes to complete (the time taken by pilot respondents). Assurances of confidentiality were also highlighted and no specific detail was requested on the questionnaire as to the respondent's name or job title nor was any coding as to the operating units explicit on the questionnaire. Regarding the maximising of rewards, it was emphasised in the cover letters that management had already been interviewed and that this was the employees' chance to have their say. This, and the fact that a management report would be published that would be available to them, was intended to increase the salience of the research to the respondents. Indeed, Herberlein and Baumgartner state that, "when the content of the questionnaire is salient to the respondent and the respondent is knowledgeable and interested in the topic, the cost of responding may be reduced, and personal input to the study may be judged by the respondent as more important" (1978: 458).

In the case of BT, there had been recent reductions in the workforce and response had been low in the internal employee attitude survey, sent out the month before. This motivated the researcher to include further incentives for the respondents. Armstrong (1975) claimed, in a review of published evidence on the use of monetary incentives, that the larger the monetary incentive used, the greater the increment in the response rate. Rather than promising money, the researcher felt that the fact that the questionnaires were being sent out close to Christmas and that monetary resources for the research were low, a luxury item may be a more practical incentive. Hence, members of BT were sent two raffle tickets, one of which they were asked to send back with the questionnaire, which was then entered into a raffle to win a bottle of champagne. Although there was evidence that some respondents felt this was a way of betraying anonymity, for example by noting on their questionnaire that they were not returning their raffle tickets for this reason, most respondents did include their raffle ticket with the questionnaire suggesting it had acted as an incentive.

Cover Letter

All questionnaires were sent with an attached, dated cover letter written on one side of University headed paper signed individually with a blue ball-point pen (Dillman, 1984). Each letter declared the identity of the researcher; the purpose of the research; and the specification of a final return date (see Appendix G). It is argued that the mention of management and union support for the research adds considerable strength and authenticity. However, although the unions were made aware of the questionnaires in both organizations and gave their approval for the research, only those in the North Leicestershire District of The Benefits Agency gave permission for this to be mentioned in the covering letter. Additionally, although the research had management support, BT suggested an endorsement by management was not explicitly mentioned to emphasise the researcher's independence and in the Preston district of The Benefits Agency the management asked, for similar reasons, to have the word "full" from "full co-operation of management" removed from the letter. Dillman (1984) argues that each letter should be addressed to the individual respondents but, not only was this not practicable due to the size of the sample, it was felt that addressing the letters would compromise assurances of confidentiality.

Distribution

Due to the fact that The Benefits Agency was being researched on the basis of District, all respondents worked in the same town or surrounding area. Hence, the researcher was able to deliver the questionnaires to the 'link' at each office who then distributed them via team leaders. The importance of completing the questionnaire was emphasised to the respondents by the team leaders at this distribution stage. In BT the sample of respondents was spread throughout the country so the questionnaires had to be internally mailed by the organization. Hence, it might be suggested that, the fact that the envelopes were personally addressed may have cast doubt upon the respondents' anonymity. The dispersion of respondents could also have decreased the motivation to fill them out for, whereas in The Benefits Agency all employees received a questionnaire so they could discuss it and see others filling it in, the isolation of those chosen in BT may have had an effect. To try and mitigate this, a voice-com (a phone call that is distributed to every employee's answering machine)

was sent by a senior manager of both Payphones and Marketing to inform people that they may be receiving a questionnaire and to encourage them to fill it out.

Once the questionnaires have been sent and a date has been established for their return, it is usual to send reminder letters to encourage the response of those who have not yet returned the completed questionnaires. There are suggestions in the literature that this should be done as frequently as is needed for an acceptable response rate (Herberlein and Baumgartner, 1978). However, there is a danger that in doing so the researcher will annoy the respondents and damage the research relationship. Generally, it is best to consider the reasons for the non-response and make decisions on further action on this basis. The 'links' in both organizations were kept informed of the response rates throughout the response period and both the line managers in The Benefits Agency and the senior managers in BT (through the use of Voice-com) thanked those who had replied, on the researcher's behalf, and encouraged those who had not to do so. After the date established for the questionnaires' return, it was decided that, although the response rates were not as high as the researcher would have wished, particularly in BT, there were identified reasons for this, as outlined above, and that it was unlikely that sending a further reminder in the form of a letter would significantly increase the number of returns.

The response rates obtained for the four operating units were: 44% (n = 95) for the North Leicestershire district of The Benefits Agency; 61.4% (n = 140) for the Preston district; 34.3% (n = 46) for the Marketing directorate of BT; and 28.8% (n = 61) for the Payphones directorate. The restrictions on the time of employees explains, to some extent, the relatively low response rate obtained from the questionnaires, particularly in BT. The rate was considerably higher in The Benefits Agency because many managers allowed their staff time at work to fill it out, whilst the geographical diversity of the BT sample meant such time could not be made available. However, the sample size was still large enough for analysis of data and tentative generalisations to the entire population, and the fact that this research is the first to look at these relationships between feelings of empowerment and personality/ organizational/ biological characteristics, means that an indication of relationships from 342

respondents creates a framework for further research on larger samples. The response rate in BT was also small due to, what appears to be, a fatigue of employee surveys. Whilst the timing of the distribution was considered carefully, so that no other questionnaires were being completed at the same time, the fact that the recent CARE Survey had received an unusually low response rate made the researcher wary of the possible low number of returns. The decision to offer an incentive to these respondents may have created a biased sample, although the choice of a relatively neutral, luxury item - Champagne, was hoped to avoid such bias.

The Design of The Questionnaires

Length

A questionnaire should generally be long enough so that it contains all questions needed to gather all the information essential to the study but short enough to guarantee as high a response rate as possible. The general rule states that the shorter the questionnaire the higher the response rate, so one might conclude that the optimal length of a questionnaire is where it covers all essential information in the fewest possible questions. However, despite this common belief, studies that have actually examined the effects of questionnaire length have found no effect or only a modest negative effect (Berdie, 1973; Champion and Sear, 1969; Mason et al, 1961; Scott, 1961; Sletto, 1940). Indeed, Herberlein and Baumgartner's study of questionnaire response rates found that, with an average questionnaire length of 7 pages, 72 questions and a less than half an hour completion time (only slightly shorter than the questionnaire used in this research), there was "no significant zero-order correlation between any of the length measures and overall responses" (1978: 452). Moreover, even when they had allowed for those factors accounting for most of the variance, the negative effect of an extra questionnaire item on response rate was still only, a negligible, 0.05%. It is even suggested by the authors that length may have a positive effect, "length, then, may signal importance to the respondent, possibly even enough to overcome the costs associated with it" (1978: 459). Hence, although the questionnaire used in this research is rather long at 10 pages, 105 questions (104 in The Benefits Agency), research suggests that this will have no or little effect on the

response rate, indeed it may even increase its perceived importance. However, to decrease any effect still further the researcher acknowledged that it "may look rather long" in the cover letter sent and emphasised that it should only take about 15 minutes to complete. The length of the questionnaire appeared to deter a number of respondents from replying, or from completing the questionnaire fully. Indeed, some respondents commented that completing the questionnaires truthfully had taken them a considerable amount of time. There was a requirement for the questionnaires to be of this length due to the need to include as many possible predictors as possible. Perhaps, now that this exploratory research has been completed, and the crucial variables have been identified, future investigations can use a more compact version of this questionnaire with the aim of achieving a higher response rate and, hence, a greater approximation to the general population.

Piloting

"The preparation of a good questionnaire requires time and thought. The questionnaire must serve its goal of providing reliable and valid data in a usable form which meets the needs of the researcher" (Cragg, 1991: 182). This, then, is the role of piloting a questionnaire prior to sending it out: to allow for any problems with the questionnaires to be identified and corrected. Piloting normally occurs through the consultation of three groups involved in the research (Dillman, 1978): colleagues; those that will use the data (management within the organisations); and potential respondents (focus group interviewees). The combined efforts of these three groups and the researcher can then isolate problems of interpretation, word meaning and content and alter them accordingly. Moreover, in this research two more groups were consulted: MBA students and the staff in the University data preparation unit.

The MBA students were consulted at an early stage, through one of the researcher's supervisors, they were asked to read the questionnaires and give feedback on them. As the majority of MBA students work in the business world it was useful to gather their comments about layout, question construction and whether or not they would complete the questionnaire. Several suggestions regarding wording (especially the clarity of instructions), positioning of questions and, most particularly, the excessive

length of Rotter (1966)'s locus of control, were given and acted upon by the researcher. These suggestions were reiterated by colleagues who also offered suggestions as to how to make the questions more specific in order to increase their validity. The questionnaires were also shown to the 'links' in both organizations, who consulted other members of the management team and who were able to make the questions more relevant to their organization (e.g. which grades would be responding to the questionnaire). They also asked for changes to be made to certain words in order that the questionnaire be more focused to their context, the specific changes made on the basis of piloting the questionnaires with management were:

The Benefits Agency: These requests were made on the basis that the grade structure within The Agency is quite specific about references to supervisor, manager etc.

Section 5: Q4 "A1/A4" and "B3 supervisor and above" added

Q9 replace "the supervisor's" with "the management's"

Section 6: all references to "manager" changed to "supervisor"

BT: These requests were made on the basis that top management do not like the word "empowerment" and try to avoid its usage.

Introduction: "your organization's empowerment programme" changed to
"...for a better life"

Section 1: Q5 "BT Apprenticeship" added

Section 7: Extra question added:
Q2 "I believe that *"...for a better life"* is about empowerment".

It might be suggested that these slight differences will affect the comparability of the questionnaires across the two organizations, but it is believed that by making the questions more understandable in their context, the items' validities are actually increased.

Additionally, in The Benefits Agency, after the focus groups had been drawn to a close, the participants were asked to read the questionnaire. This acted as a piloting exercise, to see if there were any questions which they did not understand or which contained ambiguity - no problems were raised. In BT, the questionnaires were

distributed to 6 people in the Personnel department who completed them in the researcher's presence. Not only was this process useful in identifying ambiguities (for example, Section 1, question 4 "live with parents" was added as an option) but it also allowed the researcher to estimate the average completion time: about 15 minutes. Finally, the researcher requested feedback on the questionnaire from the data preparation department at Loughborough University. Cragg suggests that, "if the data analysis is on a computer, then the questionnaire must be designed in such a way that coding and data input are both easy and error free. If another person is to input the data then seek their views on the questionnaire layout" (1991: 182). A few minor changes were made at this stage, mostly concerned with the clarity and specificity of the instructions accompanying particular questions.

The Structure Of The Questionnaire

The interdependence of the qualitative and quantitative methods employed in this research is highlighted by the fact that the management interviews and employee focus groups contributed to the construction of the questionnaire. Whilst some of the questions are based on the existing literature, the number of factors previously identified is limited and the requirement of this research was to further the understanding of empowerment. Hence the knowledge gained through the use of qualitative methods allowed the researcher to construct meaningful and original questions. However, before addressing the actual content of the questionnaire, the format of questions and the scales used to measure the responses to questions should be considered. These will be dealt with below.

Open and Closed Questions

Falthzik and Carroll (1971) conducted a study that consisted of a one question questionnaire sent to a number of personnel departments within large American organizations: half of whom received the question in an open format and half in a closed format. They found that the response rate was much higher from those organizations who received the closed question format (78%) as opposed to those who received the open format (27%). However, despite such research, the majority of

questionnaires will use of a combination of both open and closed questions as the usefulness of a particular format varies with the question asked. For example, closed questions allow answers to be compared much more easily for analysis purposes and the alternatives presented often make the meaning of the question easier for the respondent to understand. Closed questions are particularly useful when asking about factual aspects of the respondent's background (age, tenure etc.). However, used in other contexts they sometimes force the respondent to form an opinion or may not include in the alternative answers that situation which is most applicable to the respondent. To overcome this, as many categories as possible are included (piloting is a useful way of identifying these alternatives, as discussed above) and an "other, please specify" category allows the respondent to include other situations, if applicable. Closed questions are used primarily in this questionnaire for attitudes and opinions, using the Likert Scale.

The Likert Scale is employed regularly in attitude and opinion questionnaires. It allows answers to be given within a range of possible answers with attitudinally anchored termini on a numbered continuum. Usually the range gives five possible answers: strongly disagree; disagree; neither agree nor disagree; agree; strongly agree. However, two problems exist with this scale: firstly there is a tendency for respondents to circle a number towards the centre of the scale for fear of making a decisive choice and secondly, no meaning can be interpreted from the distance between the numbers on the scale. The use of attitudinal scales can commonly lead to self-reporting bias. That is that respondents may have wished to create a positive impression of themselves in the eyes of the researcher. However, the fact that responses regarding personality seemed to be relatively neutral, with no extreme scores, suggests that this effect was not a large one. More significant appears to be the fear of truthfully completing the questions, regarding their organization. One of the employees who took part in the BT focus groups stated that the insecurity of staff made them wary of being identified:

"Regarding the questionnaires, I think the trouble is, they [employees in general] *don't fill them in with the truth anyway. I mean people know you won't be showing them about, but I think people are actually frightened to put pen to paper and say how they really feel about the company"*

There did appear to be more positive views raised in the questionnaires, particularly about management, than in the focus groups but these were still lower than those found in internal perception surveys. This suggests that respondents were encouraged to respond more honestly by the fact that this study was being conducted by an external researcher. Nevertheless, the use of management interviews and focus groups has allowed the more optimistic results of the questionnaire study to be set in context, forming another 'data set' with which these other results can be compared. The fact that most of the findings from the questionnaire were corroborated by the qualitative data, suggests that, whilst attitudes may have been reported slightly more optimistically, the basic relationships between the variables have retained their validity.

Open questions are most usefully employed when an issue is complex and the relevant dimensions or critical factors are unknown, as in the definition of empowerment. They can also be used at the end of a questionnaire, as in this case, to allow people to add their own comments on the area covered by the questionnaire. Using open questions in this way allows respondents to express themselves in their own words and this often produces interesting and relevant comments (see Chapter Eight).

Questionnaire Items (see Appendix H for full questionnaire)

The questionnaire was designed to take an exploratory look at the different factors affecting empowerment, as suggested by previous literature and the qualitative data. It sought to determine whether, and to what extent, attitudes to empowerment are affected by personal background and demographics, general attitudes to work, individual personality characteristics and attitudes, perceptions of organizational culture and climate, and aspects of the empowerment programme itself. In total, the questionnaire comprised 105 items (104 in the case of The Benefits Agency) over 10 sheets which were printed on one side only and stapled together. It was separated into 7 sections each looking at these different aspects of the individual, their work, and their attitudes. The questionnaire items included in each section and the rationale for their inclusion are discussed in detail below. Where established scales have been used

in this research, their alpha coefficient of internal reliability was calculated for this sample. The differences between the alpha coefficients for the sub-samples of organization and gender were also considered and, unless specified, these were similar to each other and to that of the entire sample.

Section One: You and Your Job

Section One of the questionnaire has 19 questions which are primarily concerned with exogenous variables (Kohn and Schooler, 1993: 74) in a closed-question format. That is that it consists of variables related to gender, social background, education et cetera, the possible effect of which, on feelings of empowerment, was discussed in Chapter Four. This includes the debate over gender differences, for example the fact that The Benefits Agency has a large concentration of women employees in clerical grades whilst BT has a large number of male, blue-collar workers, suggests that employees from the two organizations may perceive empowerment differently. Moreover, a highly graded structure such as that found in The Benefits Agency, may affect the perceptions of respondents who are on the lowest 'rung' of this hierarchy. Factors such as Trade Union membership, tenure and education are also tested for in this section. Due to the confidentiality assured to respondents, there were some details about employees' actual jobs that could not be included in the questionnaire. The fact that respondents in The Benefits Agency primarily did similar jobs negated the effect of this omission, however, it is possible that differences in the jobs undertaken by BT respondents may account for the lower R^2 adjusted scores which were found in that organization. Further research might consider the effects of job content (for example, whether or not the job involves dealing with customers) over a broader sample, where issues of confidentiality are not so salient.

Questions related to orientations to work and empowerment are also included in Section One. From exploratory research it appears that people feel that the actual practice of empowerment, and taking part in "empowering" activities, takes up a lot of time. Therefore, it is suggested that the existence of dependants at home (elderly parents, children etc.) may mean that a respondent has 'no time' to be empowered and also that the presence of such significant others creates different life priorities. It was

also thought that the importance of a respondent's wage to the household may have an effect. If a respondent is the sole or main earner in his/her household, the requirement to adopt empowering behaviours in order to be appraised highly may lead to people projecting the right image without truly believing in the concept, i.e. empowerment by coercion. A similar superficial reaction to empowerment may relate to the perceived job security that a respondent has. Hence, as suggested in Chapter Four, if a person believes that redundancies are imminent, he/she may display "empowering" behaviours without really believing in them. Or, alternatively, this may lead to some employees 'detaching' themselves from the job and create widespread cynicism towards empowerment processes. Question 15:

If without having to work, you had what you would regard as a reasonable living income, do you think you would still prefer to have a paid job, or wouldn't you bother?

Would still prefer paid job	**1**
Wouldn't bother	**2**
Do voluntary work	**3**
Other (please specify)	**4**
Don't know	**5**

also looks at orientation to work and whether if people did not have to work, and yet could still receive a salary, they would do so. This question evaluates respondents' commitment to work and the organization and is also central to a recent debate about women's orientation to work. The question is taken from the British Social Attitudes Survey, as cited by Hakim (1992).

In the exploratory research, a general theme emerged whereby those who had previously been exposed to an empowerment programme, were more likely to see empowerment as a 'fad'. Hence, previous exposure to empowerment is included as a question in this section. Finally, a question was included which asked which participative techniques (based on those mentioned in documentary data and qualitative research) employees took/ had ever taken part in. This was included for comparative purposes, as a later question in Section Seven asks to what extent these same activities make them feel empowered. It was believed that this interaction between empowerment orientations to particular techniques in the abstract and empowerment in practice would provide interesting results regarding the nature of

empowerment (a similar technique was used by Travers et al, 1992 in their analysis of individualistic and collectivistic attitudes) .

Section Two

This section of the questionnaire looks at how people would like to work, independent of their current job or organization. It is intended to measure a person's disposition towards empowerment or, as it might be termed, their propensity to be empowered. The rationale behind the inclusion of this scale was to allow an examination of the interaction between individual dispositions to being empowered and their actual experiences of empowerment in practice. The scale was devised using both established scales and items which were created on the basis of the qualitative research and previous literature.

The items below are based on exploratory research, previous literature and a brainstorming session where the researcher tried to encapsulate the characteristics of empowerment:

(2) I would be reluctant to air my views to the management of an organisation which I worked for in case it damaged my career. (reverse coded)

(3) If I make a mistake I'm always prepared to admit it.

(5) I am the sort of person that likes to follow rules to give me a sense of order. (reverse coded)

(6) I often shy away from making major decisions. (reverse coded)

(8) I like to take ownership for my actions.

(14) If people trust me to do things well I normally perform better.

(16) If I meet a problem I've never encountered before, I feel confident I could make a decision about it without consulting others.

The questions shown below are adapted from the n(Achievement) scale (Steers and Braunstein, 1976), removing any specific job or organization references:

(1) I take moderate risks and stick my neck out to get ahead.

(4) I try to avoid added responsibilities. (reverse coded)

(9) I do my best when my assignments are fairly difficult.

(15) I try very hard to improve on my past performance.

The last item of this established scale is in Section 4. The development and validation of this instrument found that n(Achievement) has a mean of 4.3 and a standard deviation of 0.71. The alpha coefficient of internal reliability was 0.66 and, with a sub-sample, the test-retest correlation over two weeks was 0.72. Previous research has found that n(Achievement) correlates with job involvement (0.31) and organizational commitment (0.32) (Steers, 1971). For the present sample, the alpha coefficient of internal reliability was found to be 0.50 for the n(Achievement) scale. This was found to be considerably more reliable for men (0.59) than for women (0.43) in the sample but should be treated with caution when applied to both the male and female sample, as both coefficients are relatively low.

The questions below are taken from the scale n(Autonomy) again removing any specific job or organizational references (Steers and Braunstein, 1976):

(7) I disregard rules and regulations that hamper my personal freedom.
(10) I like to work alone.
(11) I consider myself a "team player". (reverse coded)
(12) In life, I try to be my own boss.
(13) I go my own way regardless of the opinions of others.

The development and validation of this scale found that n(Autonomy) had a mean of 3.7 and a standard deviation of 0.62. The alpha coefficient of internal reliability was 0.61 and, when tested on a sub-sample, the test-retest correlation over two weeks was 0.77. Previous research has been found to correlate -0.25 with organizational commitment (Steers, 1971). For the present sample the alpha coefficient of internal reliability was found to be 0.44 for the n(Autonomy) scale. This was found to be considerably more reliable for those in The Benefits Agency (0.47) than for those in BT (0.31). However, the coefficients are all rather low and hence results derived from this scale should be considered carefully.

Section Three

Section Three consists of two personality tests: Locus Of Control (Rotter, 1966) and Job Insecurity (Ashford et al, 1989). The wide usage of Rotter's construct of internal/ external control for evaluating people at work and its possible linkage to employees'

global assessments of the empowerment process was discussed in some length in Chapter Four. In analysing the results of this scale Renn and Vandenberg's (1991) suggestion that the analysis is not conducted, as some studies have done, by classifying the sample into sub-samples of "internal" or "external" respondents, was noted. Indeed, Rotter (1975) himself dismissed typologies or bi-modal distributions and Renn and Vandenberg suggest that earlier studies may have drawn false conclusions by not treating their results as a normal distribution. The test-retest reliability of Rotter's 29 item scale has been calculated as consistent and acceptable, varying somewhere between 0.49 and 0.83 and its validity was confirmed by Hersch and Scheibe (1967) who found that, "the performance of the subjects on the I-E scale is consistent with their performance on a variety of other self-report devices" (1967: 612). The test ordinarily consists of 29 items (23 items and 6 filler items taken from the 60 item James scale) but in this research, piloting found that people perceived the test as too long and some of the items irrelevant. To overcome this, the researcher shortened the test, retaining those items seen to be relevant to organizational life. The test used in this questionnaire was a third of the length of the original: 10 items (8 items and 2 filler items):

I more strongly believe that:

1) In the long run people get the respect they deserve in this world

Unfortunately, an individual's worth often passes unrecognised no matter how hard he/she tries

2) Without the right breaks one cannot be an effective leader

Capable people who fail to become leaders have not taken advantage of their opportunities

3) One should always be willing to admit his/her mistakes

It is usually best to cover up one's mistakes {Filler Item}

4) I have often found that what is going to happen will happen

Trusting to fate has never turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite course of action

5) Becoming a success is a matter of hard work, luck has little or nothing to do with it

Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time

6) The average citizen can have an influence in government decisions

This world is run by a few people in power and there is not much the average person can do about it

7) When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work

It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune anyhow

8) Who gets to be the boss often depends on who was lucky enough to be in the right place first

Getting people to do the right thing depends upon ability; luck has little or nothing to do with it

9) A good leader expects people to decide for themselves what they should do

A good leader makes it clear to everybody what their jobs are. {Filler Item}

10) What happens to me is my own doing

Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking

The alpha coefficient of internal reliability for this adapted scale was calculated as 0.64, being a more reliable scale for those in The Benefits Agency (0.67) than for those in BT (0.57). The fact that the scale will not be using bi-modal or typologies, but will be treating the results as a normal distribution and that previous shortening of the scale (Andrisani & Nestel, 1976) has proved valid and reliable, suggests that the researcher can assume the scale accurately measures internal/ external orientations.

Moreover, five items were included in the questionnaire from the Job Insecurity Scale (Ashford, Lee and Bobko, 1989). The scale consists of 17 items which ask how important certain features of respondents' jobs are to them, those features considered relevant to empowerment such as variety, freedom and feedback were included:

1) The freedom to schedule your own work

2) The freedom to perform your work in the manner you see fit

3) The feedback you receive from your supervisor about your performance

4) A job where you do a variety of tasks

5) A job where you do an entire piece of work from start to finish

The mean of the original scale was 69.7 with a standard deviation of 6.4. The alpha coefficient of the original scale was 0.78 and, for this adapted scale it was calculated as 0.77.

Section Four: You and Your Team

This section looks at the concept of individualism. Travers, Bacon and Storey (1995) created a new scale to measure individualism and collectivism in work-related attitudes, which they constructed using three main areas identified by Triandis, McCusker and Hui (1990): interdependence; self-reliance; and attitudes to in-groups. Individualism was assured if responses suggested, "they resist group membership, prefer to work alone and seek their own solutions to problems, and exhibit greater emotional detachment from the in-group" (1995: 3). It would appear from the literature review that there is some conflict between individualism and empowerment. Whilst empowerment is one of the initiatives to be advocated by a more individualistically orientated management and is often tied to individual appraisal schemes (particularly in The Benefits Agency), it also tends to involve team-work activities. Indeed, referring back to Rotter (1966)'s Locus Of Control, Dailey (1978) found that whilst "internals" were more likely to enjoy participative management techniques, "externals" were more satisfied with their co-workers. Hence, there appears to be some conflict as to where empowerment fits into the shift towards individualism and the inclusion of this scale is to explore this issue further. The six items that the researcher chose to use from the 18 item scale, were those which related particularly to teamwork and respondents were asked to answer these questions whether or not they worked as part of a team. Two of the items taken were taken from the factor that accounted for most of the variance in Travers et al's study - Performance Related Individualism; 1 from the second highest loading factor - Social Reciprocity; and 2 from the fourth factor - Group Affinity:

(1) If a group is slowing me down it is better to leave it and work alone

(2) It is important to me that the values of my colleagues are similar to my own (reverse coded)

(3) I like to be in a position where I have a strong affinity with my colleagues (reverse coded)

(4) I perceive myself as an active group member (reverse coded)

(5) It is important to me how I am regarded by my co-workers (reverse coded)

(6) I like to be judged by my own merits not on the performance of a team

The alpha coefficient of internal reliability for this adapted individualism scale was calculated as 0.52. This score is disappointingly low and suggests that the applicability of this scale must be treated with caution, particularly in regard to women (0.39). The seventh question in this section is taken from Steers and Braunstein (1976)'s scale: n(Achievement):

(7) I try to perform better than my co-workers

The alpha coefficient of internal reliability and the test-re-test correlation of this scale can be found in *Section Two.*

Section Five: You and Your Organization

Whereas Section Two asks respondents to answer questions on the basis of how they would like to work, Section Five asks specifically about the organization that they work for, allowing a comparison between the abstract and perceived reality as previously discussed. Eleven of the 22 items have been created on the basis of exploratory research and previous literature that highlighted those aspects of an organization's culture and climate which may affect how its employees perceive, and feel about, empowerment:

(1) My organization cares about its customers

(3) My organization believes in teamworking

(4) A feeling of "us" and "them" exists within my organization (reverse coded)

(6) My organization values the ideas put forward by its employees.

(8) My organization believes in having lots of layers of management (reverse coded)

(10) My organization has a clear vision of what needs to be done and how to achieve it.

(13) The values which my organization holds are clearly communicated to me

(14) The organizational culture encourages its employees to continue to train and learn

(16) Top management provides strong and clear leadership

(18) Morale is high in my organization
(22) I am proud to tell people which organization I work for

Eight of the items included in this section are taken from Hayes (1994)'s Employee Empowerment Questionnaire (EEQ):

(2) I have a lot of control over how I do my job
(5) I can make changes to my job whenever I want
(7) I do not have to go through a lot of red tape to change things
(9) I do not need to get the management's approval before I handle problems
(11) I have the authority to correct problems when they occur
(12) I am allowed to be creative when I deal with problems at work
(17) I am allowed to do almost anything to do a high-quality job
(19) I am encouraged to handle job-related problems by myself

Hayes based his items on the Baldridge Quality Award (Hayes, 1994), and found that 8 items loaded on to the factor which he labelled "belief that they have authority". Restricting the remainder of his work to these 8 items he calculated the scale had a mean of 3.43 and a standard deviation of 0.62. The Cronbach Alpha estimate of reliability was 0.85. Hayes also found that his EEQ had positive, significant correlations with job satisfaction (0.34), task variety (0.35), task importance (0.30), participation (0.60), organization based self-esteem (0.49) and supervisor's commitment to quality (0.21). He suggested from these results that, "empowerment is better fostered through job redesign" (1994: 45) rather than management or co-worker attitudes. That is that empowerment is achieved through real changes to jobs rather than cultural change. The use of the EEQ, a valid and reliable measure of empowerment, in this research is a useful tool to act as a further dependent variable for analysis, particularly as, unlike those questions in Section Seven, it is unrelated to differing interpretations of empowerment. For the present sample, the alpha coefficient of internal reliability was calculated as 0.77.

The remaining questions in this Section are taken from Ashford et al (1989)'s scale of powerlessness:

(15) I have enough power in this organization to control events that might affect my job

(20) In this organization, I can prevent negative things from affecting my work situation

(21) I understand this organization well enough to be able to control things that affect me

Interestingly, Jacobson (1991) found that this powerlessness scale which was used as part of a job insecurity measurement, was the most important component in relation to the antecedents and consequences of job insecurity. Whilst its relationship to job insecurity will be considered in this research, the scale is used primarily to examine the level of power which individuals feel they have in their organization and over their job. In this way, the debate over whether empowerment does lead to feelings of power amongst employees can be examined. Ashford et al found that this three-item scale had a mean of 9, a standard deviation of 2.6 and an alpha coefficient of 0.83. In this research the alpha coefficient was calculated as 0.72. Each of the items in this section were considered as separate scales (if they were derived from one) but also were broken down into manageable, meaningful factors of organizational culture and climate using Factor Analysis (see below).

Section Six: You and Your Manager

It emerged from the exploratory interviews, that the attitude of employees' immediate supervisors was perceived as central to whether or not people felt empowered. Parker and Price (1994) studied this effect with a survey of 692 workers and 141 managers in American mental health homes. They found that workers felt most empowered (which they defined as "perceived control over decision making") when they perceived their managers as both empowered and supportive. Hence, a measure to investigate this effect was added. The 5 items used in this section were taken from the Supervision module of the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann et al, 1979):

(2) My supervisor has the respect of staff

(3) My supervisor feels each member of staff is important as an individual

(4) My supervisor encourages staff to participate in important decisions

(5) My supervisor encourages people to speak up when they disagree with a decision

(6) My supervisor makes most decisions without asking staff for their opinions

Two of these items (Questions 4 and 5) collected on a factor termed "participation", the others were taken from other factors to try and cover the main issues that arose from the exploratory interviews. The "participation" factor has an alpha coefficient of internal reliability of 0.76. Several intercorrelations emerged between the factors so it has not been unusual to use a smaller version of the scale. For this adaption of the MOAQ, the alpha coefficient of internal reliability was calculated as 0.54, this rose to 0.86 if the final question was reverse coded, so the item was reverse coded on the scale. Question 1 of Section Six enquires as to the gender of the respondent's immediate manager to test for the effect, suggested in the literature discussed in Chapter Three, which suggests that women make more empowering managers.

Section Seven: You and Empowerment

The final section of the questionnaire looks at how employees feel about empowerment in general and then, more specifically, in their organization. The use of a semi-structured question:

Firstly, could you please give three words in the space below that describe your understanding of the term "empowerment".

.....

.....

to begin the section is useful, due to the fact that respondents commonly misinterpret the wording used in questionnaires (Belson, 1981). This effect is likely to be amplified in the case of "empowerment" as it is a highly value driven term which the exploratory interviews and focus groups suggest varies amongst staff. In this case, all employees may have been answering the remainder of Section Seven of the questionnaire in different ways. A more objective, less variable, option would have been to include a formal definition of empowerment. However, the researcher believes that this would have led to a loss of the richness of the data and because the contested concept of empowerment had emerged as a central theme both in the literature and the qualitative data, it was felt that the values which individual respondents placed on the

term were an important aspect of the research. Moreover, the fact that: (a) the definitions given suggested that most respondents in both organizations defined empowerment in a similar way; (b) 54% of BT respondents who expressed an opinion agreed that they thought *'...for a better life'* was about empowerment; and (c) the dependent variables were highly inter-related; suggests that respondents were generally interpreting empowerment in consistent ways. By formatting the questionnaire in this way, the subsequent questions can be understood in the context of deviant influences upon the interpretation. Yet, by restricting the answer to three words, the analysis of these varying definitions is made simpler.

Questions 2-7 of this final section ask for respondents' opinions as to whether or not they perceive empowerment as occurring in their organization. In the case of BT, where the use of the word empowerment is avoided, respondents were asked whether they believed their culture change programme was actually about empowerment. Opinions, like attitudes (see later in this Chapter), do not always reflect what occurs in the real world. More often, opinions are a result of a person's background, past experience, and psychological 'make-up' and, of course, these factors are tested for elsewhere in the questionnaire and will be considered in the analysis of the results. The suggestion in Chapter Ten that BT respondents may have been answering the empowerment questions from a slightly more abstract viewpoint, is a valuable contextual factor in this research and allows differences in the labelling and introduction of empowerment policies to be accounted for. Further research may consider whether similar abstract viewpoints are taken by respondents in other organizations where the empowerment initiative is targeted towards particular behaviours or merely where the word "empowerment" is omitted from organizational 'jargon'.

Questions 8-15 (or 9-16 in BT) refer back to question 20 of Section One. They ask respondents whether, in their opinion, the various management initiatives listed contribute to their empowerment:

To what extent do you agree that the following activities contribute to your empowerment:

(8) Regular team briefings

(9) Quality improvement teams

(10) Suggestion schemes

(11) Personal action plan

(12) Peer group meetings

(13) Training and development

(14) Multi-skilling

(15) Performance Related Pay

In Section One, respondents were asked if they participated in these activities. Hence the distinction is made between those who are making their judgements of "empowerability" on the basis of experience, and those who are answering in the abstract. This should give interesting results regarding the theory and practice of empowerment (Travers et al, 1992). Hence, the questionnaire may find that, whilst in the abstract people think of certain activities as empowering, those who encounter them in practice do not. As discussed earlier, closed questions restrict answers only to those options that the researcher gives. It was, therefore, important to ask respondents if there were any other activities which they undertook at work and perceived to be empowering. Although some further answers were given here (see Chapter Eight), it appears that the majority of empowering activities were covered in questions 8-15. Question 17 (or 18 in BT) requires respondents to rank factors according to how important they perceive them to be to their empowerment:

(17) Please rank in order from 1- most important to 6-least important, how important you believe the following factors are to whether or not you can be empowered?

Senior management attitudes ☐

Line Managers attitudes ☐

Your own personality ☐

The work that you do ☐

The Strand 2/ Personal Development training ☐

Other factors (please specify) ☐ .....

This question could be said to be sensitive to, what is termed, the "format effect". That is "respondents are more likely to endorse a particular option if it has been explicitly listed, than if they have to spontaneously think of it for themselves" (Foddy, 1993: 8). The format effect, rather like the disadvantage of closed questions, implies that by listing a number of factors to be ranked, one may unconsciously exclude other, possibly more important, factors and yet this would be impossible to detect. Two methods were used to overcome this problem: firstly, a conscious effort was made to include as many relevant factors as possible, this was achieved through identifying factors from exploratory interviews, previous literature, meetings with the 'links' and piloting; secondly, a box was included which was labelled "other factors (please specify)". This, it was hoped, would encourage respondents to think more carefully about whether or not other factors, not explicitly listed, could have an effect on empowerment. Very few other factors were given by respondents. Finally, a space was left at the end of the questionnaire where respondents were asked to add any other comments which they had regarding empowerment in general or within their organization and this encouraged many responses. Unfortunately, however, in a few cases, the writing was illegible and, hence, these particular comments had to be excluded from the results.

The Use of Attitudinal Scales

Lee (1993:75) claimed that "Respondents wish to manage impressions of themselves in order to maintain their standing in the eyes of the interviewer". Because of this a researcher must always be aware that when people are asked questions about their feelings, actions or emotions both in an interview situation and in questionnaires, the respondent will act to protect him/herself and portray themselves positively. The researcher must be aware that attitudes are not always contingent with actual behaviour. It is a proven psychological phenomenon, illustrated by La Piere (1934), that people often say one thing and do another in practice. Hence, when analysing the results of these questionnaires, the fact that the attitudes expressed may not necessarily be borne out in practice must be considered.

Describing The Sample

Gender Composition

The sample of respondents consisted predominantly of women, with over three-fifths of respondents being female (62.6%, n = 214). This is a higher ratio of working women than the national average in the U.K. which is calculated as 56% of men to 44% of women (Hammond, 1994) and is likely to be due to the high number of women employed in The Benefits Agency and in Marketing professions (see below). The ratio may also reflect more widely the higher incidence of women in non-managerial jobs (Davidson, 1996). There was a predominance of female respondents in The Benefits Agency (74.5% of sample were women), whereas in BT the respondents were more likely to be men (63.6%). This would suggest that we are looking at two very different samples as regards gender composition and hence, the possible effect of gender when making comparisons between the two organizations must be considered. Moreover, whilst the gender composition of The Benefits Agency regions is relatively similar with both containing a large percentage of women, there is a relationship between gender and operating unit in BT with 78.7% of respondents in Payphones being men compared to 43.5% in Marketing.

Age

The respondents' ages range from 17 to 64 years of age with an average age of 32.42 years. 68% (n = 229) of respondents fall between the ages of 22-36 indicating that the respondent sample is relatively young which might be expected in a non-managerial sample. Those in BT had an average age of 36.56 years, significantly higher than the average age of those in The Benefits Agency (30.59 years) ($t = -5.38$, $df = 337$, $p < 0.001$). Overall, the female respondents (Mean = 31.29 years, s.d. = 10.01) in the entire sample were significantly younger than the males (Mean = 34.31, s.d. = 9.17). This difference was significant at the 1% level ($t = 2.78$, $df = 337$: $p < 0.01$). An analysis of variance with age as the dependent variable; organization as the independent variable and gender as the covariate showed that there was a significant difference between organizations ($F = 14.90$, $df = (2, 336)$, $p < 0.005$), but gender was non-significant ($p = 0.349$). Hence this suggests that gender does not have much effect on the age compositions for the two samples and that age is more directly related to

organizational membership. Generally, men and women in BT were significantly older than men and women in the Benefits Agency.

Presence of Dependents at Home and Earner Status

It was suggested in the literature that the presence of dependents at home may affect orientations to work and also the extent to which employees feel that they are able to commit themselves to various empowering activities. This literature (Goldthorpe et al, 1968) suggested that workers with young families give priority to this aspect of their life and are less likely to spend time and energy on work-based activity. In this sample, 43.2% had dependents at home but this varied between the organizations. 59% of respondents in BT had dependents at home compared with 36.2% in The Benefits Agency and this may indicate why security at work emerged as particularly important to those who took part in the focus groups in BT. Moreover, women were less likely than men to have dependents, indicating that some of the men's dependents may be non-working wives. Separate chi square analyses were conducted for the relationship between gender and dependents in the two organizations. These revealed that whilst there was no difference between men and women in the possession of dependents in The Benefits Agency, there was a relationship in BT ($\chi^2 = 13.51$, $p < 0.005$). In BT men were far more likely than women to have dependents ($\chi^2 = 13.51$, $p < 0.005$). Indeed, of the 59% of respondents who had dependents in BT, 79% were male. This suggests that male respondents in BT appeared to have a much more "traditional" role in the family, with dependents at home, whereas in the Benefits Agency, men and women did not differ in this respect reflecting, perhaps, the more empathetic attitude in The Benefits Agency towards working women with dependents. Indeed, one female respondent from The Benefits Agency stated that children's activities were provided by her organization and that one of the activities which she found most empowering at work was to *"Organize a playscheme during school holidays for the children of staff"*. In the entire sample, respondents were most likely to be joint earners (49.1%) and this was the case in both organizations, perhaps reflecting a more general trend for dual-career partnerships (White, Cox and Cooper, 1992). However, there was a relationship between the organizations and earner status with those in BT more likely to be the main earners than those in The Benefits

Agency, and those in The Benefits Agency more likely to be joint earners ($\chi^2 = 47.4$, $p < 0.005$). This seems to further reflect the additional financial responsibility placed on those in BT.

Separate chi square analyses were conducted for each organization to explore the relationship between earner and gender. In the Benefits Agency there was a relationship between gender and earner status ($\chi^2 = 30.75$, $p < 0.005$) with women (57.7%) being far more likely than men (35%) to be the joint earner and men being much more likely to be the main earner (21.7%) than women (1.7%). The percentages of those who were main earners or who lived with parents were relatively similar for both sexes. In BT there was not a significant relationship between earner status and gender, suggesting that any population differences between gender in earner status are over-ridden by the effect of the organizational context. About equal proportions of men and women were the sole earner. However, of the 29% of the BT sample who were main earners, 80.6% were male and of the 43% of BT respondents who were joint earners, 60.9% were male. Hence it seems that in BT, and particularly in Payphones where 36.1% of respondents were main earners, there is a more traditional male workforce with more financial responsibility.

Education

92.1% (n = 315) of the respondents had O-levels/ CSEs/ GCSEs and 50.6% (n = 173) had A-levels. Hence over half of the sample had reached a good academic standard which might have been expected considering the status of the organizations involved and the inference that these organizations would have relatively stringent selection procedures. Chi square tests were conducted on educational qualifications to determine the difference between the sub-samples: organizations and men and women. Interestingly, whilst women (96.3%) were more likely than men (85.9%) to have GCSEs/ O-levels (there was no relationship between gender and A-level attainment), it was the men who were more likely to have gone on to get a degree (19.5% compared to 9.3%), but women who were more likely to have achieved a higher degree (3.3% compared to 1.6%). Of these women who obtained a higher degree, 85.7% worked in the Benefits Agency whilst one worked in BT Marketing. As regards

differences between the organizations, only two qualifications were related to organization: those in The Benefits Agency (58.3%) were more likely to have A-levels than those in BT (34.6%) ($\chi^2 = 16.55$, $p < 0.005$) and to have GCSEs/ O-levels (94.5% as opposed to 87.9%; $\chi^2 = 4.584$, $p < 0.05$). There was a relationship between gender and A-level attainment in The Benefits Agency, with 67.9% of those with A-levels being women ($\chi^2 = 7.49$, $p < 0.005$), however no such relationship was found in BT, suggesting again that the relationship between organization and A-level attainment is not merely related to the different gender compositions in each organization. Again in The Benefits Agency, a relationship was found between gender and GCSE/O-level but this was not found in BT.

In BT 7.5% had BT apprenticeships, where all but one holding these were in Payphones, making up 11.5% of Payphones sample. Moreover, chi squares calculated for regions produced interesting results as regards educational qualifications. In Payphones, respondents were less likely to have national examinations, with 83.6% having GCSEs/ O-levels) compared to 93.5% in Marketing; 97.1% in Preston and 90.5% in Leicester ($\chi^2 = 11.749$, $p < 0.001$) and only 26.2% having A-levels compared to 45.7% in Marketing; 65.7% in Preston and 47.4% in Leicester ($\chi^2 = 28.13$, $p < 0.005$). As was suspected from the professional status of Marketing, respondents in that sample were more likely to have a degree (19.6%) and professional qualification (17.4%) than those in the other operating units. It appears from some of the comments which were made on the questionnaires that many of the employees in The Benefits Agency are aware of their relatively high educational attainment but feel frustrated in that they are not promoted on this basis:

"It is not available to all, it depends on whether or not your face fits. They do not recognise the importance of educational qualifications. The reward scheme and pay is so low that workers don't want extra responsibility! Empowerment should equate to financial gain and it doesn't" Female, Age 24

"Empowerment in this office means getting the A4s (LO2s) to do as much B3 (LO1) work as possible, because of lazy incompetent B3s and HEO/Senior managers who want the work done for the cheapest cost, often irrespective of the quality of work done. A lot of A1s and A4s are better qualified and more competent than the grades above. The people in the grades above know this and feel threatened, therefore promotion will continue to be given to 'time-served' members of staff, preferably educationally unqualified (or virtually), despite capabilities. I understand that

educational qualifications doesn't automatically mean a person would be better as a supervisor/ manager, but going to the other extreme of holding back highly qualified people for whatever the reason, cannot surely be good for any organization. Get the 'old-school' managers out!" Female, Age 28

Yet BT employees, particularly in Payphones, seemed frustrated that their organization would not support them to become better qualified:

"Now would be a good time for me to go back to college to gain higher professional qualifications but BT do not seem to have any interest in backing me to do that. The company has helped me only so far and when I look for continued help the attitude is 'consolidate what you have'. Well at present those opportunities are not there so to continue in part-time education would empower me for the future but BT do not seem to see that" Male, Age 32

Grade Membership

In The Benefits Agency, 19.7% of those who specified their grade were A1s, the lowest administrative grade whilst 80.3% were A4s. In BT, the grade structure is more complicated and varies across operating units. Of those who specified their grade, 17.6% were TSLs, 17.6% were COs, 47.3% were Commos and 17.6% were members of another grade, normally senior technicians and omitted engineering grades. from Payphones. The fact that these grades cannot be compared across organizations, or across operating units in BT, means that grade in this research, merely acts as a descriptive variable and will not be included in further analysis.

Job Status

Overall 84.8% of respondents worked full time, and this differed significantly according to gender ($\chi^2 = 10.60$, $p = 0.001$). 20.1% of women worked part-time as opposed to 7% of men. The number of women working part-time in this sample appears to be lower than the national average (approximately 50% of employed women are temporary or part-time workers, Davidson, 1996). There may be two explanations for this: firstly the fact that the respondents are quite young may mean that the women employed have yet to consider becoming part of a more flexible workforce; and, secondly, the women in the sample may be more career orientated than the average population of working women. A t-test was performed to see if women working part-time were older than those working full-time, although those women working part-time were slightly older (mean age = 32.56 years; 30.96 years

for full-time) this effect was not found to be significant suggesting that women in this sample may merely be more career orientated than the wider population.

Moreover, there is an association between part-time work and the organizations (χ^2 = 7.21, $p < 0.005$). 18.7% of those who worked in BA were part-timers compared to 7.5% in BT. Separate chi squares were calculated to test for the relationship between gender and job status in the two organizations, whilst there was a relationship between job status and gender in The Benefits Agency, a similar relationship was not found in BT, suggesting that the relationship between the organizations in job status is not related to any wider gender effects. Instead, it is suggested that the higher proportion of part-time workers in The Benefits Agency, may be related to the good maternity leave and part-time benefits offered to those in Civil Service.

Team Membership and Responsibility for Staff

Overall 96.8% of the sample worked as a team, and there was no indication of a relationship existing between team membership and gender, organization or operating units. This, therefore suggests that team membership is a universal phenomenon throughout this sample, this may reflect a more general shift to the values of teamworking or be a more specific factor related to empowerment. However, it might be possible that the difference between teamworking in manual (sharing skills) and clerical (sharing ideas) jobs may affect perceptions of teamworking between employees who work in these different job areas. Yet, when this was examined, there appeared to be no difference between the operating units in either organization, with the difference instead occurring between the two organizations. Only 14 of the 342 respondents were responsible for staff and this was associated with organization. Those in BT were more likely (9.3%, n = 10) than those in BA (1.7%) to be responsible for staff and this was particularly true of Payphones where 9 of those who had staff worked, this result was expected due to the fact that Senior Technicians in Payphones are generally responsible for a number of engineers. Senior Technicians are responsible for staff in that they offer technical support for the engineers but they do not manage them and are not considered of a managerial grade. Hence, as was

expected of a non-managerial sample, most respondents were not responsible for any staff.

Tenure

Respondents had been working in their organization for an average of 8.47 years with 77.3% having an organizational tenure of less than 12 years. This is comparable to the latest Labour Force Survey (Office for National Statistics, 1997) which found that the greatest proportion of the workforce (21%) had been with their present employer for more than five years but less than ten years. BT staff had worked in their organization for significantly longer than their Benefits Agency counterparts ($t = -5.71$, $df = 328$, $p < 0.001$) with their average tenure being 11.75 years, seemingly longer than the national average, but did not differ regarding length of tenure in role or grade. The respondent sample had been in their present role for an average of 3.12 years and in their present grade for an average 5.92 years suggesting that promotion and job rotation are not frequent in the organizations concerned.

Men were likely to have both a longer organizational and role tenure than women respondents. Men had been working in the organization for an average of 9.85 years (s.d. = 7.72) with women having worked an average of 7.64 years (s.d. = 7.12), this difference was significant at the 1% level ($t = 2.65$, $df = 328$, $p < 0.01$). Male respondents had worked in their present role for an average of 3.79 years (s.d. = 4.19) with women having worked an average of 2.72 years in their role (s.d. 4.35). This difference was significant at the 5% level ($t = 2.20$, $df = 332$, $p < 0.05$) and is likely to be related to the difference in the overall organizational tenure. Separate t-tests were conducted for the two organizations to see if tenures differed on the basis of gender in these two organizations.

In the Benefits Agency, no significant differences were found for length of tenure between men and women. However, in BT men had a significantly higher average organizational tenure of 12.91 years compared to 9.82 years for women ($t = 2.07$, $df = 102$, $p < 0.005$); a significantly higher grade tenure being 7.88 years for men and 3.59 years for women ($t = 3.80$, $df = 103$, $p < 0.005$); and a significantly higher role tenure,

being 4.95 years for men and 1.62 years for women ($t = 2.07$, $df = 102$, $p < 0.05$). It is suggested here that this difference in tenure between men and women accounts for the significant differences in tenure which were found between Marketing and Payphones where the gender compositions differ markedly. This is confirmed by the results of t-tests conducted on tenure and Directorate which show very similar statistical outputs to that of the gender t-tests for BT. As suspected, respondents in Payphones had worked in BT for significantly longer than those in Marketing ($t = 2.07$, $df = 102$, $p < 0.005$) and subsequently had significantly longer grade ($t = 2.30$, $df = 103$, $p < 0.05$) and role ($t = -5.74$, $df = 102$, $p < 0.001$) tenures. However, when a Simple Factorial Anova was conducted to test for the role of gender in these relationships, it was revealed that whilst there was a significant effect on tenure by organization ($p < 0.005$) this was not true for gender when it was examined as a covariate($p = 0.423$).

Previous Exposure to Empowerment

Overall, 50.1% (n = 168) of respondents had been exposed to empowerment previously in their careers. An association was found between previous exposure and organization, with a far smaller proportion of BT respondents (24.8%) than BA respondents (61.1%) having had previous experience of empowerment ($\chi^2 = 37.31$, $p < 0.005$). Finally, there was an association between previous exposure and operating unit with those in Preston District (66.2%) being considerably more likely to report being exposed to empowerment before:

"Management need a continued approach not just a go at it every now and then, as it is at the moment. The idea of empowerment is a good one but I have not yet seen it work in our organization and don't think it will unless there is more commitment from management" Female, Age 20

"Empowerment was raved about constantly, with phrases like 'inverted pyramid' for some considerable time but like most other 'fly by nights' it doesn't seem to have taken off like originally planned" Female, Age 23

The difference between the organizations in terms of exposure is interesting in that in Chapter Six it was explained that whilst the term "empowerment" had been used in BT in the past and similar initiatives had been introduced, the programme was relatively new to the Benefits Agency culture. It is suggested here that there may be three reasons for this apparent contradiction. Firstly, as is implied by the quotes given

above, The Benefits Agency introduced their policy earlier than in BT and employees may have perceived that "empowerment" has been put on a "back-burner" in recent times and are in actuality answering this question in relation to the present initiative. Secondly, exposure to empowerment may have been at a previous employer which is being compared to the present initiative and, as such, it could have implications for these findings. Alternatively, the numbers who report that they have been exposed to empowerment previously in their careers are surprisingly high for a new scheme and may suggest that people are merely using the term loosely.

Trade Union Membership

Over half of the overall sample were members of a trade union (54.5%, n = 186). Whilst this is considerably higher than the national average of 32% (Millward et al, 1992), it might still be considered low given that the sample incorporates a Public Sector organization, which are traditionally highly unionised (public sector unionisation in 1987 was estimated by Incomes Data Services to be 81%), and an engineering division (BT's overall unionisation was 80% in 1989, see Chapter 5). One reason for this is likely to be related to the general trend away from trade union membership since 1979. Arguably, the decline in Trade Union membership over the past 20 years and the youth of the sample, may indicate that many employees merely had never been members of a union and did not see the need to be one in the new, unitarist organizational climate:

> *"I think it's like, political, I mean unions just aren't as strong as they used to be. When I joined the union was evident and encouraged me to join but now, I don't know, do they approach new staff?"*
>
> Female participant of Benefits Agency Focus Group

Secondly, there were a high number of women in the sample which may have reduced the percentage overall as women are generally less likely to be trade union members (Davidson, 1996). Indeed, a higher proportion of men (69.3%) than women (45.8%) were members of a union ($\chi^2 = 17.75$, $p < 0.005$) which reflects what one would expect in the wider population. Moreover, a far higher proportion of BT employees (75.5%) than BA employees (45.1%) were Trade Union members ($\chi^2 = 27.17$, $p < 0.005$). Separate chi squares were calculated to explore whether the difference in

union membership between the two organizations was explained by their differing gender compositions. Whilst there was no relationship between gender and trade union membership in The Benefits Agency, men were far more likely than women to be members of a trade union in BT ($\chi^2 = 15.59$, $p < 0.005$). This is likely to be due to the fact that the Communication Workers Union is a traditional, male engineering trade union which is unlikely to attract women members. Also the fact that Payphones is highly engineering based will accentuate this relationship, indeed there was a further relationship between operating unit and trade union membership with Preston having the lowest proportion of Trade Union members (38.6%) and Payphones the highest at 85%. All those who belonged to a union in BT were members of the CWU and all union member respondents in Preston belonged to the CPSA, however in Leicester 28.3% of those who were members of a union, were members of PTC. The trade union culture which prevails within the two organizations is also important, and the fact that the CWU still determines pay at a national level through collective bargaining may increase the relevance of membership to BT employees. The decentralisation of pay determination in The Benefits Agency to the District level may lessen the significance of unions for members in these individual units.

FACTOR ANALYSIS

The following section presents: the resulting factors from factor analysis of the "Propensity to be empowered" scale (Section Two of the questionnaire) and the "You and Your Organization" scale (Section Five); and the reliability coefficients obtained for these factors. Taking an overall single score for these scales would not be as informative as performing factor analyses, as the aim of the questionnaire study is to identify those aspects of a person's disposition/ organizational culture and climate which are related to feelings of empowerment. Factor analysis is a method by which data is broken down into a meaningful, manageable number of factors by the identification of underlying themes or dimensions. It is a preparatory step for further bivariate and regression analysis. The method of factor analysis employed used Principal Components Analysis with Varimax rotation to extract orthogonal factors using SPSS for Windows (SPSS Inc, 1995).

The primary aim of factor analysis is to find common factors, that is those factors which contain 2 or more items with significant loadings. Child (1970) argues that, essentially, it is only the common factors which are required in an analysis and he suggests Kaiser's criterion as one way to isolate them. Kaiser's criterion works on the rule that only factors which have latent roots (eigenvalues) of more than 1 should be considered. Child states that this method of obtaining the common factors is particularly suitable for principal components analysis which was used in this research. However, he also suggests using Cattell's (1966) scree test which is based on the graphical representation of the descending variance accounted for by the factors, with the cut-off point coming where eigenvalues seem to level off. The SPSS package used allowed both of these techniques to be employed and the two main factor analyses which were performed, revealed a total of four factors on one scale and five factors on the other.

Child (1970) suggests that factor loadings should be accepted if they are greater than $\pm$ 0.3 provided the sample consists of more than 50 respondents. All factors in the factor analyses performed in this research had loadings of more than $\pm$ 0.3 and most were much higher than this. The inclusion or otherwise of missing values appeared to have little effect but, the researcher decided to exclude all those respondents who had not completed every item on the inventories from the factor analysis.

The importance of sample size in relation to the 'subject to item' ratio was discussed by Kline (1987). He argues that the minimum ratio should be 3 to 1 where the sample size is at least 100. In this research, the sample size, even when missing cases were deleted listwise, was large enough to produce meaningful factors and the ratio remained much higher than the minimum suggested by Kline. In the following sections, the resulting factors from analysis will be presented in total with a brief interpretation of these factors at the end.

Identification of Factors from the "Propensity to be empowered" scale.

Factor analysis was performed on the 16 items measuring "Propensity to be empowered" and Table 3 presents the summary of these factors. Factor analysis

produced 4 reliable factors that in total accounted for 48.5% of the variance. So that easy reference could be made to the factors, the researcher gave each factor a "subjective" label that best described the content items, these are presented in Table 4 which also shows the factor loadings of each item.

TABLE THREE: Summary of Factors - Personal dispositions to work.

FACTOR	LABEL	EIGENVALUE	%VARIANCE	%CUMVARIANCE
1	Desire for Challenge and hard work	3.20	20.0	20
2	Avoidance of Responsibility	1.94	12.1	32.1
3	Autonomy/ Independence	1.46	9.1	41.2
4	Team Orientation	1.16	7.3	48.5

TABLE FOUR: Factor Analysis of the "Propensity to be empowered" Inventory (48.5% of the variance)

FACTOR ITEM	LOADING ON FACTOR
Factor 1: Desire for Challenge and hard work (20%)	
Improving on past performance	0.7105
Taking ownership for actions	0.6866
Performing better if people trust you to do well	0.6391
Doing best when assignments are fairly difficult	0.6194
Always prepared to admit making a mistake	0.3566
Factor 2: Avoidance of Responsibility (12.1%)	
Shying away from making major decisions	0.7632
Trying to avoid added responsibility	0.6286
Following rules to give a sense of order	0.4798
Feeling confident enough to make a decision about something you've never encountered before without consulting others	- 0.3994
Reluctance to air views to management in case it damaged career	0.3724
Factor 3: Autonomy/Independence (9.1%)	
Going own way regardless of opinions of others	0.7096
Disregard of rules and regulations that hamper personal freedom	0.6738
Being own boss	0.5682
Taking moderate risks and sticking neck out to stay ahead	0.4928
Factor 4: Team Orientation (7.3%)	
Liking to work alone	0.8073
Not considering oneself a team player	0.6410

A Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was calculated for each of these subscales to test their internal reliability. Tests were also conducted to see if the exclusion of any of the items from the scales would improve their reliability. However, in no case was the exclusion of an item found to increase the alpha coefficient of the scale and hence no items were handicapping the factors' reliability. Table 5 shows the alpha reliability for each of the four factors, along with the Cronbach Alpha scores of reliability for each organization. Only one of these factors - Desire for Challenge and Hard Work - had a high enough reliability to be considered a true and reliable factor so the remaining three, although being included in some of the analysis, will be treated with caution and all three will be excluded from the regression analyses in Chapter Eight.

TABLE FIVE: Internal Reliability Coefficients for Factors extracted from "Propensity to be empowered" scale.

FACTOR	NO. OF ITEMS	CRONBACH ALPHA
Desire for Challenge and Hard Work	5	0.68
Avoidance of Responsibility	5	0.48
Autonomy/ Independence	4	0.51
Team Orientation	2	0.41

FACTOR INTERPRETATION OF "PROPENSITY TO BE EMPOWERED"

Factor 1: Desire for Challenge and Hard Work

This factor consists of five items and accounts for 20% of the variance. It covers those aspects of individuals' personalities which welcome a challenge and hard work. Such people wish to improve on their past performance, do their best when their targets are fairly difficult et cetera. The emergence of this as the major factor is not surprising as, as discussed in the review of the literature, empowerment requires people to take ownership and make decisions rather than just following a set of rules, hence it would seem that those who score higher on this factor are more likely to thrive in an empowered environment. Moreover, if people who score highly on this scale are not interested in being empowered, it suggests that this relationship must be affected by a further interacting factor.

Factor 2: Avoidance of Responsibility

This factor consists of five items and accounts for 12.1% of the variance. To some extent it represents the antithesis of Factor 1 in that it incorporates issues relating to those who prefer to shy away from making decisions and who like to follow rules rather than taking the initiative. Because these items were reverse coded for analysis purposes, a low scorer on this factor is most likely to avoid added responsibilities.

Factor 3: Autonomy/ Independence

This factor consists of four items and accounts for 9.1% of the variance. It relates to those aspects of respondents' personalities which are associated with taking risks and getting ahead regardless of others. It is not strictly an individualistic personality trait because it does not only relate to the disregard of other workers, but also to the rules and regulations which govern work practices. This is an interesting factor, as it would suggest that people who score highly on it may not necessarily be interested in empowerment, due to the fact that they go their own way anyway. Perhaps it is these types of people who see empowerment as merely authorizing what they are already doing.

Factor 4: Team Orientation

This factor consists of two items and accounts for 7.3% of the variance. It is related to whether or not people prefer to work as part of a team or on their own. Those who score higher on this factor are more likely to want to work alone and any correlations found between this factor and the dependent variables will help to further understand the relationship between teamwork, team orientation and empowerment.

Identification of Factors from the "You and your Organization" scale.

Factor analysis was performed on the 22 items measuring organizational culture and climate and Table 6 presents the summary of these factors. Factor analysis produced 5 reliable factors that in total accounted for 54% of the variance. So that easy reference could be made to the factors, the researcher gave each factor a "subjective" label that best described the content items, these are presented in Table 7, below, which also shows the factor loadings of each item. A Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient was calculated for each of these subscales to test their internal reliability. There were not

found to be any items which increased the reliability coefficient considerably and so none of the extracted items were omitted from the scale. Table 8 shows the alpha reliability for each of the five factors. One of the factors - Bureaucracy - did not appear to have a high enough reliability to be considered a true and reliable factor. Hence, although it will be included in some of the analyses in Chapter Eight, it will be treated with caution and will be excluded from the regression analyses. Separate factor analyses were performed for each organization but the factors generated were very similar to those produced for the whole sample.

TABLE SIX: SUMMARY OF FACTORS - Organizational Culture and Climate.

FACTOR	LABEL	EIGENVALUE	%VARIANCE	%CUMVARIANCE
1	Freedom and Autonomy	6.37	29	29
2	Customer and Staff Care	1.98	9	37.9
3	Power, Security and Morale	1.32	6	43.9
4	Vision and Direction	1.19	5.4	49.4
5	Bureaucracy	1.02	4.6	54

FACTOR INTERPRETATION OF "YOU AND YOUR ORGANIZATION"

Factor 1: Freedom and Autonomy

This factor accounts for 29% of the variance and is labelled "Freedom and Autonomy". The factor actually consists of seven of the eight items taken from the Employee Empowerment Questionnaire (Hayes, 1994), the eighth item "I do not have to go through a lot of red tape to change things" loaded onto the fifth factor - "Bureaucracy" - in this analysis. Not only does this confirm the relative reliability of Hayes' scale but it also indicates that the actual re-design of work to give more freedom and autonomy is a distinct feature of organizational culture and climate. This is reflected in some of the comments made by employees on their questionnaires, suggesting that this factor is accurate and reliable:

"I can undertake certain tasks with advice if necessary and without first obtaining clearance from my supervisor, and control such tasks or duties through to completion" Female, Age 35, The Benefits Agency

"I can hire and sack staff who work for me and they can be either B3s [LO1s] *or C3s* [HEOs] *(grades higher than me)"* Female, Age 30, The Benefits Agency

"When my Director is away from the office, he will trust that I make the right decisions, in his absence, the word trust is important for me personally, it states satisfaction of my performance" Female, Age 32, BT.

Factor 2: Customer and Staff Care

Customer and Staff Care accounts for 9% of the variance. It incorporates issues such as dedication to employee training and development, communication of organizational values and customer care. This factor is interesting in that some of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two indicated that the change of emphasis towards customer requirements was actually taking place at the cost of staff care.

" When my supervisor is not available - stepping into his role and helping other staff with difficult decisions about work/ authorizing payments etc - dealing with customer queries" Female, Age 24, The Benefits Agency

"If empowerment is used as a cost-cutting exercise and it is not backed up by properly funded training it can be a bad thing and mistakes can be made, the customer loses." Female, Age 46, The Benefits Agency

Factor 3: Power, Security and Morale

This factor accounts for 6% of the variance. It incorporates the powerlessness scale of Ashford et al (1989) which was originally designed to predict feelings of job insecurity. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that morale also loads onto this factor. This relationship indicates that employees may experience some form of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975), in that those who score low on this scale have been frustrated by the inability to do things their way, are fearful that they will not be able to secure their livelihood and consequently demonstrate a lack of morale. Such feelings seem to relate to the attributional and interpretative styles, as suggested by Thomas and Velthouse (1990). Again, respondents' comments suggested that this factor was one which was applicable to their experiences:

"You must ensure empowerment does not lead to degrading. Your supervisor must be willing to help if needed. There must not be a feeling of being used - possibly dictated by the supervisor themselves" Male, Age 27, The Benefits Agency

"Empowerment seems to represent the manager's ability to 'off-load' his responsibility to the lower paid members of his staff. In my organization the emphasis

is to be empowered to gain job security. However, in reality, staff often can read between the lines" Female, Age 29, The Benefits Agency

"The government's cost-cutting and constant disregard for civil servants and the way they have reduced (in real terms) the wages of staff plus recent revelations about privatisation makes morale almost non-existent and makes it very difficult for people to motivate themselves to get involved" Female, Age 24, The Benefits Agency

Factor 4: Vision and Direction

This factor accounts for 5.4% of the variance and centres around issues of pride in the organization, where this appears to relate to the strength of leadership and achievement of goals and whether the organization values the ideas put forward by its employees. Essentially, then, this factor is concerned with whether employees consider their organization to be a good firm to work for and may, plausibly, give some indication of an employee's commitment to the organization. The fact that often these variables are seen negatively, reducing commitment, was demonstrated by employees' comments:

"I feel that not enough information or respect is given to people of my grade and we are not seen as important enough to discuss these matters with"
Female, Age 28, The Benefits Agency

"The civil service uses short sighted, fire fighting management techniques. It is not remotely interested in empowerment, it is a very dictatorial organization. Training and career development are not a priority unless it suits them (i.e. Investors In People Award), and speed is always a priority over quality, as long as there are people doing a job, it really doesn't matter if it's done well, the civil service is a very de-motivating environment" Female, Age 26, The Benefits Agency

Factor 5: Bureaucracy

This factor consists of three items and accounts for 4.6% of the variance. These items relate to the bureaucratic nature of organizations incorporating the number of layers of management, feelings of "us" and "them" and the level of red tape encountered. This is an interesting factor in that it represents exactly what modern "empowering" organizations claim that they are trying to get away from. The first two items on this factor were reverse coded for analysis so respondents who score highly on this scale are more likely to believe that their organizations have succeeded in moving away from such styles of management. Many of the respondents commented on the level of their organization's bureaucracy, suggesting that this factor is reliable and expected:

"There's a need to cut out a lot of the forms which are not always understandable and the bureaucracy in getting work done within BT." Female, Age 47, BT

"Too much red tape and too many procedures to get the job done quickly and efficiently" Female, Age 52, BT

"Very hard to be empowered in this organization as the level of bureaucracy, rules and regulations mean we work within strict guidelines, can vary these rules so everything is set down for us" Female, Age 24, The Benefits Agency

TABLE SEVEN: Factor Analysis of the "You and your Organization" Inventory (54% of the variance)

FACTOR ITEM	LOADING ON FACTOR
Factor 1: Freedom and autonomy (29%)	
I am allowed to be creative when I deal with problems at work	0.7583
I have the authority to correct problems when they occur	0.6956
I do not need to get the supervisor's approval before I handle problems	0.6955
I can make changes to my job whenever I want	0.5313
I am encouraged to handle job-related problems by myself	0.5227
I have a lot of control over how I do my job	0.5035
I am allowed to do almost anything to do a high quality job	0.4562
Factor 2: Customer and Staff Care (9%)	
My organization believes in teamworking	0.7916
My organization cares about its customers	0.6716
The organizational culture encourages its employees to continue to train and learn	0.6598
The values which my organization holds are clearly communicated to me	0.5110
Factor 3: Power, Security and Morale (6%)	
I understand this organization well enough to be able to control things that affect me	0.7257
In this organization, I can prevent negative things from affecting my work situation	0.6836
Morale is high in my organization	0.6033
I have enough power in this organization to control events that might affect my job	0.5379
Factor 4: Vision and Direction (5.4%)	
I am proud to tell people which organization I work for	0.6569
My organization has a clear vision of what needs to be done and how to achieve it	0.5609
My organization values the ideas put forward by its employees	0.5216
Top management provides strong and clear leadership	0.4972
Factor 5: Bureaucracy (4.6%)	
A feeling of "us" and "them" exists within my organization	0.6930
My organization believes in having lots of layers of management	0.6914
I do not have to go through a lot of red tape to change things	0.3456

TABLE EIGHT: Internal Reliability Coefficients for Factors extracted from "You and your Organization" scale.

FACTOR	NO. OF ITEMS	CRONBACH ALPHA
Freedom and Autonomy	7	0.76
Customer and Staff Care	4	0.72
Power, Security and Morale	4	0.76
Vision and Direction	4	0.72
Bureaucracy	3	0.44

CONCLUSION OF, AND REFLECTIONS ON, RESEARCH METHODS

Inevitably, any research project has its limitations regardless of the methodological approach taken and a discussion of these limitations must be considered. Due to the fact that this research is of an exploratory nature, one might expect that there are still fruitful areas of employee empowerment which can be investigated through further research. Hence, this conclusion will address issues from a theoretical perspective, identifying limitations, explaining how some of these limitations have been overcome and suggesting new areas where further research would be beneficial to the study of feelings of empowerment amongst employees in the United Kingdom.

The longitudinal nature of doctoral research, suggests that several changes may have occurred over this time period. The research presented here was conducted over a period of two years and the changes which have taken place within the organizations studied may have had an effect on the reliability of the results. The availability of managers and employees for interviews meant that the qualitative research was spread over a number of months. However, within the individual operating units, the research was generally conducted over a small time span. Yet, there is still the suggestion that intervening factors (i.e. changes in management within the Marketing directorate of BT and the Benefits Agency district of North Leicestershire; the announced merger between BT and MCI; the announcement of Treasury reductions for The Benefits Agency) may have had an effect. Where possible, the impact of these changes were considered when analysing the results. Paradoxically, the fact that this research is not intentionally of a longitudinal nature, suggests that a "snapshot" of these organizations

and the individuals within them, has been obtained and that orientations and attitudes will change over time.

The nature of empowerment itself may have impacted on particular limitations of the longitudinal design. The fact that both initiatives were launched at a similar time as the onset of this research suggests that initial interviews may have been dominated by 'teething problems' and issues which have since been overcome, for example, the resistance of management. Similarly, the empowerment initiatives may have been superseded, and there was some indication of this in the qualitative data, by other management policies or priorities. The researcher was aware of the possibility of these effects but the fact that the qualitative data and the quantitative data (which were collected at the end of the research period) were generally compatible, suggests that such changes had negligible effects on attitudes.

The methods of research discussed here suggest that this research has been conducted using methodological pluralism (Bell and Newby, 1997) or "triangulation" which Webb et al (1965) defined as, "the onslaught of a series of imperfect measures". Research in organizations necessitates this approach to some extent, for, as discussed earlier, the validity and reliability of different methods can be compromised by organizational reality. In this research triangulation has been adopted for both data source (managers and employees) and data method (interviews, focus groups and questionnaires). Carney (1990) suggests that research methods should move from uncontrolled to more controlled, this has been achieved here whereby the subjective nature of qualitative research has been followed by objective, quantitative research in the form of questionnaires. The correlation between the findings from managers and employees and qualitative and quantitative research is not assured. However, as discussed above, this may mean that the concept is too complex to be neatly analysed and requires further research. What is advantageous about this hybrid approach, however, is that it reduces, what Mark and Shotland (1987) term, "inappropriate certainty" which may occur if just one source or method is used. As Easterby Smith et al (1991) write, "the strength of almost every measure is flawed in some way or other, and therefore research designs and strategies can be offset by counterbalancing

strengths from one to another" (1991: 133). In this research, however, the method was not merely chosen in order to minimise flaws, but was that approach which the researcher believed was best suited to answering the exploratory research questions, in that their emphasis on both contextual and individual factors, demanded this inter-disciplinary mix. The next chapter will introduce the case-study organizations and operating units, comparing and contrasting their structure, background, union/management relations, and approaches to empowerment. In this way, the following chapter will begin to provide a contextual backdrop for the research.

CHAPTER SIX: The Case-Study Organizations

"a place of obscurity: the space behind the principal figures of a picture: that against which anything is, or ought to be seen"

Definition of "Background" in Chambers 20th Century Dictionary

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the history, organizational structure and union/management context of the two organizations who took part in this research: The Benefits Agency and BT plc. It questions why they undertook their current empowerment programmes and the content and nature of the training and official publications which accompanied the initiatives. From taking a broad overview of the organizations, it then considers the selected business units and how each District/ Directorate has introduced the policy at that more local level.

The evidence presented here is based upon organizational documentation, interviews with the empowerment initiatives' implementation teams, union documents and observation. The use of organizational documentation and the nature of those interviewed, means that the official, management espoused policy is used to describe the initiatives and how and why they were introduced. Although this contains much of the management rhetoric and may seem rather uncritical of management, it is felt that this, supplemented by an examination of the union's role in, and attitude to, empowerment initiatives, will best form the context within which the rhetoric and reality debate can be understood.

This chapter will conclude by drawing out the similarities and differences between the two organizational contexts and the case study units within them. By considering their comparativeness, the results presented in the following chapters can be more easily placed in context and their implications for wider industrial society examined.

PART ONE: The Benefits Agency

INTRODUCTION

This section looks at The Benefits Agency as an organization. It examines its structure, purpose, characteristics and the current issues which face the Agency. Moreover, it looks at the development of quality within the Agency and examines how and why it introduced an empowerment policy. The chapter then looks at the two Districts under study: Preston and North Leicestershire and progresses their moves towards becoming empowered units. It should be noted that since the research took place, there have been several changes to the structure both of the Benefits Agency itself and the Districts. However, as the research was conducted before these changes took place, it was decided that the chapter would concentrate on the structures which existed at the time of the research.

THE ORGANIZATION

The Benefits Agency was established in April 1991 following the "Next Steps" initiative by the Government (Ibbs, 1988). It is the largest of 5 executive agencies which are part of the Department of Social Security and is responsible for 21 different benefits with the main exceptions being Housing benefit (paid by local authority) and Unemployment benefit (paid by Employment Department). The Agency serves 22 million "customers" and makes in excess of one billion payments totalling £70 billion a year. Its day-to-day running is the responsibility of a senior management team, consisting of six executive and two non-executive Directors, under the chairmanship of an acting Chief Executive: Ian Magee who replaced Michael Bichard in April 1995. The current structure of the organisation is that the 155 districts grouped into 20 areas throughout the United Kingdom are subject to support and supervision from three territorial directorates under the responsibility of three members of the management team. Additionally, they are responsible for three Benefit Centres which process the work for 21 London offices; and three national centres where certain benefits are administered: Fylde (disability working allowance; disability living allowance;

attendance allowance; legal aid; invalid care allowance; and family credit); Newcastle (retirement and widow's pensions in UK and overseas, and certain benefits for people abroad); and Washington (child benefit, one parent benefit and guardians allowance). There are also three Central Service (head office) Directorates covering the issues of Finance and Security, Benefit Support and Development matters, and Medical Services. The Agency employs 60,000 full time staff and more than 11,500 part-time staff. Only 1-2% of the staff work at the Central Services in Quarry House, Leeds; the rest work within the Territorial Directorates. The service is delivered through a network of 455 local offices and 275 customer service points. Hence, employees work in offices which range in size from the large Head Office to some of the smaller "satellite" offices in rural areas.

Each Agency of the Department of Social Security has a clear responsibility to carry out its business in a manner which contributes to the aims and objectives of the Department. The Benefits Agency must participate in the preparation of the Public Expenditure Survey and Departmental Plan which the DSS presents to the Treasury. Hence, each year the Agency's Chief Executive is formally required to prepare a Business Plan; a review and update to the Strategic Plan and an Annual Report. Each Unit (a unit generally being a District, a Benefit Centre, A Fraud Area, or a branch in Central Services/Central Benefits) of the Agency is required to produce the same documents in the context of that particular unit. This allows each Unit to develop its service to customers, taking into account the aims, objectives and core values of the Benefits Agency. The Agency is empowered by Ministers to achieve agreed objectives and is accountable to Ministers and Parliament annually for its performance and the use of taxpayers money. Ultimate accountability lies with the Chief Executive, who is the Accounting Officer. The public spending reductions announced in the November budget of 1995, have led to changes in structure (as mentioned in the above introduction, and as will be further discussed in Chapter Eleven) and the requirement to reduce staffing levels and to outsource Child Benefit. Hence, the transitional state of the organization, and the inevitable impact of meeting tighter targets are having a considerable effect on The Benefits Agency at the present time.

The Organization's Vision

The Agency's main aim is set out in the Vision, which is:

To Provide An Efficient One Stop Service Which Offers Reliable Advice And Pays The Right Money To The Right Person At The Right Time.

The 1995/1996 Business Plan states that this Vision reflects their objectives "by advocating a quality approach to all aspects of our business" (The Benefits Agency, 1995: 7). This Quality approach is reflected in the Agency's core values which have been developed as part of the Quality Framework. These are: Customer Service; Caring For Staff; Bias For Action; and Value For Money.

QUALITY IN THE BENEFITS AGENCY

The move towards Quality in the Department of Social Security took hold in the 1980s when, in line with changing societal expectations, the Government altered its emphasis with the view that it "was there to serve not to control" (Green & Faure, 1992: 3). A Quality Assessment Package was introduced in 1984 in a sample of offices, reflecting this change of emphasis, to measure quantitative and qualitative aspects of the service provided at a local level. The results of these studies showed wide discrepancies across offices and, after more scrutiny, the "Business of Service" report was produced in 1988. This report, as its name suggests, was based around the concept that the business of the Department of Social Security was service. It highlighted that a number of the London offices provided unacceptable service and suggested that there should be a relocation of benefits processing work to rectify this and contribute to the change in focus towards customer service. This, along with the benefits of Information Technology, meant that major advances in the provision of customer service were promised as the accessibility of a person's full details allowed benefits to be more carefully tied to the person's needs.

Following these changes, at the end of the 1980s, a fundamental restructuring was recommended in the Civil Service and the Benefits Agency was set up as an Executive Agency within the Department in 1991. This move to Agency status involved the

devolvement of managerial responsibilities to the District level, the managers of the, then, 159 districts were "given considerable autonomy in the running of the business unit" and with this the regional tier of management was removed, supporting "the ethos of empowerment at the local level" (Green and Faure, 1992: 9). Additionally, each District Management Unit (DMU) was organised as a cost centre giving financial independence but also allowing for variation between the Districts. Hence, the move to Agency status led to an element of diversification within the civil service which neither staff nor managers were accustomed to. The importance of customers was emphasised with, the change of name from "claimants" to "customers", the creation at the District level of a Customer Service manager and the encouragement of feedback from "customers". However, despite the change of emphasis, customers still effectively remained claimants of the service, with no strength of consumer choice. The Agency recognised that, as important as customer service is, it would not be achieved without the ethos of Quality existing throughout the organisation, and a TQM style ethos was instilled within the Agency, as Green & Faure (1992) of the Benefits Agency write, "a quality service emerges from the interactions within the whole customer chain culminating in the interface with the external customer. With this concept in mind a comprehensive communications and training programme has been launched with the aim of empowering staff at all levels to recognise the value and importance of the services they provide" (1992: 10).

Hence, the emphasis on staff, and their understanding of their role within a customer-focused organisation, has been increased. Staff are consulted about their performance before their appraisal is written to establish more ownership of the procedure and the system is now geared at rewarding people for their achievements rather than their tenure. However, the introduction of appraisal and Performance Related Pay has angered the unions who see it as a way of cutting wages by abolishing the annual increment (see Role of Unions, below). Also important is the change in the role of managers "the ultimate aim is to upturn the perceived 'top down' management style replacing it with a supportive, enabling culture which will improve the service to the customer both internally and externally" wrote Green and Faure (1992), who continued by saying that this culture should allow "greater ownership of responsibility

and involvement in decision making at junior levels and do much to foster and improve corporate and public image" (1992: 10).

The development of a Quality Award scheme for the Benefits Agency to complement the introduction of the Quality Framework was carefully considered by BA Consultancy Services. A project team was set up in April 1992 to examine those recognition systems used by other organisations and developing their best practices to produce an internal accreditation system. The most appropriate system was identified as an "Incremental Quality Improvement Scheme" which would support the principles of Chartermark (award aimed at Government departments, agencies, and other public bodies) and incorporate both objective measures of standards and more subjective notions obtained from customer and staff surveys. The team proposed a four point plan of action which would kick start the initiative : State it, believe it; support it; promote it; and recognise it. This involved making a commitment to Quality, promoting it with clear support from the top, and devising an independent team to give advice and guidance on its implementation. This team became QUEST (Quality Education Support Team) and one of the twelve members of this team was the researcher's initial contact point with the Benefits Agency. He stated that he had been directly involved in the development of the quality initiative within the Agency, describing his work as being the "central focal point of making quality happen". QUEST are also working towards rewriting the quality framework (an update was published in December 1996 which drew on the experience of the first three years and, although there were small changes made, the underlying values remained the same). The Benefits Agency joined The European Foundation for Quality Management in 1994 which allows them to take a structured approach to quality and to compare themselves to similar organizations in Europe. Joining this foundation means that the update to the quality framework has aligned it more closely with the EFQM model for business excellence. The concurrent development of BA as an Executive Agency and the appointment of a new Chief Executive, Michael Bichard, was an impetus for change. The Chief Executive had joined the Executive Agency at its inception and had brought with him a varied career in private sector organisations and a great deal of personal investment in the concept of Quality and empowerment.

His focus on customers and the harnessing of staff enthusiasm, led Mr Bichard to develop 4 core values for the Agency: Customer Service; Caring For Staff; Bias For Action; and Value For Money.

The Quality Framework

Whilst the Quality Framework encapsulates some of the main ideas of TQM such as a customer focus, performance against targets and the tying in of pay and rewards, it is not purely based on the BS 5750 and incorporates a more incremental, qualitative approach. Although the Quality award, introduced in October 1993, is considered an optional target, the adoption of the Framework is not, this outlines the way all managers are expected to run and monitor their business. The Framework is based on 12 key areas, expansions of the core values, called "criteria"; these are expected to change over time as the priorities of the Benefits Agency change but currently are: customer research; service delivery; handling exceptions; place in the community/organisation; staff development; equal opportunities; staff services; organisational culture; communications; internal customer focus; managing budgets; and process efficiency. The framework is aimed at encouraging units to look at their performance against the criteria and to seek ways in which they could make improvements, this basis in self-assessment "reinforces the culture of empowerment" (BAMT, 1992). The initial stage of implementing the Framework is the establishment of a baseline. This requires that the management team individually assess the unit according to the criteria and reach a consensus decision for scores on each area. This is then compared to the results of a focus group of the unit's staff, who have undergone the same procedure, at a joint meeting and a baseline score is agreed. The rating scale is divided into levels of 0-9. Whereas 9 is only awarded if excellence on that criteria has been maintained for three years, 0 indicates that the organisation has not even announced an intention to achieve quality performance in a particular area. These are extremes but the Quality Award requires a total score of 70 or more with a minimum of 5 on each criteria, where 5 indicates "acknowledgement of some improvement". Such ratings allow the units to identify areas which require improvement and target their strategies accordingly.

EMPOWERMENT IN THE BENEFITS AGENCY

The Benefits Agency is increasingly viewed by other organizations as being both innovative and successful in introducing empowerment (Davenport and Balcombe, 1994). Empowerment is closely linked to the Quality Framework and other quality awards encouraged within the Benefits Agency, and this is discussed briefly below. Yet, over and above this, the move towards making the Benefits Agency more customer focused and competitive necessitated a need for managerial practices to alter accordingly and for staff to take on more responsibility for the day to day running of the business. This is outlined in the introduction, to a manual for Senior Managers on empowerment, written by Michael Bichard, which states that, "Empowerment is about enabling our staff to influence the way things happen; it is about giving our front line staff the power to pull the levers that count as we strive to deliver a quality service and good value for money; it is about providing greater job satisfaction for staff and it is about ensuring that all of our staff have an equal opportunity to contribute to the success of the Agency".

The Benefits Agency has published two internal documents specifically related to the introduction of empowerment - "Empowerment in The Benefits Agency" (The Benefits Agency, 1995b) and "Benefits Agency Empowerment and Accountability Framework" (The Benefits Agency,1995c). In a letter to those District Managers to whom the leaflets were distributed, it stated that, "The seed for producing them was sown at the Senior Managers' Development Workshops [discussed in the training section below] where BAMT (The Benefits Agency Management Team) members received feedback that "greater clarity on empowerment" could be achieved by producing a document outlining the BA approach on the issue, and that it could be used by managers not only to convey a consistent, positive message to staff, but also to stimulate local debate and benchmarking" (Internal Document, 1995).

Defining Empowerment

The first document, "Empowerment in the Benefits Agency" sought to define the meaning of empowerment and clarify the reasons for, and approach to, empowerment in the Agency. It defines empowerment as being about equipping people with the

confidence and skills to enable them to respond to customers and resolve issues which would otherwise have been referred elsewhere for a decision. However it does emphasise that this does not preclude the application of decisive leadership when needed in crisis or emergency. It summarizes that:

"Empowerment is about . Ends not Means
. Frameworks not details
. Involving Front Line
. Developing Staff
. Defining the Limits
. Teamwork
. Encouraging Initiative
. Valuing Innovation
. Devolving Decisions
. Supporting Initiatives
. Devolving Hierarchies/Status
. Accountability

Empowerment is not about.....
. Anarchy
. Abdication
. Absence of Monitoring
. Absolution
. Avoiding Corporate Cornerstones"

(The Benefits Agency, 1995b:4).

Yet, whilst the document aims to clarify the definition of empowerment, it still avoids giving one single, definition, arguing that, "There are many...'one-liners' on empowerment which are put forward as a definition. What is important, healthy and beneficial is the debate that these definitions provoke, which, if constructively based, moves away from the issue of which definition is right or wrong, and into an exploration of what actions, behaviours, systems and beliefs are necessary for empowerment to flourish." (The Benefits Agency, 1995b: 4).

The Reasons Behind Empowerment

The reasons for The Agency's introduction of empowerment have already been discussed in the light of its change of status and move towards quality. It is clearly integral to the Benefits Agency's business strategies, being both incorporated into the Benefits Agency's long-term objectives and, yet, also being adopted as an enabling process by which other Quality goals might be achieved. Despite not being evaluated

as a separate criteria, the Quality Framework encapsulates, and consequently to some extent, measures, the concept of empowerment within its core values:

a) **Customer Service:** "Empowerment has a clear role to play in releasing the energies and commitment of our people to strive for continuous improvements in our team working, work processes, work organization and systems which lead to improved customer service on quality, accuracy and benefit security" (BA Publishing Services, 1995b: 12).

b) **Caring For Staff:** "Empowerment has a key role to play here in providing the climate where staff are able to realise their potential. In this context BA is creating an environment where personal development is high on the agenda" (The Benefits Agency, 1995b: 12).

c) **Bias For Action:** the leaflet states that this core value is a "product of empowerment" and states that decisions and actions can only be taken nearer the customer interface, "if those taking such decisions and assuming responsibility for the outcomes are feeling truly empowered, confident, supported and skilled" (The Benefits Agency, 1995b: 13).

d) **Value for Money:** The leaflet states that this core value is the link between empowerment and accountability. "BA has adopted an empowered approach which is well grounded in the reality that empowered decisions are also decisions for which there is accountability" (The Benefits Agency, 1995b: 13).

The internal document referred to above, also indicates that the growth of empowerment within other successful organizations and more particularly amongst local authorities who were driven to change by Compulsory Competitive Tendering (CCT), were other drivers behind the implementation, "Herein lies the main driving force which should stimulate BA along the empowerment road. The advance of market testing, which is being increasingly applied to areas of core business, means that we are in a competitive situation and that we will need to show that we can deliver effectively on existing targets, respond flexibly to new challenges, and drive down our costs" (The Benefits Agency, 1995b: 5). Indeed, there is an acknowledgement that, whilst empowerment may seem to be an altruistic act for the

benefit of employees, the success of the Organization in meeting customer satisfaction and Treasury targets is paramount, "such 'altruistic' benefits are, therefore, aligned with the business imperative for empowerment, which for BA is the winning and retaining of the benefit delivery service" (The Benefits Agency, 1995b: 5). The introduction of market testing and the competitive edge which this introduces to the organization, threatens job security and pay increases for many employees and it is interesting that The Benefits Agency, in the quote given above, are trying to link the "hard" and "soft" elements of the management rhetoric.

The Role of Management in Empowerment

There is a recognition within The Benefits Agency that the role of management is crucial for the successful implementation of empowerment. Empowering leaders are described in the internal document sent to District Managers as having a number of qualities including seeing people as assets to be developed not as costs (interesting when related to the introduction of market testing!); seeing the potential in people rather than their limitations; and believing that decisions which have good ownership from staff and customers are likely to be implemented well and prove to be successful rather than believing decisions are best made by bosses. As part of the move towards empowerment all members of staff have been encouraged to create their own Personal Development Plan. Personal Development Plans are voluntary and enable employees to map out their development in a structured way, identifying areas of weakness and setting realistic, achievable objectives to build on these. The role of the manager in these circumstances is to support and guide their staff in their action plans and to create an environment in which staff can recognise and exploit their potential.

There is an acknowledgement that managers need to move away from their traditional role, instead of increasing control when work pressures rise and that this will prove difficult for established 'command and control' type managers, as the internal document states, "our aspiring and successful leaders have previously been exhorted, trained and developed to adopt the 'command and control' style, but they are now being asked to re-examine their beliefs, values, behaviours and qualities which have got them to where they are today" (The Benefits Agency, 1995b: 7). Moreover, in this

discussion of management behaviour, the Benefits Agency senior management team appear to recognise that empowerment is fundamentally about people's motivation to, 'want' to be empowered, "You cannot give people empowerment - they have to want it and they are unlikely to want it unless the environment is right" (The Benefits Agency, 1995b: 6).

Constraints To Empowerment

The parameters which exist for empowerment are set out clearly. Indeed, Michael Bichard wrote that "people need to understand their particular role in the Agency, their powers and also their limits on those powers. They also need to appreciate that empowerment is not some form of institutional anarchy" (Internal Document, 1993). Empowerment is seen in The Agency as arising between what staff have to do and the limits of discretion, and it is recognised that this relates heavily to Government and government regulations. In acknowledgement of this and, "in response to requests from BA managers for a document which gives guidance on the freedoms and limitations of empowered decision making in Benefits Agency" (sic) (The Benefits Agency, 1995c: 1), a second booklet was distributed to District Managers named "BA Empowerment and Accountability Framework". The document refers to two specific freedoms which managers have: the freedom to organise the benefit delivery service and deploy resources in a way that best suits local needs; and the freedom to vary procedures when guidance is not prescriptive. In addition, it lists a number of requirements which it states are necessary due to the benefit system being a national and regulated one, these are requirements to: obey the law; follow Ministerial Policy in order to honour Ministerial wishes or commitments they have made to Parliament or elsewhere (for example, the grading of Social Fund decision making at LO1); meet Secretary of State targets for clearance times/accuracy; abide by central requirements; adhere to the BA business strategies; not exceed the Social Fund budget in any year (i.e. community care grants or crisis loans); and provide a quality service.

More specific requirements and freedoms are set down in regard to Consultancy Procurement; Document Retention; Estates; Finance; Media Handling; Personnel; Purchasing supply and contract management; and Security. Particularly interesting

amongst those listed are those requirements relating to finance and personnel. The financial parameters are further expanded in a separate leaflet "BA Empowerment and Accountability Framework: The Financial Framework" which gives detailed accounts to budget holders about how to record details of accounts and what to refer to a higher level etc. Publication of such documents emphasises the specificity of Treasury constraints and there limitations on the exercising of 'empowered' behaviour. However, the Agency state that although there are a number of procedures and rules which have to be adhered to "it can be more positive to see those constraints in the form of important objectives which we in the Agency are trying to meet" (The Benefits Agency, 1995c: 11). As regards freedoms and requirements on Personnel issues the document states that positive steps have been taken to make sure that personnel policies are tailored towards decision making at the lowest appropriate level. For example, managers are empowered to authorise Special Leave both with and without pay; and those managers of Grade 7 or above may impose disciplinary penalties for serious misconduct of staff up to and including LO1. Hence, it seems that whilst the Agency have gone to some trouble to set out the capacity for empowerment there is still only an implicit pressure for staff to move to this new way of working, as Davenport and Balcombe write, "In theory, it is still possible for a manager to run his or her unit using a 'command and control' management style" (1994: 17). This suggests that whilst there is evidence that managers are being empowered, whether this is filtering through to non-managerial employees is less clear.

The Empowerment Training Programme

The importance of senior managers in the move towards quality and empowerment was emphasised by the fact that the "initial thrust of the empowerment programme was to change the mind-set of senior managers" (Davenport and Balcombe, 1994). The intention of this training was for senior managers to develop their own management competencies and set up further workshops for other managers. Terry and Hadland (1995) wrote that, "Empowerment relies on a chain that leads from the Chief Executive right through senior managers, middle managers and customer service staff. If it is broken at any stage, the level of empowerment is radically reduced" (1995: 30). Their internal review of this senior management development in

1993 found that there was a need to develop a framework of competencies against which management could measure themselves and draw up an action plan for their further development. They utilised feedback forms for this purpose from the managers' boss, peers and subordinates across a range of skill areas and found that one major problem which emerged was that "people said empowerment was predominantly about behaviour and this behaviour was most successful when accompanied by a genuine belief or commitment" (1995: 30).

Middle Managers (HEOs and above) [in the Districts, HEOs and above are sometimes referred to as senior managers] attended a residential week-long course called "Communication Catalysing Change" which required them to critically analyse the way in which they manage. The course centred on the concept of the "inverted pyramid" and the communication methods that were needed to support this, incorporating a number of self-perception and psychometric tests which allowed managers to take a close look at how they work and match that against how they were required to work in the new organizational culture of the Benefits Agency. The facilitators acknowledged that change would not be easy. Indeed, in the training manual which accompanied the course it stated that, "Resistance from others is a powerful barrier to change. If your colleagues find you behaving differently, they will consciously or subconsciously say and do things to get you to revert to 'normal' and this will put pressure on you to return to your old, comfortable ways. You should be prepared for such reactions and resolve not to be swayed by them. But the key barrier to change will be yourself". The Strand 2 training programme directly relates to the issue of empowerment within the Districts (for a résumé, of the general training manual see Appendix I). It emerged out of consultation following a report called "Management in BA" which was published in October 1992. An examination was conducted into which roles could be devolved to lower levels within the Districts (i.e. HEO to LO1, LO1 to LO2) and a list of these task analyses can be found in Appendix J. The report suggested that, rather than middle management maintaining a technical, adjudication role (LO1s used to check all claims before they were processed), structural changes necessitated that Districts become more self-sufficient and that middle managers work more like team leaders - guiding rather than controlling. The

report also stated that LO1s would continue to attract the same pay and grading due to the fact that their new responsibilities still broadly matched that of Executive Officers elsewhere in the Civil Service.

From this report and analysis came the need for Strand 2 training, "Our proposals involve a significant change in the activities and approach of individual LO1s and middle managers. Many have progressed as a result of their technical knowledge and skills and derive much of their authority from this. They cannot be expected to take on the managerial role we envisage without proper training and support...it will be essential to promote and underpin the changes by effective training" (The Benefits Agency, 1992: 33). In 1993 the training packages were focused mainly on management teams and LO1s, as suggested in the report, and £3.821 million was earmarked for the training programmes in the 1993/1994 period. The "Communicating and Empowering" course, which was completed by approximately 15,000 LO1s, lasted two days with a further half day learning review. The declared aim of the training was to take responsibility for empowering oneself and members of one's team. Specific details of these workshops and the ways in which empowerment was conveyed will be discussed within the Unit case studies, as it differed between the regions. Each District was given money to spend on training the lower grades and the QUEST team member interviewed, stated that it was a demonstration of their commitment to empowerment that many managers decided to train all their employees down to the lowest (AA) grade. He went on to argue that without the success of enablers like empowerment no unit could meet award standard, stating that those organisations who had won awards showed a much greater dedication to the principles of empowerment than the others and were often those which had used their discretion to send all their staff on the "Strand 2" training programme.

THE ROLE OF THE UNIONS

Two non-managerial unions are recognised in the Districts under study in The Benefits Agency: CPSA and PTC. By taking each of these unions and examining their history of employee relations, one can consider the union/management atmosphere within which empowerment has been introduced and the bearing which this might

have on employee attitudes. Before considering the perspective of the two individual unions, a more general approach to union/management relations in the Public Sector will be taken. The Civil Service is the most highly unionised part of the IR system in the United Kingdom. This is partly to do with the bureaucratic nature of the organizations, the large-sized undertakings in which civil servants work, and the encouragement of union membership by government (although whether this latter factor can be attributed to the former Conservative government is debatable). Whilst at the time of the Donovan Committee, Public Sector Unions were considered healthy and relatively uncontroversial, most IR conflicts since 1979 have occurred in this sector. The adversarial approach which exists between government and the public sector unions today, began when the newly elected Conservative Government promoted efficiency in The Civil Service as one of the priorities of its term in office. Mrs Thatcher considered the Sector as too large and overbearing and placed an immediate ban on recruitment along with the development of targets to reduce staff numbers. Departments were given the responsibility to identify ways of cutting numbers by 10, 15 or 20%. The emphasis which was placed on efficiency was reiterated by various initiatives such as the Financial Management Initiative which aimed to place responsibility for budgeting at lower levels, and the decentralisation of financial and personnel responsibilities.

Throughout this period, the unions became sceptical of the government's motives, believing that the importation of private sector practices and Mrs Thatcher's privatisation programmes, threatened the very future of a Civil Service. These fears were heightened in 1988 with the publication of the "Next Steps" report which proposed the separation of the policy and executive functions of Government. The DHSS was one of the departments which was affected and the development of a Benefits Agency was planned. By April 1991, 50 agencies had been set up involving 200,000 civil servants, in October 1994 this had increased to 99 agencies covering 348,000 civil servants. The development of these agencies angered the unions who perceived them as "half way houses" towards privatisation, something which the government did not rule out and indeed trading funds are being established with the expectation that full privatisation is not far away. The introduction of market testing

has emphasised this approach and the unions oppose these developments: "The inescapable conclusion is that the true aim of the market testing programme is to reduce the size of the public sector and in doing so assist the break up of a national civil service and weaken the trade unions" (NUCPS, 1994:2).

Indeed, following the establishment of The Benefits Agency the unions were faced with a new, more powerful local management who sought to undermine the power of the unions. Facility time was restricted (and abolished at an area level) whilst the regional level of the Whitley structure was likewise abolished. Management took these moves on the basis that locally based problems would be settled at District levels with union representatives now dealing with HEOs and District Management. This devolution of union activity has in some respects made union activity more active at a local level (Fairbrother, 1996), although clearly this depends on the militancy of local representatives and membership levels. Yet, the opportunity does appear to offer itself for more participative forms of unionism than in the past, rather than local union representatives merely being a message carrier for the national leadership.

This uncertainty about the future of the Civil Service and the nature of the culture changes which have been brought about by the development of the Executive Agencies, has created an atmosphere of insecurity for present civil servants. Reductions in staff are still "required" by the Government to improve efficiency but the actual allocation of reduction targets has proved inefficient due to the employment of more expensive casual staff. Yet, despite this, the deliberate reference to expected reductions in staff numbers in the Government's 1994 White Paper on "Continuity and Change" is, according to the NUCPS union, "intended to intimidate staff by further spreading insecurity and fear of job loss as a means of gaining acquiescence and acceptance of the reforms" (1994: 2). The demoralisation of staff which the unions believe that this job insecurity is causing draws a paradox with the quality which the agencies are expected to achieve: "It is politically dishonest to constantly cut numbers and thereby increase workloads whilst claiming to be concerned about the quality of service. Over worked staff already demoralised by threats to their livelihoods are finding it increasingly difficult to provide the service the public

expects and deserves. Quality demands time and resources. It does not come cheap" (1994:2).

For the unions themselves the introduction of Performance Related Pay, the individualisation of senior management contracts, and the decentralisation of bargaining is directly affecting their influence on management. The introduction of the executive agencies has meant that bargaining on pay and terms and conditions of employment have been decentralised not only to Departments but also to the agencies within them. Because of this, there has been a subsequent decentralisation of union administration (discussed in more detail below) with the role of regional officers becoming increasingly important. In addition the freezing of global running costs means that staff should expect to see their pay drop or alternatively pay could be increased through the shedding of more staff.

So, in conclusion, union management relations have become strained since 1979, with union action being taken in many circumstances. However, the decentralisation of collective bargaining and the introduction of pay related to performance ratings, is marginalising the effect of the Civil Service Unions. Employee morale is reported by the unions to be low - the unpredictability of the future of agency ownership, the continued emphasis on efficiency and staff reductions, and the comparatively low pay rates which civil servants receive, are all contributing to low staff well being. In addition to these basic security needs being denied, employees are now expected to work harder, as jobs enlarge to compensate staff who have been shed, and to do their jobs in a more "quality way". It is now, in this atmosphere, that employees are being exposed to the management policy of empowerment where taking on extra responsibility and participating in additional "empowering" activities is expected of all staff.

Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA)

The CPSA came into being in 1969 having formally been the Civil Service Clerical Association (CSCA). The CSCA was created from an amalgamation of the Assistant Clerks' Association, the Post Office Engineering Clerical and the Civil Service

Typists' Association in 1921. The aim of this first amalgamation was to claim representative rights for the entire clerical class of the Civil Service and this was achieved within the year. For the period 1927- 1946, however, the CSCA was not affiliated to the TUC after the Trade Disputes Act caused government employees to disaffiliate. In more recent years, the CPSA has gained a reputation for active resistance to changes in the Civil Service structure. In 1979, pay strikes were organized to protest about the comparatively low pay received in the Civil Service and, in 1985, members of the union working in the DHSS went on strike for a number of days over issues of overtime and the employment of casual workers. Now, in the 1990s, trade union activity is heavily driven by delegated and decentralised bargaining and the implications of culture change and HRM for its members.

The move to executive agency status has worried the CPSA, not only in terms of its members' rights but also, because they believe the present policies are being introduced in order to marginalise their influence. The development of Agency status has led to the Union having to break up into more self-contained units and they feel that their role is being restricted through the development of more direct staff consultation: "CPSA representatives...will be consulted on the outcome of working parties rather than involved in negotiations and it is more difficult to argue about proposals into which staff have had an input. These developments have the potential to weaken substantially the role of trade unions within agencies" (CPSA, 1991: 12). More generally, the culture change which has accompanied the move to Agency status is creating a feeling amongst the Unions that their relevance to employees may decline as a result of a new 'caring, sharing' management: "An issue strongly related to non-union consultation structures is the cultural change which management are trying to introduce - characterising agencies as caring firms with a strong corporate image. This may seem trivial but if management are producing glossy, in-house magazines and improving their communications with staff, then if CPSA does not respond and ensure that communication with members is effective, then the union's relevance for members will decline" (CPSA, 1991:12). They believe that there is a need to counter this approach through heightened propaganda; the construction of local CPSA agendas to monitor HRM initiatives; and the exploitation of divisions between senior

management and the threatened middle management layers. This latter approach, identifies that often local management teams will not be as enthusiastic towards empowerment and other HRM policies as they seem and that union members should seek such divisions to soften the effect of new initiatives: "Don't assume that your immediate office management are sympathetic to HRM initiatives - very often they won't be and opportunities will arise to delay, divert or absorb initiatives in ways which lessen or substantially defuse threats" (CPSA document: 10).

There is a general feeling amongst the communications published by the CPSA that, whilst they are aware of the "smokescreen" implications which HRM policies may have, it is essentially difficult for them to oppose the policies in theory. Indeed, in a publication regarding the CPSA's position on HRM, the double-edged sword which the CPSA sees HRM as offering its members is evident: "what trade unionists need is a more thorough understanding of the techniques of HRM and the motivation of management who adopt them in order to identify the threats or opportunities they pose to their membership and to the power and influence of trade unions at the workplace" (CPSA document: 2). Whilst they argue that the best response might be to do nothing in response to HRM and "watch it collapse under the weight of its own internal contradictions", they believe that by taking some of the genuine human resource management policies and jointly determining objectives, the interests of its members might be better served. Indeed, whilst the CPSA took a position of opposition when 'Next Steps' was first introduced, it has since changed its policy to one of "constructive engagement and negotiation to safeguard and promote the pay and conditions of members" (CPSA, 1991:1).

More specifically, The Benefits Agency section of the CPSA send out various circulars to branch and sub-branch representatives regarding their position on the changes which are occurring in the organizations. The Union approach to the Quality Framework is that it should be fully integrated into the conduct of industrial relations within the Agency. It states that various of the criteria which form the basis of the Quality Framework are linked to the guidelines which are agreed for industrial relations in the Benefits Agency and that, "the lack of consultation about the

introduction of the quality framework and the nature of HRM serves to create the suspicion that it is designed to facilitate the de-recognition of Unions where management judge they do not "operate efficiently" and are not "responsive to identified needs based on internal customer requirements"" (CPSA Benefits Agency Section, 1994: 3). As such, the Section Executive put a motion to the 1994 Section Conference to establish an agreed policy to meet the challenge of the quality framework in the Benefits Agency.

Interestingly, despite these reactions to culture change, HRM and the Quality Framework, there is no specific union perspective on empowerment. Indeed, a trade union representative from the CPSA Benefits Agency Section advised the researcher that there had not been much discussion recently on empowerment in The Benefits Agency but that, in the past, under various HRM initiatives the word had been "bandied" about.

The Public Services, Tax and Commerce Union (PTC)

The PTC was formed on 1st January 1996 as a result of a merger of the former Inland Revenue Staff Federation (ISRF) and the former National Union of Civil and Public Servants (NUCPS). The NUCPS was itself a result of the amalgamation in 1988 of the Civil Service Union (CSU) and the Society of Civil and Public Servants (SCPS). The recent mergers of so many of the civil service staff associations means that the new PTC is one of the largest unions affiliated to the TUC. Both unions, prior to the most recent merger, had a history of scepticism towards management initiatives such as TQM. The conflict between teamwork and Performance Related Pay, the risk of job losses and/or promotion opportunities through down-sizing made both unions sceptical of management's 'real' intention. NUCPS saw HRM in the Home Office, and one might assume this is broadly true of their approach to The Benefits Agency as well, as an attempt "to be trendy by copying (badly) techniques which have been discredited in many organizations where they have been deployed previously" (1995:7).

Primarily, as was the case with the CPSA, NUCPS seemed more than aware of the potential undermining of their influence, stating their belief that employee participation schemes introduced by managers were generally introduced in an attempt to diminish Trade Union influence: "trade union research has shown that....consultative groups are quickly abandoned once the union's influence has been undermined, leaving staff far more vulnerable to autocratic management actions. Equally predictably, in those workplaces where unions have been de-recognised or bypassed there has then followed a sharp deterioration in the level and quality of information reaching staff from management" (1995: 7). Additionally, there was a fear among the unions that the Whitley process would be circumvented, especially as when the issue was raised with management, no reassurance had been given that this would not be the case. The establishment of the executive agencies increased the fear that a new start would allow management to establish a new basis for industrial relations. Indeed, NUCPS stated that in the framework document for the Employment Service executive agency, the Chief Executive was officially said to be responsible for employee relations within the Agency: "even after representations to the permanent secretary of the Employment Department Group, it was only possible to achieve the addition of 'including consultation as appropriate with recognised Civil Service trade unions'" (NUCPS briefing on HRM and Communications: 19).

As a result of these various attempts to 'sideline' the unions, the reaction of the NUCPS to HRM initiatives resembled that of the CPSA, one of twin-tracks, so that the industrial relations system of Whitley was defended but that they also positively engaged in HRM implementation "our objective must be to continue to play a central role, negotiating on all proposed changes, influencing management policy at every stage in order to ensure that members' real interests are at the core" (1995:9). Both unions had taken action to protect their members by involving themselves in the development of HRM initiatives. Indeed, some union members became actively involved in Quality Circles, working groups etc in order to create a platform for putting over a general union case. More formally, ISRF became involved in the shaping of a Performance Related Pay scheme, despite their opposition in principle, and succeeded in having the PRP scheme amended to increase its consistency and

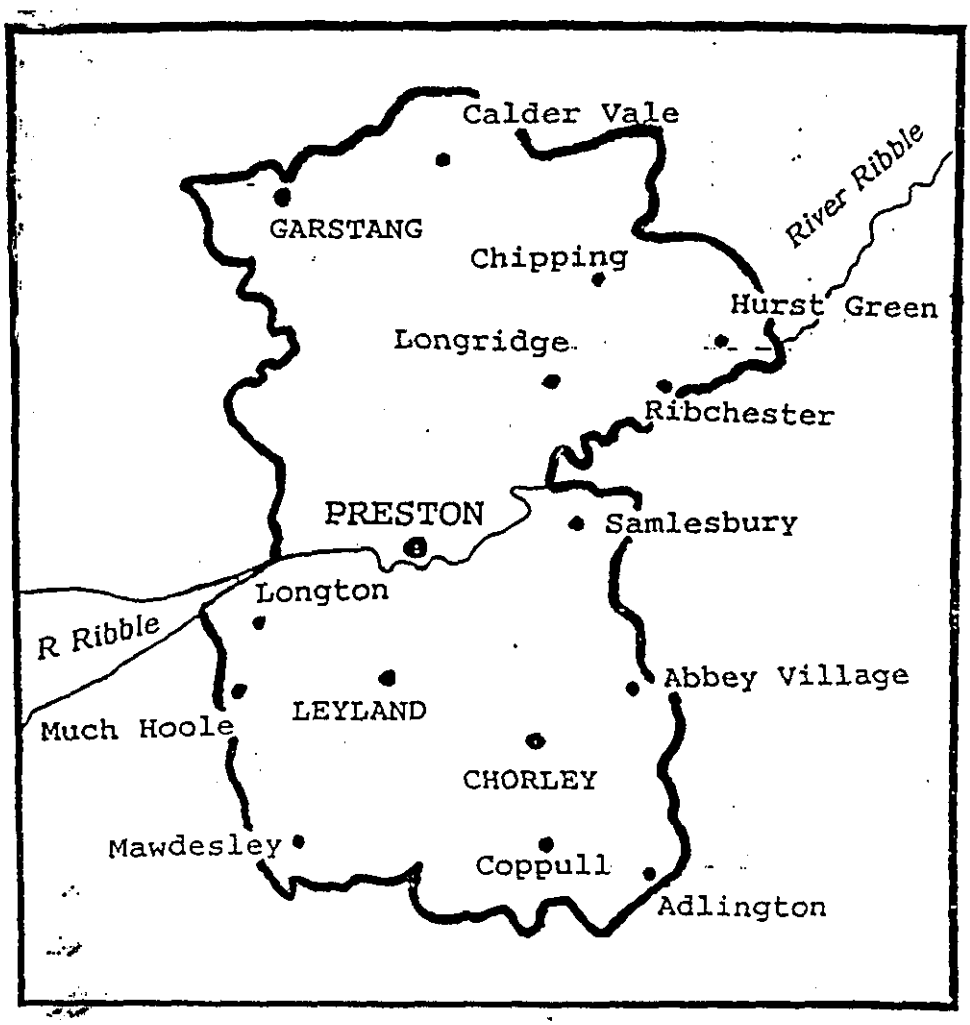
fairness. A similar successful modification was made to performance management procedures where lack of appeals mechanisms and information about the implications of particular targets was rectified. The NUCPS also had the opportunity to participate in the strategic implementation of Quality Initiatives, which they did successfully in the case of HM Land Registry (see TUC document on HRM, 1994).

As regards empowerment, the former NUCPS Home Office Group stated that they felt "empowerment....is a rather ugly and unpleasant word representing the latest of imported human resource management concepts from the USA" (NUCPS, 1995:7) continuing that, in itself, the word does not mean anything: "the fundamental principle in commandeering these words or phrases appears to be that they must avoid ready definition and interpretation" (1995: 7). However since the merger and the formation of PTC there has been little discussion at a national level of the various HRM initiatives. In April of 1997 the new, amalgamated union continued the sceptical involvement towards Performance Related Pay which had characterised its forefathers. The union remains opposed in principle to any pay system which incorporates performance measurement, yet it continues to fight for a fairer scheme. It is advocating the need for two changes to the present Civil Service system: a flatter distribution of awards between different box markings and a pay increase for those with unsatisfactory box markings at least equal to the underlying rate of inflation. As regards HRM initiatives, their approach could be summarised as one of sceptical engagement. The Union communicated to the researcher that their approach is "sceptical in the sense that we are well aware that often HRM can be used to undermine collective bargaining and effectively force staff into taking on more work. Empowerment for example can be used to increase workloads and expand responsibilities at no extra risk or cost to the employer, but with very little in the way of increased freedom or autonomy for the employee. Engagement in the sense that few of these techniques are inherently negative and union discussion and involvement in the introduction of new processes can result in positive benefits for staff" (Letter from PTC Research Officer, 15.7.97).

THE UNITS: Preston District

Preston District Office is in the Lancashire and Cumbria Directorate and, as can be seen from Figure 2, covers an area up to Calder Vale in the North and down to Adlington in the South.

FIGURE TWO: Preston District Map



The District provides local services to local people and, unusually, at Preston this occurs all under one roof after the merging of the Preston North and Preston South offices in 1991. The services it provides include income support, sickness, incapacity and first call pension enquiries (pensions are dealt with centrally at Newcastle). However, there are, in fact, two BA offices in Preston. The other handles income related benefits nationally, taking over this responsibility from the Blackpool/Norcross unit. The Preston District Management Team consists of seven Higher Executive

Officers (HEOs) in charge of each command: Contributory Benefits; Customer Services, Income Support; Job Seekers Implementation; Social Fund; Personnel/Resources; and a specialist command involving areas of computer support and security. This team works under the leadership of the District Manager and, his Deputy. The Preston District Office employs 297 staff. The requirement for staff has increased due to the introduction of the new benefit - Incapacity Benefit and the prospect of the new Job Seekers Allowance to be introduced in October 1996. The Job Seekers Allowance will also involve a merging of Employment Service and Benefits Agency staff. This is expected to produce some problems as the staff will have been exposed to very different cultures. The District office consists of a front desk which is open to the public, and backroom stations which process the claims. Contacts are made by phone, visits (either in the office or the peoples' homes), by post or in the form of the "One Stop" initiative. The "One Stop" initiative was introduced in order to achieve the customer service standards required by the Secretary of State. It enables customers to obtain advice and information on all DSS benefits even if they are not dealt with at the District Office.

Preston has a reputation as an innovative District amongst those who work in the Quality Team at Head Office, particularly since their merger and the advance of Quality. They have published a guide on communications "Getting The Message Across: The Importance Of Effective Communication" which states that "implementing and maintaining good communications is a TOTAL ACTIVITY, involving us all" (sic.). This commitment is demonstrated in many ways: there are working groups for the LOI, LOII and AA grades; weekly management team meetings which any member of staff may attend; BA weekly (a national communication produced weekly by the Personnel Director at Central Services, Leeds); and two internal office papers, DOG which is more official and is produced every two to three months and The Barry Crier which is a more informal, sociable magazine published monthly.

Union Representation

Two unions are represented at the Preston District - CPSA for the clerical grades and NUCPS for the executive. The District Manager stated that he kept very little from the unions and that they had been kept informed of the empowerment process. The CPSA representative reiterated this, saying that representation is only at a local level and that generally the office runs very well and that there are not any contentious issues. Indeed, he stated, "The Union's got quite a lot of members but, like I say, we're not a militant lot so everything just goes along normally". This emphasises the difference between local union practice and national union policy, for whilst the CPSA has a reputation as a militant, activist union, the local union representative expresses a rather apathetic stance towards the management initiatives.

Achieving The Quality Award and Working Towards Empowerment

In November 1993 Preston looked at the criteria identified in the Quality Framework and set up a BAQA focus group to baseline their performance and highlight areas of improvement. The Management Team then did the same and both scores were reconciled by a facilitator from the Customer Service branch of the Agency and confirmed by trainee validators from QUEST (the Quality Education Support Team): the final baseline score being agreed at 33 with a need to achieve 70 to win the award. This baselining process highlighted problem areas which were then worked upon. The District Manager stated that it was important to Preston as a district that they could see Quality in terms of measurable processes and could therefore see how they were improving. The District appointed a BAQA co-ordinator, who used the quality focus group to collate evidence on the various criteria and what could be done to meet award standard. Many things were already being done informally but it was necessary to document and structure them in order to meet the framework standards.

In the summer of 1993 LO1s went on their Strand 2 training course, generally these were conducted in multi-disciplinary groups and involved a week away from the office in a local hotel. The workshops consisted of a number of activities which included completing and analysing the Learning Styles Questionnaire; a "Who Dunnit?" activity which involved teamworking; and a creative thinking exercise. At

the end of the week they were encouraged to invite members of the District Management Team to a review of what they had learnt. This could take whatever form the participants chose and whilst some made a video, others presented their learning points in the form of a play. One manager said that his group had based their play on A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens, with BA Past ("tell and do" culture); Present ("give it a try") and Future (homeworking, empowerment etc.). Every member of the course had to take part in these reviews and so it also helped develop presentation skills in managers. All the AAs in Preston went on a training workshop, mostly with LO2s and these generally took place over two days in the Preston Office. A year later, in August 1994 a booklet was produced and made accessible to all staff at Preston that detailed progress on the Quality Framework, and each of the twelve criteria, this was followed by bi-monthly updates (for example see Appendix K). Initiatives were held in all commands and departments to bring the performance up to award standard and, in January 1995, the QUEST team carried out a dummy validation which scored the District at 75. When the District had reached the Award standard, the staff were consulted as to whether they wanted to actually apply for the award, which they did. Hence, finally they went for the real validation and achieved a score of 72- an award winning standard in April 1995. However, the validators report still highlighted opportunities for improvement (for full validation report see Appendix L) in the area of Organisational Culture: "during meetings it became clear to the Group that there was a tendency to emphasise grade rather than an individual's ability to contribute...hierarchy seemed to be particularly important to some and communication appeared to be 'fudged' by selective over or under emphasis of particular facts".

Overall, an acting HEO, who assisted in the co-ordination of the BAQA process, admitted that at first he was worried that the Quality Framework would become "a baby of a minority" but was pleasantly surprised by the number of people within the District who were fully involved and fully understanding of what the Framework was and what its objectives were. As for the benefit of the whole exercise, he explained that pride in a publicly owned organisation was difficult as it is so large and has "little street cred" but that the framework had, in his view, allowed the BA staff to be proud of what they had achieved and proud of working for Benefits Agency.

The Staff Perception Survey

A Staff Perception Survey is conducted at Preston District each year, with the exception of 1996, the survey is designed and distributed by the staff at Preston and to collate, analyse and report on the results they commission external consultants such as BA Training Operations. The empowerment initiative, as previously stated, began at Preston in 1993, so by looking at the results of the 1994 and 1995 Surveys, an overview of the present attitudes amongst Preston District staff can be obtained. The Questionnaire which was of a similar format in both years (see Appendix M), had a total of 207 respondents in 1994 giving a response rate of 70.4% and a total of 229 respondents in 1995 (82%). The results of The Staff Perception Survey are presented overall and then broken down by grade and command (however, due to the constantly changing structure of the commands, these breakdowns are not shown here). Table 9 and Graph 1, below, show the percentage of people from each Grade that agreed with selected statements which the researcher considered relevant to the empowerment initiative.

Table 9 shows that positive perceptions of the organisation decrease as one moves down the grade structure. In 1994, the management team, not surprisingly, all indicated that they were 100% positive as regards the statements. However, interestingly in 1995 there appeared to be some dissatisfaction amongst this grade regarding lack of feedback, involvement in decision making and being listened to. This general confidence fell to about 70-80% amongst LO1s in 1994 and again there was a pattern showing an increase in dissatisfaction during 1995 but in the case of LO1s, this dissatisfaction increased on all questions selected. LO2s and AAs were likely to be more dissatisfied, in general, than either LO1s or HEOs with the exception of the usefulness of working parties and liaison groups and regarding the question "I have all the information I need to do my job well". Again, with the exception of a few statements, dissatisfaction seemed to have increased in 1995.

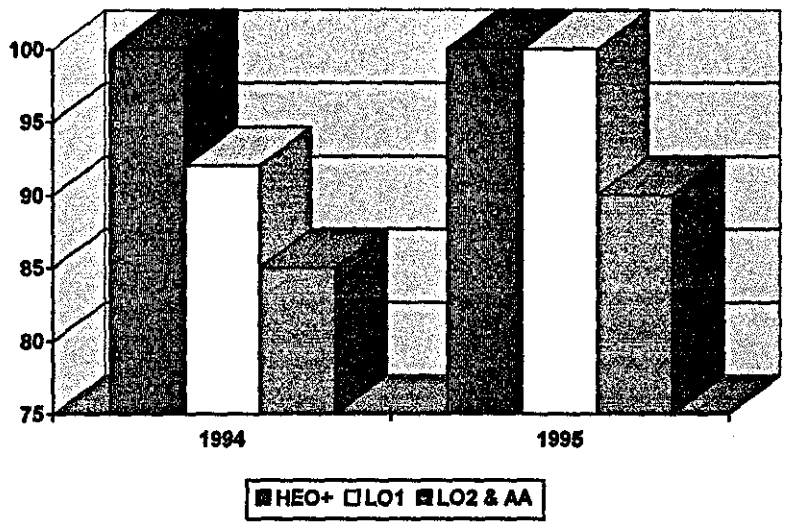
TABLE NINE: Those who agreed with selected statements broken down by Grade over a two year period: 1994-1995.

	HEO		LO1		LO2 & AA*	
Selection Of Questions Posed	1994	1995	1994	1995	1994	1995
My views on important matters are passed upwards by my manager	100	100	97	82	71	68
I have all the information I need to do my job well	100	100	81	77	75	79
I am encouraged to be honest, ask questions and come up with new ideas	100	100	92	90	86	83
I don't speak up because no one listens to my opinions	0	17	3	18	10	21
I am involved in decision making	100	83	92	82	50	54
I get positive feedback on any ideas or suggestions that I do make	100	83	92	79	69	67
Questions that I raise rarely get an answer	0	0	2.7	21	10	23
I feel I have personal responsibility for, and control over my job	100	100	95	84	83	82
I am aware of the broad aims and visions of the organization, what goals we are working towards	100	100	100	97	90	95
I receive information about BA other than that directly concerned with my own job	100	100	97	95	85	87
Working parties/liaison groups are useful to analyse problems and recommend improvements	100	100	92	80	86	90
Working parties/liaison groups enable staff to put forward views on certain key issues	100	100	92	79	82	94

* In 1995 LO2 and AA results were calculated separately. The average is given in these circumstances.

As well as the general statements listed under the heading "About The Organisation", above, a new statement was added to the Survey in 1994: "Regarding Empowerment - the training received has made me aware of the meaning of empowerment and the responsibilities it brings". The overall percentage of staff who agreed with this statement was 85.5% in 1994 and 93% in 1995, although the mention of training did not occur in the 1995 statement. Graph One, below, shows a graphic comparison of agreement with this statement between grades for the years 1994 and 1995.

GRAPH ONE: Those who agreed with Empowerment statement broken down by Grade 1994 -1995

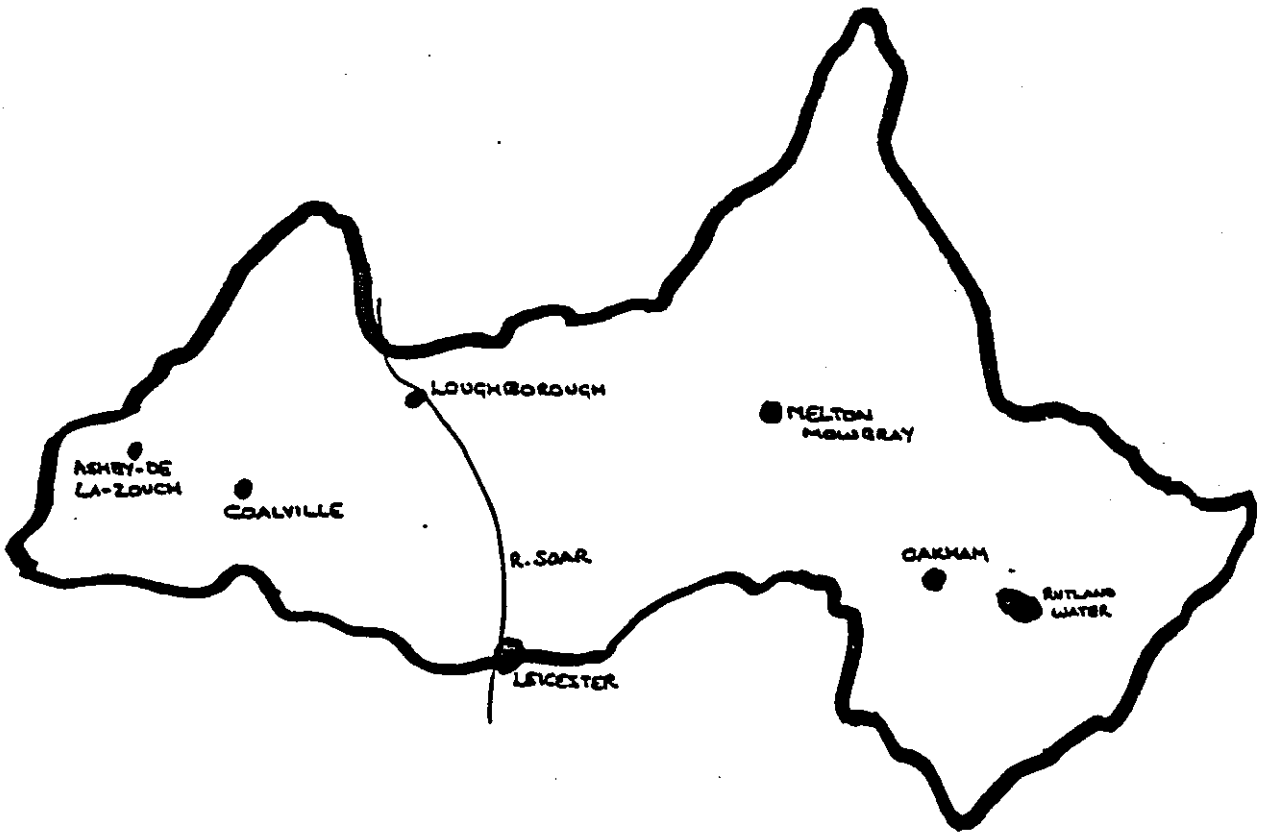


Graph 1, showing the breakdown in terms of Grade, demonstrates a slightly different pattern than in Table 9. Whilst the positive perceptions again decrease as one moves down the hierarchy (except in 1995 where HEOs and LO1s both report 100% agreement), the satisfaction appears to have increased during 1995. The greatest increase in satisfaction regarding empowerment appears to have occurred at the LO1 level, with an increase from 92 to 100%. However, it must be noted that the percentages are all very high, and the disparity between Grades is low, which is particularly encouraging for the empowerment initiative.

THE UNITS: North Leicestershire

North Leicestershire is in the East Midlands Directorate and, as can be seen from Figure 3, covers an area up to Castle Donnington and Bottesford in the North and down to north Leicester and Uppingham in the South. The area covered by the District is approximately 600 square miles and it encompasses multi-cultural inner city areas and remote rural locations.

FIGURE THREE: North Leicestershire District Map



The District, like Preston, provides local services to local people and has two main offices: Yeoman Street, Leicester and Loughborough and caller offices in Coalville, Melton Mowbray and Oakham which are manned by staff from the two main offices. The development of the Agency in 1991 involved a lot of forced marriages between units and this had caused some problems with the Loughborough office which came under the single management structure based at Yeoman Street. The services the District provides include customer care, social fund, quality assurance, pension enquiries, income support, incapacity and disability benefit and job seekers allowance. The North Leicestershire District Management Team consists of the District Manager, his deputy, and 9 HEOs responsible for the different commands. The District employs 312 staff but has suffered from high staff turnover and rising work loads in the recent past. Like Preston, North Leicestershire has experienced turbulence in introducing the new Incapacity Benefit and Job Seekers Allowance with the accompanying increased workloads and new computer systems involved. All the offices in North Leicestershire have a front desk that is open to the public, and in Loughborough and Leicester there

are backroom stations that process the claims. However, in Loughborough, the number of services provided is smaller, for example it does not process new claims or have a customer care unit. Unlike Preston, North Leicestershire is organized on a co-location basis, that is claims are dealt with alphabetically rather than by their type of benefit.

Staff development is of increasing importance to North Leicestershire. The staff are currently involved in a number of development activities such as job shadowing, mentoring, NVQs etc. Many people have designed their own Personal Development Plans and the lowest grades (AAs) are being trained on all benefits wherever it is "feasible". Staff of all grades are invited to attend District Management Team meetings, as in Preston, and HEO/LO1 meetings. Non-managerial meetings are also held both across disciplines and within commands and these are chaired by non-managers as well. Deputising or "acting up" to a higher grade are also encouraged at Leicester and they note that "staff value the invitation to deputise to higher grades" (North Leicestershire District Quality Framework Application, 1996). The effectiveness of communications is increased by a monthly informal magazine (A6 Link) and a monthly Quality newsletter. The A6 magazine in particular is used as a vehicle to promote awareness of current issues within the District.

Union Representation

Three unions are recognised at North Leicestershire: NUCPS for the executives and CPSA and PTC for the employees. It appears that the unions are stronger at Leicestershire than Preston. Indeed the District Manager emphasised the strength of the unions, stating that, as far as he knew, they were the most active BA unions in the country. In 1990, he explained, the office was on strike for 7 months due to the reduction in staffing levels following the introduction of mainstream computers. He stated that he believed this baggage remains but that, despite this, the unions had not actively resisted empowerment. After access to North Leicestershire had been negotiated union representatives asked to meet with me, a request not made in Preston. The representatives stated that they, and the workers they represent, felt a great deal of suspicion towards the Quality Framework and empowerment. They stated that the

work has been downgraded and that management are trying to use empowerment to get round the power of the Unions. This is occurring because proposals are not going to the Unions and through the Whitley Council as they once did but are now being discussed with the employees directly. However, one of the representatives stated that he believed the empowerment process was turning full circle in that, if it was originally implemented to avoid the involvement of unions by allowing staff to have input directly, it had failed in giving workers this autonomy and/or participation and had pushed people back behind the unions to fight for their cause. Indeed, towards the end of the research period, members of North Leicestershire called for a strike to protest against the new benefits being introduced, reiterating the strength of the Unions in this District.

The Move Towards Quality and Empowerment

Unlike Preston, North Leicestershire had not achieved the BA Quality Award status during the research period but had been awarded Chartermark (which they were nominated for by their customers) and were applying for Investors in People. Although the baselining score for BAQA had been reached in 1994, the quality process failed at this stage due to staff shortages and the absence of the District Manager for long periods due to sickness and previous commitments. Hence, North Leicestershire had experienced a difficult start to the Quality Framework and empowerment.

Strand 2 training began in North Leicestershire in August 1993. Six delegates from the District attended an Area conference where a discussion was held about empowerment. the idea behind this conference was for a selective number of people to attend and take on board the initiatives discussed in order to spread the ideas on their return to the office. In September 1993, the HEO Training and Development group met to discuss with staff the critical comments they had made about the HEO grade. In the minutes it was recorded that the staff, "recognised fully that whilst many staff and many HEOs were comfortable with the empowerment process, many others were not. The pivotal role of the HEO grade was recognised, however, and the fact that a number of HEOs seemed to have difficulties with empowerment was, in their view, a

major block on progress" (Internal Minutes, 1993). During this meeting HEOs discussed with staff how they might change their behaviours and again it was recorded that, "During the ensuing discussion, it was immediately recognised that many staff had little understanding of empowerment. Many staff felt under continual pressure and that they only had time to get their own work done and not take on extra responsibilities. A block existed at HEO level with some members of the grade apparently believing that they had empowered their staff when in reality they had done no such thing. It was felt that the understanding of empowerment could only come from actually experiencing it and this in turn should lead to the process of 'letting go'" (Internal Minutes, 1993). There also emerged a belief that BAMT (The Benefits Agency Management Team) were rushing the culture change through too quickly with the result that Districts had not fully perceived or understood the purpose behind it. In conclusion it was felt that HEOs needed to clarify a number of issues, amongst these were the meaning and implications of empowerment and the role of staff within an empowered environment.

Following these initial discussions, HEOs and SEOs from the Area attended a training day led by a Human Resource Consultant in November 1993. The training consisted of brainstorming; role plays; and feedback sessions on the issue of empowerment and how it might be operationalised in the East Midlands Area. Feedback from the consultant who led the sessions suggested that concerns were raised about letting go, confusion over what empowerment really meant and beliefs that it was just a cost-cutting, brainwashing exercise. On 2nd/ 3rd February 1994, twelve multi-disciplinary LO1s from the Yeoman Street and Loughborough Offices met at a hotel to discuss the issues of empowerment. The group reached the consensus that "the role of the District Office HEO is critical to achieving success and coping with the demands of work in a changing, front-line Public Service Agency" (Internal Communication, 1994). All of those present formulated a group objective "to influence the process of EMPOWERMENT and COMMUNICATION within Leicester North District" (Internal Communication, 1994). They felt that this was best achieved through open communication, honesty, collaboration and trust particularly between themselves and the HEOs. In January 1994, LO2s attended a Development Day in a local hotel. Part

of this day was devoted to Strand 2. This development day emerged as a result of the LO1s being "keen and insistent" (Internal Communication, 1994b) that an event was arranged because they perceived that it was "of vital importance to give the LO2 delegates an opportunity to listen and think about the very real changes that are happening to us all at the Benefits Agency" (Internal Communication, 1994b). During this training several different interpretations of empowerment were discussed (see Appendix N). These included: trying new ideas without fear of failure/retribution; receiving the support of all levels; taking on responsibilities that staff are not recognised for; and passing the buck. The training also identified barriers to empowerment (see Appendix O), including: conflict of interests; lack of resources; too much change at once; and worse service. Some AAs were trained in North Leicestershire which involved discussions with their LO1s about what they required and expected from empowerment. However, due to the funds allocation and the fact that LO1s had to put bids in to get funding for the training, some AAs received no formal empowerment training of any kind.

Since mid 1995, North Leicestershire has worked towards the Quality Framework and finally achieved Award status in March 1997, after the research period had ended. Unlike Preston, empowerment was introduced totally independently of the Quality Framework in North Leicestershire but there is a perception that the qualities of empowerment have been reignited and strengthened by the Core Values of the framework. Unfortunately, the Staff Perception Survey for North Leicestershire was not made available to the researcher so comparisons across grades and between organizations can not be made.

PART TWO: British Telecommunications Plc.

INTRODUCTION

This section looks at the development of BT from its beginnings in the Post Office to the modern, international organization which it is today. It examines the structure,

purpose, characteristics and the current issues which face the organization and its Personal Communications Division which forms the focus of the research. Moreover, it looks at the development of quality within the organization and examines how and why it introduced its empowerment policy: *'..for a better life'*. The chapter then looks at the two Directorates under study: Marketing and Payphones and progresses the way in which they have reacted to *'..for a better life'*.

THE ORGANIZATION

British Telecommunications plc. began life as part of the Post Office in the second decade of this century. However, as demand for telecommunications grew, the Post Office could no longer cope with the telecommunications side of its operation and in October 1969, what was to become BT, ceased to be a government department and became a state industry. An act of parliament in 1981 established BT as a business in its own right and provided an environment for a steady build up of market competition. Then, in 1984, The Telecommunications Act removed the vestiges of the company's previous monopoly rights and created Oftel (The Office of Telecommunications) which regulates the now liberalised market. BT's privatisation in late 1984 was the largest public offering ever made and 2.3 million bids were submitted for share options. This overhaul in the ownership and market position of the organization was a catalyst for change, as Iain Vallance, the Chairman of BT wrote, "Here was both a challenge and the great opportunity we needed to rid our business of so many outdated customs and practices, to focus upon the needs of our customers rather than upon our own internal administrative convenience, to enter new home and overseas markets, and to take full advantage of the many varying demands for what we could offer, now that we had the promise of greater freedom to do so" (Vallance, 1991: 100). The privatisation also allowed employees of BT to own a stake in their organization, indeed 96% of the eligible 238,000 employees accepted allocations of free shares and almost 80% put in their own money for shares. Present data on the number of employees owning shares is, unfortunately, not available as this would have given a good indication of the possible 'culture change' within BT since privatisation. The major changes in BT's ownership status have failed, however, to have as much effect as the accompanying development of the market - liberalisation -

which has already resulted in some erosion of BT's market share, although it still holds a practical monopoly in some market sectors. This has driven a real need for change in order to maintain as much of the current market as possible and to pre-empt the future market in order to maximise their position within that. This is highlighted by BT's move towards becoming a global player after the recent proposed merger with MCI.

BT (no longer British Telecom) is the 33rd biggest company in the world and is separated into three units which address their different market places: the Global division which directs itself overseas concentrating on mergers and acquisitions; National Business Communications, which is a UK based business selling products to companies and drawing up loyalty for future business; and Personal Communications. These divisions are supported by a number of units including Worldwide Networks which brings together responsibility for BT's UK and international networks. In 1996 BT reported that it served 21 million customers and employed 130,000 people, 100,000 less than it did in 1991. On November 3rd 1996, BT announced their proposed merger agreement with MCI which aims to create a premier global company which is well positioned to take advantage of the rapidly growing telecommunications industry. The new company will be called Concert plc and will have headquarters in London and Washington D.C. although it will still operate under the brand names of BT and MCI in the UK and USA respectively. BT is a founder member of the European Foundation for Quality Management and has applied the Business Excellence Model since it was developed in 1992; BT became a European Quality Award Prize Winner in November 1996. The company "was praised by the assessors for our long term commitment to total quality management, our well-defined human resources policy and our positive impact on society" (BT, 1997:3).

The Personal Communications (PC) division, on which this research is based, concentrates on personal market places and is responsible for the provision of all personal telecommunications products and services marketed by BT in the UK. The current organization of BTPC was formed in December 1993, when the engineering element, which had previously been part of PC, was incorporated into BT Worldwide

Networks. The Division is specifically focused on Customer Service, Marketing and Sales - although there is still an engineering element, mainly in Payphones. It is important that BT identify what future consumers will want and provide this to them quicker and in a better form than their competitors. The fact that the liberalised market has led to relatively uniform prices, means that BT must develop its customer service and marketing dimensions in order to differentiate themselves on the basis of quality and excellence. In this sense, whilst the Benefits Agency chose to change their terminology from "claimants" to "customers" to give staff a more customer focus, the change in BT from "subs" to "customers" more accurately reflected the company's change in status within the market place. Indeed, the onset of competition has led to BT shifting their image from one of an engineering company to one of a competitive marketing and sales organization.

The Personal Communications Division acts like its own distinct organisation, it has its own vision and mission and its own Managing Director, Stafford Taylor. The Managing Director is supported by 8 Directors, each in charge of their own Directorate with a number of "Direct Reports" below them. The PC Directorates are: Marketing; Customer Services; Consumer products and Retail; Cellnet; Finance; BT Mobile; Payphones; Card Services; and Personnel. However, the recent re-organization of the PC Marketing function means that Stafford Taylor is now, effectively, the Director of that function (see THE UNITS - Marketing, below). The senior management team is supported by two quality councils. The first, the PC Quality Council, concentrates on the residential service-based business areas of the division whilst the second, the Away From Base Quality Council, is concerned with the interests of the consumer on the move. Membership of these Quality Councils is by the personal invitation of Stafford Taylor. As can be seen from the Directorate names, BTPC has a broadly functional structure but, for example, Payphones, BT Mobile and Cellnet (presently owned by BT and Securicor, although BT are making a bid for Securicor's 40% stake) are run like separate business units with their own Finance and Personnel departments. As of 1st April 1996, BTPC employed 17,024 "full time equivalent" employees and a further 5,846 "full time equivalent" agency

staff who are employed mainly in Operator Services and Tele-Marketing. Employees at BT are represented by one main union the Communication Workers Union (CWU).

Mission

The mission of BT's Personal Communications division (BTPC) is:

To help our customers communicate better to improve the quality of their lives and enhance shareholder value. We do this through teams of highly motivated and well trained people who:

. Give excellent customer service

. Stimulate market growth

. Continually improve the way we do things

Vision

To make BT the first choice for communications and a source of national pride.

QUALITY IN BT

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s liberalisation and the effects of privatisation caused a need for devolution and decentralisation of management, which Iain Vallance stated were "very much the watchwords" and he continued, "we sought to eliminate our middle tier of regional administration, to push decision making and managerial responsibility down the line, and to give our field managers full control over, and accountability for all the financial, engineering, technical and human resources which they so desperately needed, within a cohesive national framework, to do the best possible job for their customers" (1991: 101). BT's specific interest in Quality began in 1986 when it instigated the BTUK survey of employee communications as it became aware that "it had to change the age-old, inflexible rules and traditions about working, to be more responsive to customers, to bring in Total Quality Management" (Foy, 1994: 206). The results of the survey were fed back in a rather complicated 400 page document to each District General Manager (BT was still regionalised at this stage, a vestige of its Civil Service days) and it was decided that consultants should be assigned to various parts of the country to help interpret the findings.

Nancy Foy was one of these consultants and she was assigned to Edinburgh District, she wrote that "It was an exciting time throughout the company. The will to change was strong, but not yet directed through a single leading edge. A consultant friend remarked that headquarters was going through a phase of matrix management: 'And at every intersection, there's some enterprising soul pushing out a new culture change programme'" (Foy, 1994: 208). She recognised that there were problems at the middle management level and stated that many of those managers interviewed swore that they spoke to their people every day but admitted that they had difficulty, "They still felt very exposed when people asked questions they could not answer. They said: 'Nobody ever tells us anything'. Their meetings tended to be stilted, one way. One said: 'you know, we've never had any experience at this. We aren't sure how to do it'" (1994: 211).

Foy and her fellow consultants worked to overcome these difficulties and increase face-to-face contact between managers and employees. Yet, despite this valued work on employee communications the 1987 strike and negative press publicity created real problems of low employee morale. The management board had to come up with ways of improving this situation and they did this by directing resources to two major problems that were tarnishing the organization's image, "at a time when all other parts of the company were slimming," wrote Foy, "they hired extra people to help cope with payphone repair and maintenance, and cutting installation waiting lists. I believe that these decisions were an important turning-point towards empowerment for many BT people. As criticism receded a little, employees began to perceive that the company could, indeed, manage itself proactively and act decisively. They began to see that their supertanker could turn" (1994: 222). Yet, the optimism expressed in this quote by Foy must be treated with some caution in the lack of employee evidence to support or refute this.

In 1991, Project Sovereign involved a large reorganisation and change of image for BT. The semi-autonomous regional structure was scrapped, the workforce was streamlined and this was accompanied by several policies which sought to improve

communications and efficiency within the organisation. In Iain Vallance's view, "Project Sovereign is enabling us to focus much faster and more sharply on widely differing needs, to take decisions on them more quickly and cost-effectively, and to satisfy them in a fast, flexible and quality way" (1991:109). "Involving Everyone", a human resource policy accompanying Project Sovereign, sought to educate and involve some 200,000 BT employees in Total Quality and Continuous Improvement. The objectives were to get all staff to share and understand the company's values and goals and to work towards continuous improvement for the satisfaction of customers through the use of Quality Improvement Teams. Although this sounds rather like some empowerment policies, BT recognise the difference between the involvement programme where the idea was to tackle the problem as part of a team in a more reactive sense and the development of their new policy *'...for a better life'* which seeks to make people proactive by giving them personal ownership. Whilst the first programme added quality procedures and activities to employees' present jobs, the new project seeks to change the entire way in which people think about themselves and the way they work. In 1994/1995 BTPC achieved ISO9001 registration and they were awarded "Investors in People" in late 1996. Like The Benefits Agency, BTPC will be measuring themselves against the European Quality Award in 1996/1997. Alongside '...for a better life', Personal Communications is committed to the "Breakout" project spearheaded by Michael Hepher, the Group Managing Director of BT plc, which has been designed to get rid of outposts of resistance which remain following BT's various re-engineering activities. These attempts to reduce resistance within the organization, and the various BPR-type overhauls in structure and process since privatization, suggest that BT is now projecting a highly unitarist image, in stark contrast to the pluralist organization which existed in its days as a Public company. Personal Communications are planning to implement a range of initiatives under this banner, designed to improve the effectiveness of the organization, during 1997.

'...for a better life'

With the set up of BT Personal Communications came a new Managing Director - Stafford Taylor who declared that he was frustrated by the difficulty and delay in getting things done, he wanted all employees to take personal ownership of their work

rather than always seeking the approval of superiors - this, he called, the "own, do and decide" culture which he hoped would replace the status driven hierarchy that was an inheritance of BT's civil service background. Stafford Taylor stated his intention to develop a culture where there would be a "burning sense of energy" to get things done. Despite a commitment to change the culture, it was also acknowledged that there was a need to perform a uniform service throughout the country which forced people to do things a particular way and, therefore, left restricted room for discretion. To overcome this it was concluded that the management must take on a new role: one of supporting the organisation not driving it. *'...for a better life'* was launched in November 1994 and is an internal campaign to help BT staff adopt new behaviours and ways of working that allow them to meet the new climate within which they work. The objective of *'...for a better life'* is to fully involve all PC staff in participating in the PC vision and mission, further conveying the organization's image of shared interests and unitarism. It is a philosophy rather than a structured programme which, BT senior management hope will change the way BT staff treat each other and their customers. The policy is based on the exercising of the four key behaviours: instinctively knowing how to contribute to the success of BT; taking personal ownership for customer requirements; taking considered risks to delight the customer and taking decisive action on behalf of the customer. These behaviours have been targeted by the activities which constitute the training process (discussed below). An internal training document sets out how these behaviours tie in to the organization's objectives:

"Before we can act on behalf of the customer, everyone in PC has to *instinctively know how they contribute to the success of BT.* This enables all other actions to take place, and we will make certain that each of us is clear exactly how our contribution helps achieve the objectives of the division.

People have to *take personal ownership for customer requirements.* This means knowing what we do and do not own and who are customer is, and then becoming champions for that customer within BT.

Take *considered risks to delight the customer, and not suffer in consequence.* All business decisions involve an element of risk. We should alter the balance of decision

making towards the customer requirements and away from inaction. The worst decision is no decision.

Finally, *take decisive action on behalf of the customer*. This implies a sense of urgency, but is not the same as activity or interference. Think what has to be done. Think what it looks like from the customer's point of view. Think about the intervening steps to achieve that. And then do it!" (Internal Document, 1996)

The project is supported by the Corporate Scorecard which provides a framework for translating strategy into operational terms (see Appendix P) and identifies the four key areas the Division are focusing on. In particular it relates to the Climate For Action dimension which includes issues of ownership, decisiveness etc. and focuses on the strategic importance of employees. To support the *'...for a better life'* initiative, a Project Team was set up to co-ordinate the various activities and resources needed for it to run effectively. The team is based in the Personnel Directorate at Westside, the PC Head Office, and invites people to get involved with *'...for a better life'* through its newsletter.

The development of *'...for a better life'* was overseen by the Managing Director, Stafford Taylor and Bob Mason, the Personnel Director. The project manager was Mike Young, one of Bob Mason's direct reports, and he was responsible for designing and launching the *'...for a better life'* initiative. The programme was designed to consist of initiatives which were short term with immediate impact, medium term and long term. It was designed to run in parallel with a similar project directed at the customer - "It's Good To Talk". The image conveyed by both projects is that, in some way, BT can make their customers, both internal (i.e. employees) and external, happier. The Project Manager of *'...for a better life'* was the researcher's initial contact point within BT. He shared his thoughts regarding anticipated problems with empowerment and outlined the overriding objectives of the project. Firstly, he stated that although constraints must be removed to give employees more discretion, there is still a need to provide a standardised and excellent service. BT reconcile this by removing unnecessary constraints but maintaining a certain amount of control on more important issues. Secondly, he continued, there is a resistance to use the term

"empowerment" within the organization as employees, who are more than aware of recent reductions of the workforce, may feel a certain amount of cynicism. Although most of this reduction has been achieved through voluntary means (i.e. natural wastage and recruitment cut-backs), there is still an amount of insecurity and a lack of commitment from employees. Indeed, the manager said many employees look, not for reasons to stay, but for the best time to leave. The psychological effects of being a "survivor" and a lack of belief in their long-term job prospects means that employees require a surge of confidence: hence the introduction of *'...for a better life'*. In this way, then, the introduction of the empowerment initiative was directed at changing employees' values and attitudes as a response to the demoralisation caused by redundancies. The third problem which the project manager anticipated was from the management. Managers' behaviour, he stated, is critical: they must not only delegate but support employees so that the latter feel capable of making their own decisions and taking personal ownership of their actions. A climate should be created where people believe that how they behave counts not authority. This does not mean, he assured, that it should allow for reckless behaviour but that support should be there to allow a frame of reference to develop within which everyone uses their own discretion.

Training

The *'...for a better life'* project was first introduced to the managers in order to gain support for the policy from the top. It was introduced in November 1994 by a series of events which were attended and personally supported by the Managing Director. Frank Dick, a highly respected athletic coach, was employed by BT as a consultant at this stage which reflected their desire to create coaches rather than hierarchical managers. A small group (about 30) of management volunteers from BTPC became "better life" coaches and got involved in *'...for a better life'* from early on in its development. They met with Frank Dick and had a 2/3 day course which explained to them the nature of the training event to be held for all managers and what was expected of them as a coach. At this stage they had the opportunity to offer ideas, based on their experiences as managers, as to what would work and what wouldn't on the training days. It was then the coaches' jobs to roll out *'...for a better life'* to all the

managers within Personal Communications in the form of workshops. The sporting analogies continued with the naming of these workshops as "management workouts". These consisted of mostly physical activities which promoted the importance of teamwork and coaching methods. They were also accompanied by a training video in which Mr Dicks compared the running of BT to a team sport which was adopting a new "game plan". The video consisted of three main sections: The Game Plan; Cops To Coaches; and The Risk of Winning.

The Game Plan

The new game plan was described by Mr Dicks as, "instead of looking into the stand to see what the manager or the coach has to say to deal with this or that problem out here in the arena, we own the problem and the solution and we deliver it". The video likened Personal Communications to a sports team which Mr Dicks called BTPC and he stated that the ball used in the sport was similar to "a business opportunity", the idea being that if you pass the ball you do not give away the responsibility, you move on to a new level constantly seeking ways in which your team can have the advantage. The video acknowledged that learning new techniques was uncomfortable, but that due to the fact that there were now lots of other competitors in the sports arena (telecoms market) the team's game plan had to change. Mr Dicks stated on the video that "when change comes along it's an opportunity, you can say 'let's not', you can say 'wait and see' or you can say 'let's go'". The differentiation was made between "valley people" and "mountain people", The valley people, Mr Dicks said, were those who used words such as "would of", "could of" and "should of" and who were afraid to lose, whilst the latter were those for whom "the horizon is not the limit". One of the better analogies that was used was that of a relay race where there is a great deal of trust put in everyone involved, "the second runner never looks back, he trusts the incoming runner". Mr Dicks stated that for business, as in sport, there are three qualities which make a winner: wanting to win; believing you can win; and persisting until you do win".

Cops To Coaches

The video listed three qualities which would help managers move "from cops to coaches": "to do the job you were accepted to do to the best of your ability; to accept responsibility for your own development; and to develop other people to do their jobs even better still". It promoted managers as "coaches" whose job it was to make sure that staff are set realistic but challenging targets. Mr Dicks stated that it was important that "people understand what their skills are" and that, with a managers belief and commitment, people will start to do things instinctively. The video argued that "it is not a coach's job to control people and to push people into shape, it is a coaches job to get the best out of the athletes" and advocated four development styles of management: directing; coaching; supporting; counselling and discussed how these might be applied:

Directing: Setting down the framework

Coaching: Motivation is likely to go down at this stage, encourage your athletes

Supporting: Athletes begin to take over and believe that they can achieve, support them

Counselling: Be there when your athletes need you.

Again the video acknowledged the inevitability of resistance, "no matter how exciting change might be, it can frighten people; for some it may even make them resistant, but nobody said it was going to be easy".

The Risk of Winning

This section emphasises that there is no risk of losing with the new game plan, just the risk of winning. Frank Dick quoted George Bernard Shaw in order to emphasise the attitude which BT staff should have, "Some men see things as they really are and ask why, I dream of things that never were and ask, why not?". Despite this, the video states that BT is not advocating carelessness and that any risks should be "considered risks". Finally, Frank Dick stated that there was no way back, that the old game plan did not exist any more, and that, "now you've started coaching, you can't stop. Because, you see, what you think is a destination now will simply become a milestone and for every milestone you pass, you go on to the next and to the next. You celebrate with your team and with the individuals in your team every milestone that you pass".

After their "workouts" the managers went back to their department and repeated similar exercises with their own teams. The first *'...for a better life'* newsletter (Appendix Q) describes how some of these took form. They tended to involve a number of different exercises which were aimed at bringing out the key behaviours which *'...for a better life'* advocates. For example in two of the workouts described in the newsletter, staff had to guide each other blindfolded through an obstacle course which helped them see the importance of coaching and considered risks. Another theme was the writing of bad behaviours, which were seen to exist in the organization (i.e. an out of date procedure or way of working) on balloons and then bursting them. Staff were encouraged, with the help of their managers, to draw up a "fitness plan" to focus on actions for the future and ways of demonstrating the key behaviours. It was important that every manager designed a team workout which was applicable to their team and which highlighted how the *'...for a better life'* behaviours could be applied in their day-to-day work.

Since the training, a number of follow up activities have been organized to maintain the profile of the initiative. There have been a number of competitions including "...it's time for a better life", "Write Now" and "Images". The latter was a competition whereby the employees designed videos to illustrate how *'...for a better life'* has affected their job and their department. The best ten storyboards were given the opportunity to make short films, the videoing of which acted as a good teamwork exercise, and these culminated in an Images "Oscar-like" ceremony held at the BAFTA building in London. The video storylines included one where a girl was hit by a lorry while using a phone box and, whilst the BT engineer was refitting the phonebox, he went to see the girl, giving her some flowers and a phonecard so she would not be put off using the payphone in future. He also asked the girl if she would do some PR shots so it brought publicity to BT at the same time. Another storyline was called "Dreaming Reality" and it started out in black and white where people were working like robots in the operator services offices. One of the operators suddenly decided to be nice to the customer and sort out all the problems with the engineers etc. herself, the film is suddenly in colour and everyone is happier with the

girl stating "Dream It, Reach It, Live It - A Better Life" Again this event was strongly supported by Stafford Taylor and the senior management team and a follow up: "Images 2" was held in late 1996.

Alongside this, employees have attended customer service training courses relating to how to sell successfully and interact with customers and 1 in 8 people within Personal Communications have made individual or team pledges. The pledges are statements made by individuals or teams which outline how they are going to put the *'...for a better life'* behaviours into practice in order to make a better working life for themselves and their customers. Anybody who submits a pledge receives a printed copy of it which is signed by Stafford Taylor so that it can be placed on their desk or in their work space, this also enters them into the Better Life Club and they receive a badge to prove they are members. In May 1996, the senior management team held an "Action Month". Senior teams identified a business challenge for their part of Personal Communications and called on line managers to adopt behaviours to meet the challenges set and to lead and enthuse their teams about the Action Month. The month began with a distribution of merchandise to every employee within Personal Communications in order to raise the profile of *'...for a better life'*. The pack contained stickers, a pen, a key ring, a tax disc holder, a fridge magnet, a giant paper clip and a mug coaster; each was decorated in blue and yellow with a big sun (the logo of *'...for a better life'*). Each team were also sent bunting, posters and a mouse mat to use in the office. Managers were asked to hold a team briefing to launch the Action Month and to discuss their Directorate's challenge with their team. As a team, they then had to come up with ways in which they could achieve that challenge. The researcher observed one of these team briefings in the Payphones Directorate and the meeting generally consisted of a brainstorming session directed at why they did not think they were meeting their serviceability targets. Although they felt many of the reasons were beyond their control, they came up with three issues which they felt they could do something about and which they considered most important. Then the manager helped them to design a way in which these problems could be overcome. Many members of the team briefing which the researcher attended seemed enthused by the fact their views were welcomed and one person, having taken on personal

ownership of drawing up a map of the payphone area covered said, *"I've got it now, this 'better life', I'll take ownership of that"*.

Employee Perception Survey

Personal Communications' annual employee perception survey is called the "CARE survey" (Communications and Attitude Research for Employees). It is used as a guide by managers as to how committed and motivated their teams are. Some general questions on satisfaction and motivation are shown in Table 10 below. The percentage of positive responses ("strongly agree" or "agree") are shown for each Directorate and compared to the results of the Personal Communications Division and the whole of BT. Results for the Card Services and Mobile Directorates are not shown as they were not originally involved in the *'...for a better life'* roll-out. Additionally, since 1995, the Directorates (particularly Marketing) have changed their structure and, hence, the categories do not necessarily match the present directorates. However, the researcher chose the units for research on the basis of the 1995 CARE survey, and so it is these results which are shown.

From Table Ten, below it can be seen that the Personal Communications Division gave considerably more positive responses to the statements listed than the rest of BT. Indeed, this is the trend throughout the CARE survey and Stafford Taylor advocates that these differences are largely down to the success of *'...for a better life'* which has only been introduced in PC (although the other two Divisions are considering its merits). Within the Personal Communications Division itself, Personnel shows the most positive feedback in 6 of the 7 statements shown below. However, it should be noted that the number of questionnaires from Personnel was very low in comparison to the other Directorates (56 compared to over 1000 in each of the other Directorates). Employees in Marketing report being the least satisfied in their jobs (57%) and were least likely to report that their managers managed their people well (56%). In Customer Services, employees were the least likely to be: motivated in their work (50%): proud of working for BT (44%); and to feel that they are kept informed about what is going on (46%). The nature of customer service work, dealing with complaints in a customer facing department, may explain why staff feel less motivated and have less pride in their company in this Directorate. Payphone employees were least likely

(22%) among the Directorates listed to feel that the changes occurring in BT were good for them, this is likely to be due to the threats of further job cuts, within Payphones, which is expected to arise out of increased efficiency (see Payphones Section).

TABLE TEN: Percentage of Positive Responses* to Satisfaction and Motivation Questions by Directorate (1995).

"CARE" survey Questions	The Personal Communications Directorates					PC Division	BT
	PP	Fin	CS	Mk	Pl		
Considering everything, I am satisfied with my job	64	60	59	57	67	59	55
I am motivated in my work for BT	57	53	50	55	68	52	47
BT helps people realise their full potential	29	26	30	32	35	30	22
Considering everything, the changes going on in BT are good for me	22	27	32	34	55	31	19
I feel proud to work for BT	49	46	44	54	70	46	40
My manager manages his/her people well	67	66	72	56	61	69	60
I am kept well informed about what is going on in the company	58	55	46	49	82	49	48

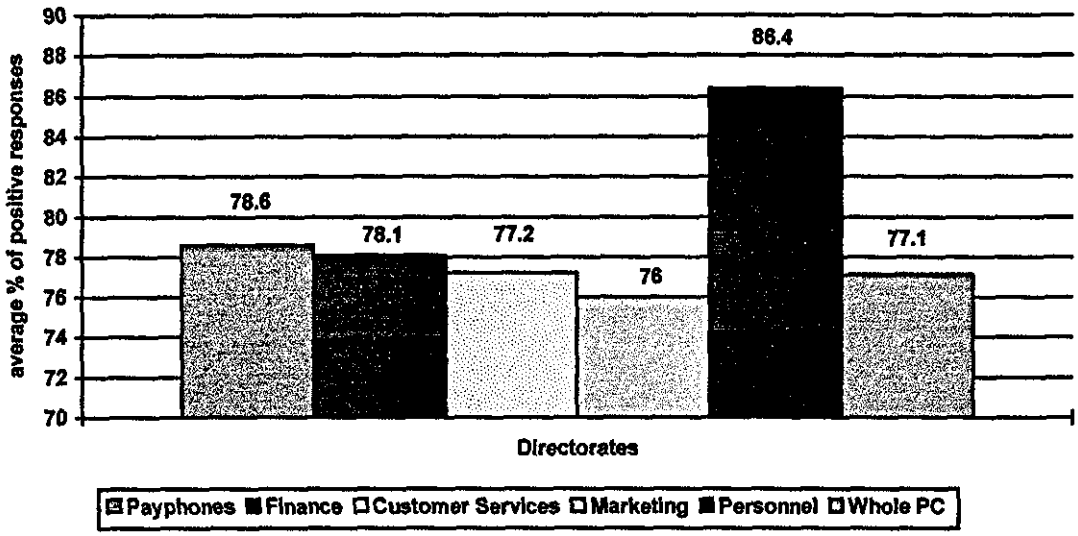
KEY

* Percentage of people who "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the statements

PP = Payphones; Fin = Finance; CS = Customer Service; Mk = Marketing; Pl = Personnel

The CARE survey also includes a section called "Working together...*for a better life*" (for list of items on this dimension, see Appendix R) which is based on the climate for action scale but which also includes questions on the coaching abilities of managers and whether the employees have perceived any changes attributable to *'...for a better life'*. The 1995 results for the dimension *'...for a better life'* are shown in Graph Two, below, by Directorate and are compared to the average for the whole of Personal Communications.

GRAPH TWO: Results of "...for a better life" dimension by Directorate



Graph Two shows that over 75% employees in each Directorate gave positive responses to the 21 items on this dimension. All the Directorates, with the exception of Marketing, gave responses which, on average, were higher than those given by the entire sample. Clearly the most positive responses have come from Personnel but one might expect this due to the fact that *'...for a better life'* is a personnel led initiative. Payphones gave the second most positive responses (78.6), closely followed by Finance and Customer Services.

THE ROLE OF THE UNIONS

In 1989 the Industrial Relations Review and Report claimed that 80% of BT staff were members of a union, although this was considered to be highly variable between different parts of the Organization. On the 26th January 1996, there was a merger between the two largest unions represented in BT , the National Communications Union - Engineering and Clerical Groups (NCU) and the Union of Communications Workers (UCW) to form the Communication Workers Union (CWU) with a membership of 280,000 members. The engineering background of BT means that both unions have a history of representing male, blue-collar workers and the Payphones Directorate, which continues to have a large concentration of such employees, remains highly unionised. For both the former Unions, particularly the NCU (which had been formed in 1985 as a result of the merger of CPSA(P&T) and the Post Office

Engineering Union (POEU)), the years since the privatisation of BT and the redundancies which accompanied it, proved to be a difficult period.

On 20th October 1982, the quarter of a million employees who worked in the, then, British Telecom, held a Day of Action to focus the public towards the impending privatisation of their company, and the ensuing job losses and services to the public, which they believed would be lost. Even though the privatisation was passed by the government, the NCU managed to ensure certain protections for the staff and threatened public services. The NCU agreed with BT that all existing contracts of employment would be carried over to the privatised company and that legal protection would be granted to all existing BT employees' pension rights. In addition, the Unions fought the attempts, which they believed, were directed at their marginalisation, and in 1986/1987 staff at BT took industrial action against the decentralisation of collective bargaining and the intention to attach efficiency measures to wage increases.

However, since then, as a result of technological change and the drive to cut costs since Project Sovereign, BT have cut staff by nearly 100,000. This reduction was made with agreement from the Unions who ensured that none of these redundancies have been compulsory, despite the intentions of BT, and that the redundancy terms have been relatively good. Employees from cleaners to directors all over the country applied for voluntary redundancy and, indeed, the redundancy scheme was oversubscribed in 1992. The fact that 16,000 employees who wanted to leave in 1992 could not (due to possession of scarce skills et cetera); the increased pressure of work which resulted after work teams had been depleted; and the redeployment of some employees, led to low morale throughout BT after Release '92. BT began to use contractors and agency workers in order to make their efficiency figures look better, a move which the Unions opposed. The results of the organization's CARE survey released in 1993 showed that morale among the 125,781 respondents was low. They felt very strongly that the changes taking place in BT were bad for themselves, for BT, and for BT employees in general (IRS Employment Trends, 1993). The unions have given a guarded response to the possibility of further release schemes after Release '93 as they try and tackle the poor morale which still exists among staff.

There was a fear amongst union members that the large reductions of the workforce would result in a reduction in the quality of service and that the failure to recruit from within would result in societal values rather than corporate values being adopted so that BT staff, as Hopfl et al (1992) wrote, no longer were "stamped BT to the core" (1992: 32). On airing these worries to BT management, the Unions received a reply from Michael Hepher that there was no hidden agenda to replace employees with contract workers and that "my preference remains to use direct labour wherever possible" (cited in NCU Journal, 1994). In 1994, without consultation with the unions, BT announced that their long term aim was to develop a company employing only 100,000, suggesting a further 50,000 jobs would be lost. Although, this was mostly directed at management grades, the NCU reiterated that any move towards compulsory redundancies would lead to an immediate ballot for Industrial Action.

Project Sovereign also involved a change in the industrial relations structure within BT. The move towards a more managerial ethos within BT with an emphasis on quality and flexibility, meant that employee attitudes had to be transformed. BT undertook "Involving Everyone"; the CARE survey; Speak-up (grievance system); team briefings and a New Ideas scheme. Each of these activities placed an emphasis on direct communication between employees and management, rather than using the unions as a channel of communication. Joint Consultative Committees were overhauled and became centralised under a hierarchical three tier structure: Group, Divisional, Zonal (Barrett & Heery, 1995). The move away from a geographical structure fragmented the interests of BT Unions and the British Telecom Unions Committee (BTUC) which previously co-ordinated the unions activities, was disbanded. The number of JCC meetings was reduced as was the number of union representatives allowed to attend, and the agenda changed to reflect strategic management decisions. The opportunities for discussion are restricted in the new structure, with the meetings generally consisting of management presentations to union representatives. The union role is further diminished by the fact that an Employee Communication release accompanies each meeting to inform employees of what was "discussed".

As well as the marginalisation of the BT unions in regard to JCCs, the influence of collective bargaining reduced over the same period. For the large majority of employees collective bargaining over pay and conditions has continued, indeed BT remains the largest company bargaining group covering 113,000 manual and non-manual employees who are balloted on proposed pay deals. However, this coverage has been reduced due to the increase in personal contracts for managers and the increasing number of peripheral workers. Moreover, there has been a drive from management to alter agreements on working practices and working hours to allow greater flexibility.

In the midst of further job cut announcements and this increasing marginalisation of the BT unions, BTPC announced the launch of *'...for a better life'* and BT announced the launch of the "Breakout" initiative to combat remaining inefficiencies. Regarding "Breakout" management promised that change would be introduced in consultation with the unions "If at all possible" (NCU Journal, 1994). The CWU were contacted regarding their official position on *'...for a better life'* but responded merely by sending results of a survey conducted on BT Customer Service Centre staff which was said to be "used by the union to support our representations to management about major concerns". However, from this survey two indications of the union position might be inferred. Firstly the pamphlet listing these results was called *"for a Better Future...after the slogans, the speeches and the spin"* suggesting that they may be sceptical about the "rolling out" of *'...for a better life'* and, secondly, the opinions expressed by staff about the initiative were largely negative, implying that the Union, on the basis of these results, may be concerned about the benefit of the programme for their members. Indeed, 1246 employees in Customer Service Centres responded to the Union survey with 85.8% stating that they knew about the "objectives and principles" of *'...for a better life'* but only 30.6% believing that it had achieved its objectives and 31.6% stating that the initiative had benefited them. Such results suggest that *'...for a better life'* is having little effect on the ground level, although the fact that the Union did not ask whether the initiative had actually affected its members negatively gives no indication of whether these attitudes should be of direct concern to the Union. One interesting aspect of the survey, however, was that only 46.4% of union members

believed that their union was able to influence management locally with 53% believing that the union could influence management nationally. These results seem to reflect the earlier discussion of the weakening of the unions and question why, if only half of members believe they have any influence, so many staff in BT remain members of the union.

THE UNITS: Payphones Directorate

The Payphones Directorate of Personal Communications manages all BT's UK payphone business, excluding Northern Ireland, and has responsibility for strategic planning and business analysis for product portfolio development, sales channels and field installation and maintenance technicians. The Directorate's highest turnover comes from public street payphones, although it also deals with rented and managed payphones, and most effort is put into the efficient running and quality of these high street payphones. Before the restructuring of the Directorate, brought about by Project Sovereign, Payphones was considered the "Cinderella" of BT, coming third in priority after business and personal use. It formed part of the regionalised structure of BT which was arranged into 92 areas throughout the UK but, at the end of the 1980s, small commercial units were set up to purely manage the Payphones side of the business. The Project Sovereign reorganization reduced the layers of management by almost half (from 13 to a maximum of 7). Since then, Payphones has become a separate business, within the ultimate authority of Personal Communications, and has become increasingly successful. Due to resources being ploughed into the Directorate, in an attempt to improve the serviceability, 95% of Payphones are now working at any one time.

As of 1st April 1996, Payphones employed 2362 staff, of whom 32 were agency staff and 2031 were non-managerial BT employees. The structure of BT Payphones's management team is such that there is a Director - Bob Warner and he has a number of "direct reports" who oversee support services such as sales and marketing, personnel, finance and activities such as business improvement (including security), systems and products, and the development of Payphones for the future. The most

visible part of the Directorate, however, is Field Operations which employs nearly 1600 engineers throughout the country who work in teams led by a field manager and overseen by Area Managers. The biggest concentration of Payphones is, unsurprisingly, in the Central and West London area which includes the whole of the 0171 payphones. The revenue from payphones in this area is about £3 million a month. The field operations unit is spread throughout the UK with the two field operation centres at Sale, Cheshire and Swansea, Wales. The operation centres or "Controls" monitor the number and nature of faults throughout the country and contact the appropriate, local engineers to fix them. Payphones have set a target for each engineer of fixing seven faults a day. The engineers are helped by area support staff who provide them with timesheets, stationary etc. and senior technicians who advise the engineers. These support services are again spread throughout the UK and are each responsible for a number of different "fields". Unionisation is quite high in Payphones, largely to do with the high proportion of engineers.

'...for a better life'

When Payphones became independent, the new management were quite prescriptive about Quality Management Techniques. The initial programme of TQM and "Involving Everyone" was not as successful as it might have been due to the instability of recent change and the blocking of the programme at lower levels of management. The Payphones Director told the researcher that *'...for a better life'* was proving more successful than these previous initiatives as it had been pushed openly and honestly, by the Payphones management, as something which was being primarily directed at organizational effectiveness rather than employee well-being and that it had tried to avoid the "glitzy side" of the promotion. He said that the staff had been made aware of the targets of *'...for a better life'*, and the Directorate in general, which are to reduce the need for the present number of engineers by increasing efficiency.

Within Payphones, managers attended cross-divisional "management workouts" and then applied this to their own work teams through "team workouts". As the initiative was pushed further down the hierarchy, more concrete examples were given as to how *'...for a better life'* could be applied to people's daily working lives. The "team

workouts" differed between the numerous teams but normally involved some form of team activity. In one unit staff went on a two day away day and a half day car rally, whilst another unit took part in a number of outdoor activities such as abseiling, orienteering and rock climbing. Most managers stated that these workouts were voluntary but nearly all staff attended, although due to the nature of work in payphones, especially in the field engineering offices, not everyone from a single depot could attend the "workouts" at the same time. Although the non-managerial employees have received no real training other than their "team workouts" the ideas and behaviours behind *'...for a better life'* are reinforced through the monthly newsletter - "Payphone News" which highlights a "behaviour of the month" whereby examples are given of ways in which staff within the Directorate have applied the key behaviours. For example in one edition of the newsletter there were joint winners who had been recommended for taking *"personal ownership of their work"*. The first had set about creating selection criteria for, and identifying, a number of potential sites for the installation of the new style multi-pay Payphones, which allow you to use a phonecard or cash. The second winner was a team of engineers who had been called to install some payphones at a hotel which was hosting a conference. They made the decision that the payphones needed mounting units and so they went to a Do-it-yourself store and built the units themselves. A representative from the hotel wrote "The engineers went beyond their call of duty by installing (and building themselves, I believe) a unit that looked both professional and aesthetically pleasing in our lobby area" (Payphone News, 1996).

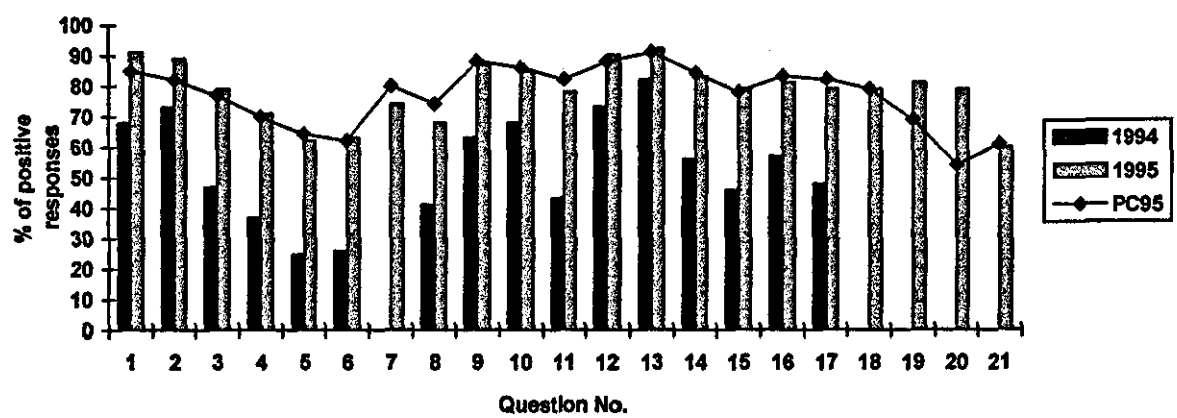
Running somewhat alongside *'...for a better life'* in Payphones is the "New Ideas" programme, which is a suggestion scheme where an individual stands to get a percentage of any profit created by their suggestion. Even though, the percentage of ideas which are implemented is low (6-7%) and only a small percentage of people have participated in it, the decision to relaunch the scheme has been made in the light of the drive for the European Quality Award. Despite the fact that *'...for a better life'* and New Ideas have come from very different starting points, there is a belief within Payphones that they complement each other well. A similar finding was expressed by Marchington et al (1992), where over half their sample of organizations had possessed

a suggestion scheme for many years but had "revamped" them in line with other involvement techniques.

The CARE Survey Results

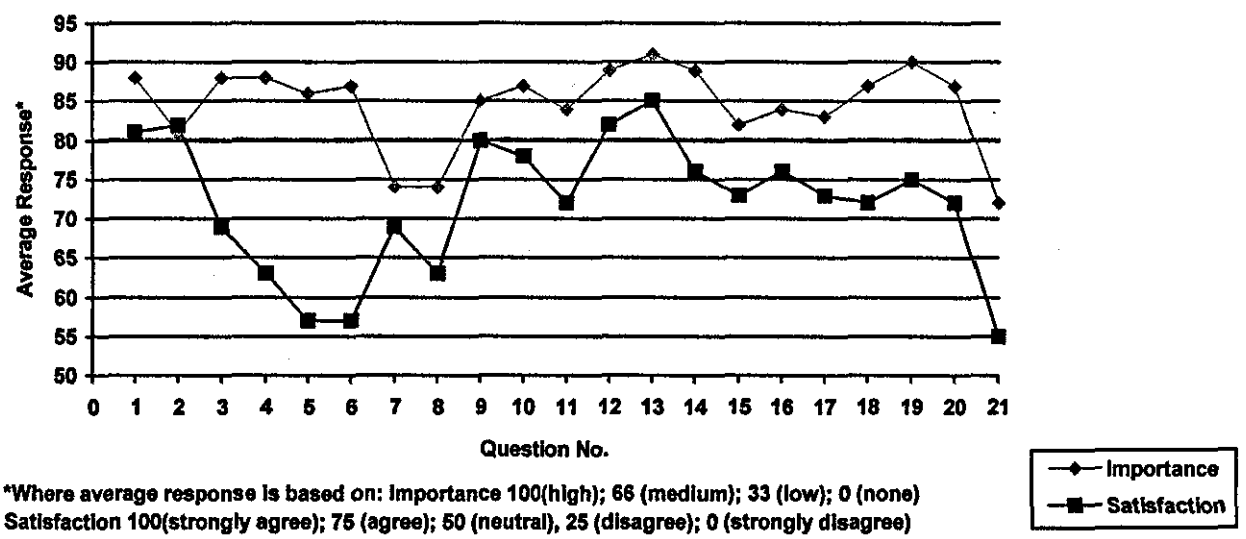
The graphs below show a detailed analysis of how the Payphones Directorate performed in the 1995 CARE survey, Graph 3 compares these results to the survey in 1994. The graphs illustrate responses to the "Working Together...*for a better life*" dimension (the 21 statements can be found in Appendix R) which looks at whether people are encouraged by their managers, and feel confident enough, to use the "better life" behaviours. Graph Three shows the percentage of people who "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the items on the dimension. It can be seen from Graph Three, below, that the Payphone responses closely followed the average for the whole of the Personal Communications Division (PC). Statements 7 and 8 were those which were the least positive compared to PC (both 6% lower) and these concerned awareness and understanding of the PC Vision and Mission. Those statements which were completed in a considerably more positive way by Payphones were 19 and 20 which concerned the leadership and coaching skills of their managers. Perhaps, most visible from the graph is the considerable increase in positive responses from the previous year (note that questions 7,18, 19, 20 and 21 were new questions in 1995), particularly in statements 3 to 6 which deal with how staff interact with each other.

GRAPH THREE: Results of "...for a better life" dimension for Payphones (1994& 1995) compared to the 1995 results for the entire Personal Communications division.



Graph Four, below, shows that generally staff's satisfaction with issues surrounding *'...for a better life'* is lower than their perceived importance. The only exceptions to this being statements 1 and 2 which relate to whether other staff within Personal Communication are perceived as polite. The biggest discrepancies between perceived importance and satisfaction are statements 3 to 6 which, as stated above, are those related to how staff interact with each other. Statement 6 which has the largest discrepancy states that "They say when they will meet my requirements", implying that communications between BT staff is still not at a satisfactory level according to most members of staff within Payphones. The most important issue within this dimension is perceived by Payphone staff to be "I feel confident about making decisions to meet my customers' needs". The least important issue is seen to be "I have perceived changes which are attributable to ...for a better life", so although employees are not particularly satisfied that perceivable changes have occurred (there is a 17% discrepancy between importance and satisfaction on this issue), it could be assumed that it is relatively low on the agenda for Payphone staff.

GRAPH FOUR: Scattergram showing the perceived Importance of, and Satisfaction with, the items making up the "Better Life" dimension for Payphones, 1995.



*Where average response is based on: Importance 100(high); 66 (medium); 33 (low); 0 (none)
Satisfaction 100(strongly agree); 75 (agree); 50 (neutral), 25 (disagree); 0 (strongly disagree)

THE UNITS: Marketing Directorate

The Marketing Directorate claims to develop, promote and deliver communication propositions that help consumers improve the quality of their lives and aid the growth of the overall UK market for telephony. The recent re-organization of the Marketing function means that now Stafford Taylor acts, effectively, as the Director of Marketing with the heads of Marketing Services (including market research etc.); Marketing Communications (adverts, press, posters etc.); Network Services Marketing and the Talk 21st Century and BT Forum projects reporting directly to him. As of 1st April 1996, Marketing employed 2643 staff, of whom 1448 were agency staff and 825 were non-managerial BT employees. The union membership within the Marketing Directorate is not high, possibly due to the number of managers and agency staff employed. The union has had very little power over Marketing's day-to-day activities since the last strike in 1987 when managers reasserted their "right to manage". They still meet with management but are rarely consulted on such issues as people change programmes. However, even though they do not exert much influence at this level, it is still likely that the unions will continue to influence some employees' attitudes. The increase in market competition means that the Marketing Directorate must take on a more aggressive, competitive edge and become more reactive to external events. The amount of money spent on advertising has significantly increased and the advertising has become much more targeted. Indeed, BT's "It's Good To Talk" campaign starring Bob Hoskins was judged the most effective piece of British advertising in the last two years by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising; it is estimated that the campaign has brought in around £300 million in revenue.

'...for a better life'

The increase in competition between telephony companies to win customers' loyalty has, as is stated above, created a need for a more aggressive marketing strategy. This has led some senior managers in the Marketing Directorate to seize on *'...for a better life'* which advocates making quick, informed decisions and which removes the need for hierarchical procedures. However, a number of factors within the Marketing Directorate have caused *'...for a better life'* to undergo a, somewhat, faltering start. The TQM change programme in the early 1990s did have some effect on the

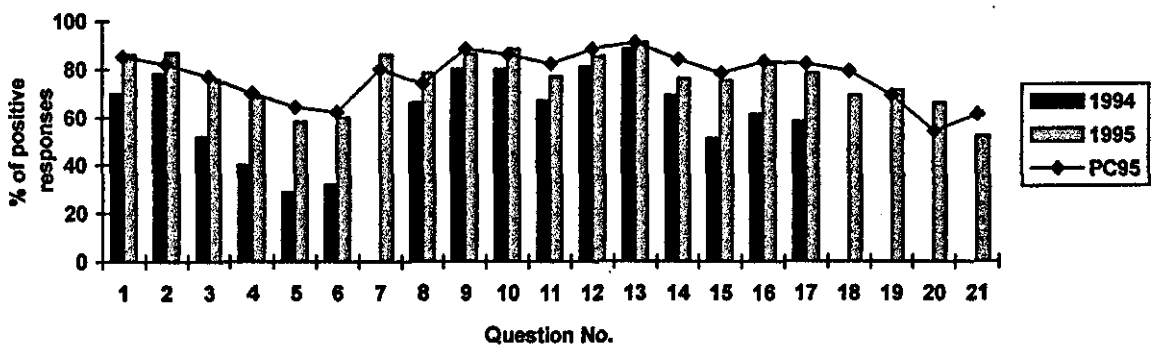
Marketing Directorate, hierarchical barriers were, to some extent, broken down. Indeed, staff involved in the Quality Improvement Teams presented their thoughts to the chairman on occasions, something unthinkable before then. However, the lack of follow up to the "Involving Everyone" programme meant that some staff became cynical about empowerment, a word used at that time within Marketing, and its failure to produce real results.

The Marketing Director's lack of interest in *'...for a better life'* at its inception meant that the messages sent down from the Managing Director were often diluted and that it was apathy towards the programme, rather than enthusiasm, which cascaded downwards. Since the departure of this Director in early 1996, a manager has been brought into the Directorate to look specifically at the Directorate's people change programmes and what can be done to increase their success. The new manager told the researcher that one of the major blockages to *'...for a better life'* within Marketing was the managerially-loaded nature of the Directorate (almost 50% of BT staff working in Marketing are of a managerial grade) and the fact that these managers do not see the relevance of the *'...for a better life'* initiative to themselves. The Directorate has been undergoing a great deal of change over the last few years with a large number of people being redeployed and this has added to the failure of those in Marketing to reconcile *'...for a better life'* with their workplace reality. Since early 1996, a concerted effort has been made in Marketing by senior management to raise the profile of *'...for a better life'* and, particularly in tele-marketing, there has been some success. The first *'...for a better life'* training took place in January 1996; however, many in the Directorate still did not attend conventional "team workouts" due to the high number of managers (who attended the "management workouts") and agency staff who work in the Directorate. The initiative has been tied in much more to business results in recent months and senior management used "Action Month", in May 1996, as a chance to re-energise the philosophies behind the key behaviours and aims of *'...for a better life'*.

The CARE Survey Results

The graphs below show a detailed analysis of how the Marketing Directorate performed in the 1995 CARE survey, Graph 5 compares these results to the survey in 1994. The graphs illustrate responses to the "Working Together...*for a better life*" dimension (the 21 statements can be found in Appendix R) which looks at whether people are encouraged by their managers, and feel confident enough, to use the "better life" behaviours. Graph Five shows the percentage of people who "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with the items on the dimension. It can be seen from this Graph that, although the Marketing responses followed the average for the whole of the Personal Communications Division (PC) reasonably closely, there were a number of issues which marketing staff appeared less satisfied with than the average PC member of staff. Particular amongst these were statements 18 and 21; statement 18 regards whether a manager leads by example and statement 21 relates to whether changes have been perceived which could be attributed to *'...for a better life'*. In both these cases Marketing responses were around 10% less positive than for the entire PC sample.

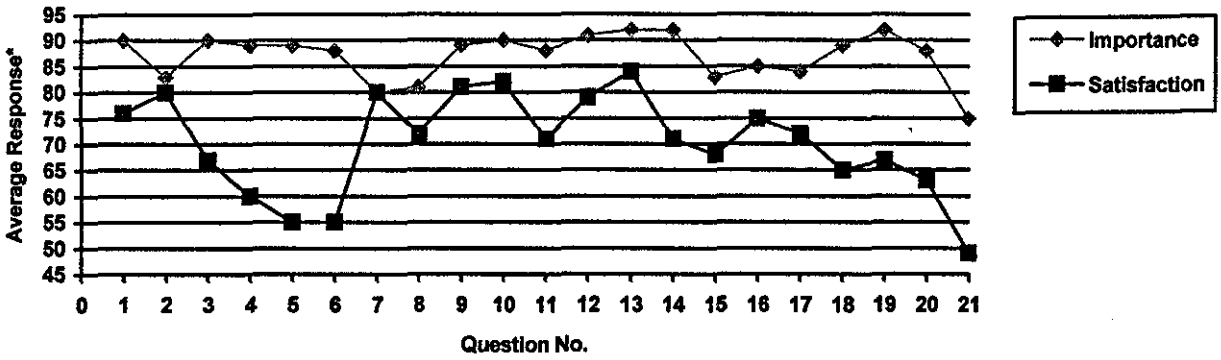
GRAPH FIVE: Results of "...for a better life" dimension for Marketing (1994& 1995) compared to the 1995 results for the entire Personal Communications division.



Those statements which were completed in a slightly more positive way by Marketing included 7 and 20. Statement 7 regards awareness of the PC vision and mission whilst 20 states that, "I receive sufficient coaching support from my manager to enable me to be completely helpful to my customers". Again, as in Payphones, the graph shows an

increase in positive responses from the previous year, although these improvements are not as large as was the case in Payphones.

GRAPH SIX: Scattergram showing the perceived Importance of, and Satisfaction with, the items making up the "Better Life" dimension for Marketing, 1995.



*Where average response is based on: Importance 100(high); 66 (medium); 33 (low); 0 (none)
Satisfaction 100(strongly agree); 75 (agree); 50 (neutral), 25 (disagree); 0 (strongly disagree)

Graph Six, above, shows that staff's satisfaction with all issues surrounding *'...for a better life'* is lower than their perceived importance. The biggest discrepancies between perceived importance and satisfaction, as was the case in Payphones, are statements 4 to 6 which, as stated above, are those related to how staff interact with each other. Statement 5 which has the largest discrepancy states that "I feel reassured that they have taken responsibility", implying that low levels of trust of other PC staff may be a major issue in Marketing. The most important issues within this dimension are perceived by Marketing staff to be "I feel confident about making decisions to meet my customers' needs"; "My manager makes effective decisions" and "I have confidence in the leadership of my manager" implying that the role of the manager is particularly important in Marketing. The least important statement is seen to be, as again was the case in Payphones, "I have perceived changes which are attributable to *'...for a better life'*, so although there is a 26% discrepancy between importance and satisfaction on this issue, it could be assumed that it is comparatively low on the agenda for Marketing staff. Hence, in both Marketing and Payphones employees neither see, nor consider important, any changes as a result of *'...for a better life'*, suggesting that there is an absence of tangible changes accompanying the programme.

CONCLUSION: Comparing The Organizations

This examination of the research organizations has raised some important issues regarding their similarities and differences which may form an interesting context in which to examine the results of the study. There are obvious similarities between the background of the two organizations, they serve a very similar number of customers and both are large employers with their roots in the Public Sector and radical changes have occurred in both organizations in the past decade. The fact that The Benefits Agency remains, at this time, as part of the Public Sector clearly indicates that it is still more heavily influenced by government constraints, but the position of BT also continues to be closely monitored by Oftel and its shareholders. Both organizations have striven in recent years to transform from hierarchical bureaucracies to flatter, more efficient structures through the use of TQM. This has meant that both have also experienced heavy job losses in the past decade, in the main both rationalisations have targeted middle managers, but although BT have managed to achieve this loss through voluntary means, how 'voluntary' these really are and how desirable the alternative - redeployment - is to those who work there, must be questioned. In addition, the increasing use of peripheral workers such as contractors and agency staff is occurring in both organizations and the concept of a "job for life" or being a "BT/ Civil Service person" is diminishing. Low morale also appears to be present at both organizations.

The positions of the Unions in both The Benefits Agency and BT are relatively similar. Two of the three unions which are represented, have resulted from recent mergers in an attempt to produce stronger, more united representations to management. The dualistic structure suggested by Storey (1992) is evident in both organizations with consultation and negotiation continuing at national levels but with more emphasis and energy being directed into HRM techniques and more emphasis being placed on local union negotiation. Although, the Communication Workers Union which represents staff in BT is still perceived to have more influence at a national rather than a local level. Whilst on a formal basis, the unions of The Benefits Agency have a policy of "sceptical engagement" to such policies, the local union perspective seems to be one of indifference, or perhaps it is just that they are being 'sidelined' by management and are unaware of many of the changes which are

occurring. In BT, the fact that union members are largely negative about the empowerment initiative suggests that the Union's official position may also be one of sceptical engagement.

There are also similarities between the organizations in the values and visions which they publicise. In both organizations there has been an increasing importance placed on the customer, with The Benefits Agency changing its terminology from "claimants" to "customers" and BT from "subs" to "customers". Consequently, both organizations are adopting unitarist assumptions, employing TQM and HRM techniques such as the individualisation of remuneration through Performance Related Pay to help them to respond to the new corporate climate. Whilst BT has for some time been experimenting with new management techniques such as employee involvement and TQM, the Benefits Agency has only begun to adopt such private sector approaches in recent years since its development as an Agency. However, in both organizations there is a similar overall approach to their new empowerment programmes, both initiatives were implemented after the appointment of a new Chief Executive/Managing Director and both are being introduced in a "top-down" fashion.

There are also clear differences between these two organizations. BT employs over twice as many people as The Benefits Agency, even after the recent release schemes reduced the workforce by 100,000. Additionally, in the Benefits Agency, the workforce is relatively homogenous consisting mainly of clerical staff, whilst in BT staff vary from engineers to marketeers to retailers et cetera. The structure of the two organizations also differs, BT is largely functional with only the necessary Directorates such as the Payphones being geographically dispersed. However, the Benefits Agency is arranged on a geographical basis, in terms of Areas and Districts and with the functional specialisms such as Personnel and Marketing being centralised at the head office in Leeds. There are also clear differences between the two empowerment initiatives, most obviously there is a difference in terminology with BT choosing to avoid the term "empowerment" in all their communications. The intentions of the two programmes also appear to differ considerably, in BT, with many of the structural changes being made earlier in the decade as a result of Project

Sovereign, the initiative appears to be more of a cultural change, adopting 'pop management' rhetoric, with the intention of gaining the "hearts and minds" of their staff, and arguably their acquiescence to these changes. Meanwhile, in The Benefits Agency, the empowerment programme appears to focus more sharply on the structural changes which are needed for the Agency to run more efficiently. Indeed, whilst few changes are being made to actual jobs in BT, the role of Benefits Agency staff is being enlarged to cover those tasks previously allocated to a higher grade. Whilst in both organizations, top management were trained first to gain acceptance for the initiative at this level, the introduction of the policy at lower levels differed between the two organizations. In BT, all managerial grades attended "management workouts" but then were expected to train their staff themselves based on this training, whilst in The Benefits Agency, all grades attended different training courses, with some of those in the lowest grades receiving no training at all.

The increasing decentralisation of power in both organizations has resulted in differences in structure and culture between different operating units. In the two case studies chosen from each organization, there were a number of interesting disparities. For example, the strength and militancy of the unions at the North Leicestershire District contrasts with those at Preston, whilst the relatively stable nature of the Preston District, situated under one roof, had led to it being regarded as a forward-thinking, proactive District and one of the first Quality Award winners. The fact that North Leicestershire District is, in contrast, spread across two offices with very different catchment areas, and has suffered from unstable leadership for many years, means that quality management techniques are occurring at a much slower pace there. Likewise, there are several differences between the BT directorates of Payphones and Marketing. The Directorates differ most noticeably in the number of core workers employed and organizational structure. Firstly, Marketing is relatively centralised at Head Office whilst Payphones is semi-autonomous, and geographically dispersed. The ratio of managerial to employee staff is strikingly different in the two Directorates. Staff in Marketing are generally graduates who entered at management level with the few core non-managerial employees generally having clerical roles. Indeed, it employs 2643 staff with only 825 being non-managerial employees and over half (1448) being

agency staff. In contrast, Payphones is dominated by semi-skilled, generally male, engineers who have generally worked for BT since their apprenticeship and who remain union members. 2362 are employed in Payphones with by far the majority being non-managerial (2031). Whilst both were affected by the threat of future job cuts, this appeared to be discussed more openly between management and employees in Payphones than in Marketing. The initial reactions to the introduction of *'...for a better life'* appear to be markedly different, with the support of the Director of Payphones to the initiative contrasting with the apathetic reaction of the previous Marketing Director.

To conclude, this chapter has considered the structure of the organizations and units under study, the management rhetoric surrounding the empowerment initiatives and the union/management relations which constitute the context in which the following results might be better understood. By then comparing and contrasting the two organizations and their units, a sense of the various factors which may affect the differing reactions, values and orientations of employees can be critically analysed in more detail.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Themes Arising From the Interviews and Focus Groups

"He knows the water best who has waded through it"
A Danish Proverb

INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at the particular themes which arose during the interviews and focus groups held within the two case-study organizations. It also draws a comparison between the two operating units internal to each. The different themes were chosen on the basis of those which emerged most prominently from the management interviews and focus groups. Hence, although the labelling of the themes is somewhat subjective, the fact that these particular issues emerged in all interviews and focus groups across both organizations, suggests their importance. Moreover, their clear linkage to some of the issues anticipated in the literature survey, imply their validity. Where some separate issues arose in one organization but not the other, these will be discussed under the most relevant theme. Each theme is considered separately with an outline of the main issues raised in each organization and their operating units. A discussion of the similarities and differences between these is also included. Although each theme is discussed separately, they are naturally, to some extent, inter-dependent and this will be acknowledged in the text and discussed in more depth in the conclusion which follows.

For confidentiality purposes, no reference will be made to individual people by name and all interviewees will be discussed in the male gender to protect the anonymity of those who took part in the research. For the same reason, although, because of the geographical structure of The Benefits Agency, the location of the operating units is known, the location of the interviews held with managers and employees within BT will not be referred to. The four main themes which emerged from the interviews and focus groups were: Training and The Essence of Empowerment; Cultural or Structural Empowerment?; Acceptance and Resistance of Empowerment - Managers; and Acceptance and Resistance of Empowerment - Employees. These are discussed in turn below.

The Benefits Agency

Preston

The empowerment training at Preston District was administered according to grade rather than command. The majority of middle managers interviewed said that they felt their empowerment training, a week long course at a local hotel, had been an enjoyable and valuable experience. One manager described the course as *"excellent"* and said that it had *"changed my outlook and focused me towards the change that is needed within BA to make it competitive with the outside corporate world"*. Other managers commended the training course due to the fact that they had not been lectured to. Additionally, they felt that the essence of empowerment had been allowed to dawn on them slowly throughout the day, indeed one manager stated that, *"it was one of the best courses that I have been on"*. However, there was evidence that some managers had found the workshops difficult as they had *"no structure"*. One manager admitted finding the training course quite a traumatic experience:

> *"I was asking myself what I was doing there and nearly left - I just can't cope with make-believe and I need things to be logical....the trainer was reducing people to tears by touching raw nerves"*

That some managers had found the empowerment training difficult was echoed by the comments made by employees during the focus group. One employee talked of a team building exercise which both managers and their teams had attended:

> *"The LO1s found that very difficult, that team building.....they found it hard work 'cause they said that they wanted to take charge all the time"*.

The definitions of empowerment which management felt had emerged from their training tended to encompass issues of *"accountability"* and the idea of *"freedom within constraints"* rather than anarchy or abdication. One manager said that he felt empowerment was not about having the freedom to do whatever you want but that it was about feeling unrestricted, *"knowing that there are certain things you can do without having to seek approval"*. Another manager said that the one aspect of

empowerment that had really struck home, as a result of the training, was the need for individual responsibility:

"You often hear of people saying 'they should do this or they should do that' but it is just a way of dodging responsibility: if something needs to be done you should take it on yourself"

Indeed, he said that his interpretation of empowerment, following the course was that it was about taking control and doing what you could within your power rather than *"sitting and whingeing"*.

When asked about their training, the employees at Preston District appeared to be a little bemused whilst one employee said, *"Training? What training? We got a talk and the odd booklet"*. Employees said that they had attended a one day workshop in the office and that they felt this had been beneficial, if only because they had got to meet with peers from other commands:

"I think that was the best bit because it made you think they have the same problems, everybody thinks that their department has the worst problems in the world and nobody else has got as much work but when you get to talk to other people and they say, we've got all this work and all that, you think oh..have you?"

The employees interviewed said that they felt empowerment was about taking the initiative and doing what they felt was best in their job. As one of the focus group participants said:

"Empowerment is actually supposed to be having your own ideas and taking them forward, taking them on yourself"

However, one of the managers stated that, when his team had returned from their training, there was:

"a bit of anarchy as they seemed to think that because they were empowered it gave them a licence to do what they wanted, so we all had to take a step back and dampen their enthusiasm and explain that certain restrictions still remained"

This misunderstanding was confirmed by employees, who felt that management had not received the right messages about empowerment from their training:

"the problem was either the departmental or middle managers didn't get that message, or didn't agree, and we came out with all this 'oh empowerment is going to be great, we can, like, make our own decisions' and they said 'no you're not'"

It seemed from the interviews and focus groups that both managers and employees felt that their definitions of empowerment were correct. Managers said that employees were expecting to be able to do whatever they wanted whilst employees felt that managers had not fully understood what empowerment meant. As one employee said, *"They've got the wrong end of the stick haven't they?"* Whilst another suggested that this perceived failure to understand the concept of empowerment was due to their training, *"Managers need to be trained better, to understand empowerment as it is".*

In conclusion, the interviews and focus groups, which were conducted at Preston District, suggest that, whilst managers appeared to enjoy their training course, employees implied that they did not feel that their training had been of much benefit other than as a forum for meeting other members of staff from different commands. The fact that the empowerment training courses were organised by grade rather than by command or teams, and that they were held at different times and by different people, has led to a confusion of empowerment definitions. At each of the training courses no strict definition of empowerment was given, in the hope that people would develop their own interpretations of what empowerment meant to them. Comments from employees and management infer that these interpretations have caused a division between them and have created differing expectations of how empowerment will manifest in practice. For management, empowerment seems to promise a more committed and involved workforce which takes on responsibility within the constraints that they set, whilst employees believe that empowerment will allow them to become more autonomous and tackle issues in the way that they see fit. It might be hypothesised here that, for both managers and employees, the positions which each side has taken confirm their worst fears of empowerment. Managers see employees who are fighting to have more control whilst employees perceive management as reasserting their control by emphasising the constraints that exist.

North Leicestershire

Very few of the managers interviewed at North Leicestershire could remember much about their training, which consisted of brainstorming sessions and role plays, as discussed in Chapter Six. Those that could said that they enjoyed the experience and that it had helped them clarify their position in an empowered culture. One manager said that the issues raised in the training had been the subject of several subsequent meetings and that the management team had decided to build on the initial training with team building sessions. Following the management training, bids had to be put in for an allocation of funds to train the lower grades, but tight monetary constraints meant that not all employees at North Leicestershire were able to attend empowerment training.

Employees from the Leicester office said that there had not been any real Strand 2 training for their grades and that they had learnt about empowerment through their managers. They said that this had caused confusion:

"It was like a huge game of Chinese Whispers, everyone got a slightly different version of the empowerment message"

Those that had gone on some form of training said that they had enjoyed it and that it had been very relaxed and informal, as a break from real work in a hotel is bound to be, and that they had, *"just sat and chatted about the way forward"*. However, some of those who went on the training felt that it had been too open-ended and that the issue of constraints on empowerment had not been fully explained to them:

"unfortunately that particular training didn't tell you about parameters and what was really expected of you so, as a result, some of us went out a bit like a bull in a china shop and ruffled a few feathers"

One employee said that he felt motivated by the training but the need to concentrate on other issues such as Job Seekers Allowance meant that the sense of empowerment that the training had created had not been followed up and that nothing had really changed in the office:

"It fired you up at the time but I think sometimes you need that continuity don't you, you need to keep on...it was good for a while but it's sort of petered off now due to other priorities"

This view was echoed by another employee, who felt that the views which they put forward during their training had been ignored, and that many now saw the Strand 2 training as having been a waste of time:

"I don't think empowerment's done anything, we did enjoy our day out because we got our views out but nothing happened, we didn't move on and learn from it. It all just seems to have been pushed to the back of the drawer"

Central to the discussions with managers were their definitions of empowerment and their belief that these definitions differed at an individual level, not only between management and employees, but also between themselves and other managers. This was backed up by the comments of employees, one of whom said:

"The problem that I had with it was that it depended who you talked to to what definition you got...I still think you can go up to different LO1s and HEOs and get a different definition from each of them"

There was some feeling amongst managers that this was due, in part, to the fact that the senior management team had not made clear what they wanted out of empowerment and what they expected of both the managers and employees. However, others attributed these differences to the fact that empowerment had not been defined on the management training courses and that it thus meant all things to all people.

There were indeed differences in emphasis among the interpretations of empowerment given by the managers interviewed in North Leicestershire. One manager said that he felt empowerment was about employees challenging the 'status quo' and asking themselves why things were done the way they were. He added that it was important for staff that they were given the freedom to do this but that he *"reserved the executive right to interfere"*. Another manager felt that, rather than empowerment being about the proactive actions of employees, it was the responsibility of managers to *"give over the reins so that employees are responsible*

for their own actions". Whilst yet further definitions were given by others who talked of delegation and passing work down to the *"most appropriate level"*. The lack of any uniformity between these definitions angered some employees who felt that the whole concept of empowerment had to be revisited at the middle management level:

"Until somebody tells them how it's going to be and says it like it is and outlines it to them properly and explains everything in great depth about exactly what's expected of them and how they're going to deliver it, then it'll be hard pressed to change anything"

"Unless it's explained exactly to them how it should work and they're told how they're going to make sure it works then they just interpret it how they want and either ignore it or take up from it what they want to take up from it"

Because of the confusion that surrounded the training and definitions of empowerment, most employees were unsure of what empowerment really meant for them. They felt that often management just used the word 'empowerment' to get them to do extra tasks:

"I think empowerment's just a cloak they put on when it suits them, or a hat, 'ooo, I think I'll put on my empowerment hat today'.....that's not what it's supposed to be is it? Really it's just you do that for me 'cause I don't really fancy doing it today"

Although some employees admitted that more recent training courses had touched on empowerment, and they were getting a clearer idea of what it meant; there remained a belief, amongst both managers and employees alike, that there was a need for further clarification of empowerment and the development of a uniform definition throughout the District:

"I suppose it wouldn't be so bad if somebody came up to you and said 'right, today I'm going to empower you and this is what it means' but it's not identified. Perhaps they are doing it to us and we just don't realise"

Overall, then, the interviews and focus groups that were held at North Leicestershire appeared to expose a great deal of confusion over what empowerment really meant and what its implications were for the District. Managers appeared to have forgotten about their Strand 2 training and they admitted having their own, offering differing views of empowerment. This would suggest that they developed their own definitions in place of the ambiguous official one. The lack of consensus amongst managers

caused problems for those employees in the Leicester office, who did not go on an external training course but, who learnt about empowerment from their supervisors. Whilst those employees who went on the external training course admitted that it had been relaxed, some felt that it had been too vague and that the full nature of empowerment had not been explained to them. Additionally there was a feeling that the training could have had no effect anyway because nothing had really changed in the office and there was no structural change to meet the rhetoric of an empowerment culture. The fact that the essence of empowerment was so confused in North Leicestershire led some employees to suggest that managers took out of the policy those bits that best suited them, and that this could lead to a downgrading of work rather than a true empowering environment.

Conclusion of The Benefits Agency

In both Districts of The Benefits Agency there appears to be confusion over the definition of empowerment and how the policy is supposed to work in practice. This lack of clarity can be linked closely, on the basis of the interview data, to the nature of training in these Districts. In Preston, managers and employees went on separate training courses, arguably emphasising the gradism which still exists within the Agency, and emerged with seemingly different interpretations of what they expected empowerment to be, whilst in North Leicestershire the vagueness of both managerial and employee training caused chaotic definitions of empowerment throughout the District. Another similarity across the internal operating units was that there appeared to be some initial anarchy from employees who interpreted empowerment as being able to do whatever they wanted. Whilst this merely seemed to be due to the effects of a separate employee training course in Preston, it appears that in North Leicestershire there was simply no mention of the limits to empowerment during the employee training. By failing to present empowerment to employees from the outset as only offering freedom within constraints, The Benefits Agency appears to have de-motivated its staff by having to reassert this control at a later stage. Overall, then, it appears that management and employees differ in their understanding of empowerment. This is particularly true in Preston where it seems that each side is

confident that they understand empowerment as it really is, causing an accentuation of the division between management and employees instead of creating a more unified atmosphere for empowering practices. In North Leicestershire, employees are reluctant to offer any definitions of empowerment and feel that managers are just adapting empowerment to suit their own needs. There appears, on the basis of employee comments, to be a widespread desire for a single, unambiguous definition of empowerment in this District.

British Telecommunications Plc

Payphones

When asked about their training, the managers, interviewed within Payphones, said that they felt that it had been quite abstract in outlining and underlying the ideas of *'...for a better life'* and not particularly related to their workplace. At the end of their management "workouts", outlined in Chapter Six, they were given a briefing pack which they were then expected to transfer to their staff in the form of a team workout. Some managers admitted that they directed their 'team workout' much more at the idea of having fun as a team rather than promoting the actual values and literature which accompanied *'...for a better life'*, as one manager said, *"If I'd just given them the briefing pack, no-one would have looked at it so I tried to create a fun atmosphere and went from there"*. Another manager said that he had created an awareness of the new crusade but had allowed his team to interpret it their own way because, due to the diversity of his team's tasks, he felt that it was better that they adapted the behaviours to suit themselves. Generally, the managers said that they felt the team activities had gone well and some had followed them up with other team events to raise the spirits of their staff. As one manager said:

"The team workout worked well because it mixed people together and generated fun as well as a sense of purpose"

Whilst most employees admitted that their team 'workouts' had been fun, some felt they had been rather childish. As one employee said, *"That involved in working as teams together and doing silly things on mats"*, whilst another stated:

"When it first started we had a day when we played with remote-control cars, one was blindfolded and the other directed them where to go, it was a bit of fun. It was still something which would be for children but, because I'm a child at heart, I enjoyed it but it's still pathetic"

Some felt that the training might have been more beneficial if they had been able to meet with the engineers whom they supported and staff from other support offices in the country. Others felt that the training had been a waste of money and that they should have taken part in charitable activities rather than *"silly games"*. Moreover, a number of the employees complained that everything that was discussed at the team workouts was *"thrown out of the window"* when they returned to the office:

"The training just involved us sitting round a table working out how to form a better working environment but we don't think it has"

As for the spirit of *'...for a better life'* that was conveyed to the employees during the training, most of those interviewed agreed that they felt that the initiative was about improving working relationships:

"There was so much apathy in the firm, people were working against one another instead of trying to work together"

"It was really to create a better working relationship with whoever you work with, well within BT Payphones, really"

However, the managers interviewed said that, although this was part of the message they were trying to convey, they also saw *'...for a better life'* as directed at the behaviours of individuals and personal initiative. Indeed, most managers said they felt that the crusade was closely related to empowerment despite some saying that they avoided actually using the term, as the Director said:

"I do believe '...for a better life' is about empowerment but I would never use the term myself as it is faddish and misapplied. Essentially though they are both the same, they are both about a behaviour change crusade"

Another manager said that *'...for a better life'* was the nearest BT had ever got to empowerment and that for the first time they had talked of human behaviours rather than tasks, skills and objectives. He said that empowerment was good as long as it

was emphasised how far you could go before it becomes anarchy, defining empowerment as:

"a state of mind which says that an employee will encounter problems and that by applying knowledge they can be fixed by making decisions and feeling comfortable about them, knowing that they will be supported if it goes wrong"

Another manager said that he *"absolutely"* believed in empowerment and that eventually he hoped that BT could get to the stage where the work philosophy was not one of constraints but rather that there was a policy of monitoring mistakes. The manager said that he did believe *'...for a better life'* was an empowerment policy in essence, concluding that empowerment was about, *"maximising the return from all people who work in a company and, hence, gaining flexibility"*. Despite the fact that most managers talked about *'...for a better life'* and empowerment as interchangeable concepts, one manager saw empowerment as a more regulatory policy which involved *"being able to sign off things at a particular level"*, rather like the "harder" aspects associated with TQM and BS5750, and said that he felt *'...for a better life'* was more about creating an atmosphere of encouragement and development.

The relationship between empowerment and *'...for a better life'* was also discussed by employees who, as well as saying that they thought the central issue of *'...for a better life'* was about teamwork, also recognised that the behaviours of 'Own, Decide and Do' related to them as individuals. One employee said that he felt empowerment was about letting people make their own decisions but that he did that anyway as there was never anyone around to ask. As to whether *'...for a better life'* had actually motivated him he said that, *"I don't think there's anything more anybody in this group can do to do any better or whatever so it's made no difference whatsoever"* and that the only way he would feel better about his job was if he had more money and more security. Another employee said that he believed *'...for a better life'* was about empowerment in theory, defining empowerment as:

"Giving somebody the opportunity to do something that they feel is right, to give them the chance to develop what they believe in. It's almost as if they're being given the power to do something instead of being told what to do all the time, if you think, 'oh well this would be a good idea, that would save me time' then try it out"

However, this same employee felt that *'...for a better life'* did not equate to empowerment in practice due to the fact that nothing had really changed and to the constraints and blockages which stopped their ideas getting through:

> *"One of the '...for a better life' principles is taking ownership and risks of certain things but how can that work when you're given those risks, if you like, and jobs to do. That's not me, personally, taking ownership for something. I've been handed stuff which no-one else wanted to do, I had to do it"*

Overall, then, the interviews and focus group held within Payphones seem to suggest that the *'...for a better life'* training was seen by both managers and employees as quite abstract and that, rather than trying to suggest how the initiative could be adopted in the workplace, it concentrated on *"fun"* and developing a closer sense of teamwork. Perhaps because the training was delivered in teams, most employees saw *'...for a better life'* as more directed at the more efficient use of teams in working closer together and breaking down barriers between individuals. Despite the fact that two focus groups were held, both groups appeared to interpret the initiative in similar ways and held corresponding expectations. In addition to the identification of *'...for a better life'* with teamwork, both managers and employees saw the initiative as relating to the behaviours of individuals and most felt that it incorporated the ideals of empowerment in theory. However, managers did not use the term due to the fact that they were afraid of the *"faddish"* connotations associated with it. The recent procession of management initiatives such as the TQM style "Project Sovereign", "Involving Everyone" and "Breakout" have, it would seem, disillusioned some managers and employees, and the use of a "buzz word" such as empowerment has been discouraged to prevent further scepticism. The association of *'...for a better life'* and empowerment was further proved by the barriers which employees and managers identified as accompanying the BT crusade. Whilst managers felt that it was important that restrictions to employees' freedoms were established, employees contested that the policy involved work being passed down rather than them being able to take things on themselves.

Marketing

Due to the fact that the Marketing Directorate has a high concentration of managers, a large number of the Directorate went on the 'management workouts'. One manager said that he had returned from this training with new enthusiasm and an open mind, saying that the atmosphere in Marketing had really changed, *"it was as if all the latent energy which was not normally exploited at work had been energised"*. However many managers admitted that at the non-managerial level there had been very little training. This was confirmed by the comments of one employee, who said:

"at our level it doesn't mean as much as at the line manager level, 'cause they went on workshops and stuff, all we got were handouts, we never really had someone who sat down and told us about it"

One manager, who did talk to his staff about the *'...for a better life'* initiative said that it seemed to have a real effect on some of his staff, giving an example of a female member of his staff who had reacted to the training *"literally as if a lightbulb had lit inside her head"*. Of the employees who took part in the focus groups only those who had been in the Customer Service Centre could remember having had any training, saying that it had been more like *"a bit of fun"* than a formal teaching day:

"'...for a better life' was kicked off with an events day and what that meant was that the managers ran an events day for all the staff and we all worked in teams doing games, having a fun day, and that's how it was introduced"

"It was geared around an athlete training and they modified it into our working environment by saying things like 'take ownership' and 'own, decide, do'"

Those who did not receive any formal training said that they had heard about *'...for a better life'* through their managers at regular team briefings, but felt that they were only getting part of the whole message:

"they were expected to disseminate all this information down to our level...and down the management hierarchy each person is probably supposed to disseminate that information to us. By the time the information has got to us, probably part of the message has been lost"

Because of their belief that they had only received partial, filtered information about *'...for a better life'*, some employees said they were really not sure what the initiative

was about and felt as if they needed someone to formally go over the main principles again:

"I think it would be nice if BT could have a recap on this better life stuff and get everyone together and tell us again what it's about"

Additionally, a number of employees said that they felt the, already confused, messages of *'...for a better life'* were being lost amongst all the management schemes which were taking place in Marketing:

"you're getting mixed messages as well, I mean, it's not just this '...for a better life', there's other things like when the managers go off on these one day seminars and things like that and see videos and they come up with all these other, different messages"

As far as management interpretations of the *'...for a better life'* crusade were concerned, most managers said that they felt the initiative was tied in with the idea of empowerment. The majority defined empowerment in similar ways, encapsulating the idea of allowing people to make their own decisions within their work area with the understanding that they will receive support from their manager, as one manager put it, *"Empowerment is allowing people to make the best use of their ability without having to defer to others"*. The managers interviewed tended to agree that empowerment-style policies were the only way forward for their organization as it competed to maintain its customer share, but there was an appreciation amongst them that moving to this different style of management would not be easy. One manager said that he believed empowerment relied on a number of factors such as career stage, redundancies, personalities and aspirations, so he felt that it was important all the staff were treated as individuals. A couple of the managers interviewed, however, did not associate empowerment with *'...for a better life'*. One said that he felt empowerment promised employees a sense of power and participation which BT were not able to give and that *'...for a better life'* was more about taking ownership of their own work area, concluding that the word 'empowerment' was *"bad"* because it promised something it could ultimately never give. Whilst, the other manager, who did not see *'...for a better life'* as empowerment, said that he felt the BT initiative was just about efficiency and profit rather than the more altruistic, as he saw it, policy of

empowerment. The manager said that even if the initiative did incorporate issues of empowerment now, it had never been intended that way, saying that *'...for a better life'* was about:

"making the business work better and identifying the fact that, in order to do so, they had to change the way their people worked"

Employees, like the majority of their managers, said that they felt there was a relationship between empowerment and *'...for a better life'*, and some employees actually gave *"Own, Decide, Do"* as their interpretation of empowerment. As to whether the initiative was actually about empowerment, one employee said that he felt it was but that he thought he was relatively empowered in his job anyway:

"Um, well I think it [empowerment] *'s all part of our jobs anyway in Marketing, we are supposed to be able to produce work off our own back and we're expected to work alone and take considered risks probably more so than the rest of BT. As far as better life's concerned, yeah it's part of it, it's about taking considered risks"*

Yet some employees, agreed with the manager who felt that *'...for a better life'* was not aimed at their well being but at the profitability of the company. They felt that the amount of work they were expected to do, particularly after the recent rationalisation programmes (see "Cultural or Structural Change?"), led them to believe that the policy was not specifically directed at their empowerment, *"It's not for a better life"* said one employee, *"it's for a cheaper wage bill"*.

On the basis of the interviews and focus groups held in Marketing, then, it seems that there was very little training for employees at the non-managerial levels. This may have been due to the low priority which was placed on *'...for a better life'* by the previous Director. Those that did go on the training appeared to have relatively positive opinions of it regarding it as a *"bit of a laugh"* but those who received the messages of *'...for a better life'* through their manager on a somewhat ad hoc basis said that they felt they were only receiving half the story. This dissemination of information appears to have been further confused by the rhetoric of other management ideas. As regards the interpretations of *'...for a better life'*, the evidence given here implies that both managers and employees considered the initiative to be closely linked to the rhetoric of empowerment. There were two notable exceptions to

this from managers who felt that the term 'empowerment' was inappropriate as they felt it promised things to employees which the initiative was never intended to deliver. There were some examples of employees who felt that they were empowered in their work, as one said, *"yeah, we are, we are pretty much given a free rein as long as you can justify your decisions"* but the general feeling was that this was more to do with the nature of their work rather than as a direct effect of *'...for a better life'*. For some employees, however, *'...for a better life'* seemed to just represented an increase in their workload which they found difficult to reconcile with the use of terms such as 'better life' and 'empowerment'.

Conclusion of BT

The qualitative data gained from the two Directorates of BT seem to suggest that, whilst there are a number of similarities between them in terms of the *'...for a better life'* training, definitions of empowerment, and expectations of the 'better life' initiative, there are also a number of notable differences. Managers and employees from both Directorates appeared to perceive their training as "fun", yet this training was far more ubiquitous in Payphones than in Marketing, where a number of people had received no formal training at all. It is likely that the apathy of the previous Director of Marketing towards *'...for a better life'* may explain the failure of the Directorate to train everyone and it is plausible that many of the messages passed down from managers may have been affected by the cynicism (see "Acceptance and Resistance of Empowerment") of many managers within Marketing.

Both Directorates concurred that *'...for a better life'* was related to the term 'empowerment' with a similar interpretation of empowerment in theory being adopted, by the majority of managers, in both Directorates: that is the overcoming of problems in one's immediate work area without the need to refer to management. However, there were slightly different emphases given to the BT initiative in the two Directorates: whilst in Payphones *'...for a better life'* was associated with the efficient working of teams, in Marketing the emphasis appeared to be much more on the improvements to customer service and competitiveness. This, then, may suggest that

each Directorate is adapting the basic 'better life' behaviours to meet their own objectives and overcome their own problems.

Whilst there did appear to be agreement amongst most managers and employees that the BT initiative was related to empowerment in theory, there were some doubts about the similarity of their meanings in practice. There was evidence from managers' comments in both Directorates that empowerment may be an inappropriate term to describe the reasons for, and the way in which, *'...for a better life'* was introduced. Indeed, in both Directorates there were also suggestions from employees that *'...for a better life'* was not directed at their well-being but merely involved an increase in workload, failing to allow them to take on considered risks or any of the other 'better life' behaviours. As one employee from Marketing said:

"'...for a better life and empowerment essentially mean the same thing: responsibility without remuneration"

CONCLUSION

The major difference between the two organizations in terms of the empowerment training was that whilst the training was delivered by external consultants by grade in The Benefits Agency, the BT training consisted of a set of workshops for all managerial grades which were run by a set of coaches drawn from BT managers. These differences in training delivery may account for some of the main differences between the organizations. There was not one single company of external consultants which ran the empowerment training within BA which meant that the training not only differed across Areas but also within grades, particularly as the empowerment training was delivered to different grades at different times over a long period. This seems to have resulted in a variety of different interpretations of empowerment throughout the Agency.

In BT the fact that they chose to deliver the training internally and target their initiative, to a certain extent, by giving it a name and listing essential behaviours associated with it, may explain why the interpretation of *'...for a better life'* appeared

to be relatively stable between grades and across Directorates (except for the extent to which the Directorates adapted the initiative to meet their own needs). Definitions of empowerment still varied amongst managers within BT but most defined it in much the same way as they did *'...for a better life'*, associating it with decisions made within certain parameters, a definition echoed by many managers in The Benefits Agency.

For those employees who did not receive formal training, in the Marketing Directorate of BT and the North Leicestershire District of The Benefits Agency, there appeared to be similar confusions about their roles in an empowered environment and the definitions behind their respective initiatives. Both units implied that they had learnt about the policies through a convoluted *"game of Chinese whispers"* and many seemed to feel that they were receiving other people's interpretations of empowerment rather than hearing the whole message. From these employees in both organizations, there was a request for a clearer message from senior management about what empowerment meant for them. Associated with this lack of clarity was the belief of many employees, in both The Benefits Agency and BT, that managers were taking advantage of the confusion surrounding empowerment by "empowering" them to do extra work without devolving the authority to accompany it. It is worth considering whether such feelings will have been affected by the wider Industrial Relations context of both organizations. Three specific issues emerge: firstly staff are taking on wider roles as a result of rationalisations of the workforce, secondly the emphasis on quality has increased the scrutiny within which these tasks are carried out, and thirdly pay increases have been frozen (at least in the Public Sector). These factors may well impinge on the cynicism which staff have towards a policy which promises them increased autonomy.

In conclusion there does appear to be a strong connection, on the basis of this data, between training and interpretations of empowerment. It appears that, particularly in The Benefits Agency, the failure to give clarity to an ambiguous concept such as empowerment allows people to create their own expectations of what empowerment may mean for them, leading to clashes across and between grades. Although the focus

which BT have given to their empowerment initiative has mitigated these effects to some extent, there are clearly still problems there too. What seems most apparent from the issues raised in the two organizations is that the real problems run deeper than just the inadequate and vague training that was given, and are more focused on the perceived gap between the management rhetoric and the organizational reality.

The Benefits Agency

Preston

Most managers in this District were able to give examples of the structural changes which had occurred as a result of empowerment, although the District Manager admitted that it was difficult to say in concrete terms that one thing or other could be attributed to the initiative, adding that he did not really care what the actual changes were as long as the process was working. This suggests that although structural changes were occurring and empowerment was being introduced to aid this process, the linkage between these "hard" and "soft" approaches was difficult to clarify. One manager said that, in his command, there had been a number of changes that could be directly attributable to empowerment, although these again indicated a "softer", communications approach. He explained that, having read a book on communications, he had started to give certificates to his staff to thank them for their contribution to the success of the team. He talked of two certificates: the "Little Gem" award for "Going an Extra Mile" and the "Allsorts" award for anyone in the Preston District who had gone out of their way to help the team. Additionally, every week the "underpants" is published (originally based on the shape of an inverted pyramid) which is a team thank you to each other for things achieved [examples of these certificates can be found in Appendix S]. The manager admitted that, at first he felt that they had been treated with a certain amount of cynicism, but that he was very proud of what he was doing as he thought recognition was important in an empowered environment:

"so often they are told where they are going wrong, it makes a change to let people know what they are doing right"

Employees confirmed that some people round the office did make cynical comments about what happened in this particular command. However they put this down to jealousy because many employees in the District felt that their manager would never allow them to do it. Those employees who were part of this command said that, although they thought some of the things they did were daft, it was nice to be thanked:

"If your name's on it, or if you get one of these certificates, you think somebody's obviously said something, somebody thinks I'm doing well, so it gives you a boost, kinda thing"

The most common theme that was mentioned, either by managers or employees, was the delegation of workloads down the hierarchy. There had been no devolution of budgets to the commands at Preston as the management team had felt that doing so would have lead to insular decisions. As far as devolvement of work and responsibility to their teams were concerned, most managers felt that although it had been difficult (see "Acceptance and Resistance of Empowerment - Managers"), they had begun to devolve some of their tasks to the front-line employees. One manager said that a non-managerial grade (A4) was now doing the work that used to be done by the command manager and that he felt this was a positive step towards empowerment:

"now responsibility has moved away from its relationship with grades and work is being delegated to the lowest competent level, it's the person and their expertise which is important, not their grade"

Comments from employees confirmed that there were changes occurring in their District, one focus group participant said that, *"when I first started you did what you were told...now things are a lot more open"*, whilst another claimed:

"The A1s and A4s are the people who do the majority of the work and yet we were never consulted about the way we were doing it, but I think we are now, whether they actually do it or not"

Yet, despite these comments, many said that they felt that there was a fine line between empowerment and delegation, and that work was merely being "dumped" on those at lower levels, increasing their already heavy workloads:

"I find it very difficult to differentiate between empowerment and delegation...if something's delegated to you, you say it's not in my job or I've got enough to do why should I do this. Well, now we've been "empowered" to do it. It depends which way you look at it"

"If they delegate something they say 'you are empowered to do it', whereas really you should empower yourself to do things"

"It sounds good but, at times, I feel it's not delegation or anything, it's just dumping"

Employees said that they felt that apart from the devolvement of work and the communication improvements in one command of the District, all other changes were superficial, adding that they did not really think that their opinions were being considered. An example which a number of employees gave to explain these feelings, was the suggestion scheme. Staff were asked for their ideas and were given £10 for contributing ideas as to how their job could be done better. However the employees interviewed said they felt that, whilst they gave their ideas in good faith, most were only given lip service and were rarely implemented:

"I got ten pounds for making a suggestion once but they never did anything with it, I'd rather they'd done something with it and I'd got nothing for it"

"It's rewarding you for having an idea but it would be more rewarding to see your idea put into action, I mean that would be great"

"It was like that money for the team-building sessions and they said 'right, come up with some ideas of what you want to do. So we came up with these ideas and they said 'well, no, actually, there's only these three available'...why get ideas going and encourage people to think about it?"

Another common source of these feelings of superficiality was the use of the word "empowerment" itself which many employees felt had "faddish" connotations:

"They go through certain stages, the management team, last year it was empowerment, this year it is all Quality, and it's just like the word everyone knows, it's the buzz-word sort of thing...the people that matter seem to have forgotten about it now"

This feeling that the Quality Framework and empowerment were just management fads was fuelled, said the employees, by the money which had been spent on promoting them. There were a number of posters around the office and mugs which had been given to all of the staff, displaying Quality messages such as "Quality only happens when you care enough to do your very best". These appeared to have angered some employees:

"It's like these bloody posters that are around, all of a sudden they were on the wall, I dread to think how much they cost"

"I could have thought of a lot of better ways of promoting quality than giving everyone a mug!"

Overall, then, it seems from the interview data at Preston District that, both managers and employees perceived changes which were attributable to the empowerment initiative. Whilst managers seem to have felt that, in general, these changes had contributed to the empowerment of their staff, employees tended to believe that the devolvement of tasks was little more than "dumping". There appears to be an exception to this is the case of one command which had adopted new communication and reward procedures. Comments from both managers and employees in this command suggested that both felt they had benefited from these changes. However, the general impression which emerged from employees' comments was that they did not feel that, other than having more work to do, there had been structural changes since empowerment. The promotion of quality was seen by employees as "faddish" and the suggestion scheme as ineffectual, leading some participants of the focus group to question whether Preston managers were really interested in their views.

North Leicestershire

Most managers and employees who were interviewed in this District did not see empowerment as having occurred over night, but said that the move towards an empowered environment had happened gradually since the development of the organization as an Executive Agency. Many employees felt that the opportunity to "act up" (cover a higher grade's work in their absence), which existed before the introduction of empowerment, was empowering but that they would just act up for a few days and then return to their normal jobs which had no sense of the same authority. One employee said that he felt the move to empowerment had "buffered" the effects of this process:

"'cause I did some acting up and...I'd have a lot of one-to-one talks with the HEO [department/command manager] *and stuff. You go back down to the other level, you don't have any authority anymore but now there's this empowerment business that means you can still have a say at some kind of level"*

A number of managers said that they felt that the structural changes since empowerment had increased their workload. Budgets had been devolved to the

command managers so each manager was allowed to decide on their own staffing levels, for instance if a member of staff left their command, they could make the choice as to whether to replace them or spend the money elsewhere. Many of the managers in charge of these budgets said that they felt more in control of their work and more directly accountable to their paymasters as a result but that, because of this increase in responsibility, it was only sensible that their old responsibilities be passed down. As one manager commented, *"It is only natural that as I get more responsibility, I pass that down, otherwise I'd have too much"* . This cascading down of responsibility was recognised by employees too, as one said:

"Work's coming down all the way from the top, you know, the HEOs have put work down to the LO1s, who have put work down to the LO2s, and so it goes on"

Managers also said that they felt that empowerment took up more of their time than traditional ways of working because of the need to consult their staff. Some employees agreed that allowing them to contribute their ideas could lead to long drawn out decision-making processes:

"In some cases you can have too much freedom, I mean, we had a case when we arranged the way the desks were set out and we had meetings and meetings and more meetings, and it just dragged on for ages and people were thinking - let's just make the decision and do it - right or wrong but, at least, make a decision- it just dragged on and on and people were sick of the whole thing"

The managers complained that consultation not only took more time than when they had made their own decisions, but that often their decisions were not suitable. As one manager said:

"If for certain reasons their ideas are not acceptable they think you made the decision without them but, due to my experience, I often just have certain ideas in my head when I put things out for discussion...and some things are just not negotiable"

Yet, employees said that they felt that often managers did not give them enough information to make properly informed decisions about an issue, and that this was why they often came up with unacceptable or unsuitable suggestions. One employee at the Leicester office explained that he and his team had been asked about how they might re-organize their work. He said that they had been given a few options and had

chosen one but that at the team briefing, the next week, the managers over-ruled their decision, *"everybody got their backs up, obviously, because they said 'we chose, you gave us the options'"*. The managers then told them that the target had been to free up more staff, the employee felt that, by not telling the team this, the managers were preventing them making real decisions:

"we could have come up with a solution to meet their needs then people would have felt they had an input in, made a valued contribution, but instead, although we were consulted, there's a difference between being consulted and having power to be part of the decision making process"

This quote indicates clearly the two distinctive elements of employee involvement that were discussed in the literature review. Whilst employees were being allowed "pseudo-participation", their influence remained at the bottom end of the "escalator" (Marchington et al, 1992), with little say over real decisions which influenced their working lives. And as another employee said:

"You can come across a situation, where you're basically told well you can have the meetings, you can make a choice and then we'll tell you what we've decided already and that's happened far too many times"

The feeling that empowerment increased workloads was not only a complaint of management. Employees felt that, whilst they were having no more say over their work processes since the introduction of empowerment, the sort of tasks which were being delegated were relatively menial such as sorting the post, checks on payments, and dealing with callers to the Agency. Whilst not really affecting their level of authority, except in cases where they could adjudicate on some short term benefits, these extra tasks were seen as merely adding to their workload and they were being expected to do more work for the same pay:

"They're not devolving power but they are actually devolving responsibility for sections to the point where you haven't got time to bless yourself but that's not empowerment, that's piling work down...you're told what to do and the quantity and you don't have a say, you have to keep chipping away at the block"

"I think it's a false consciousness, they are trying to make you feel that you are a bit more involved but, at the end of the day, they're trying to get you to do a larger scope of work for less money"

"We have some of the authority but not the bits that we really need, we don't have enough power. I don't see why we should take on more when we don't get paid, it used to be a fairly decent wage but now it goes down and down each year as inflation rises and our pay increases get smaller"

The final major theme which emerged from the interview data was the perception by employees that "empowerment" was a managerial cultural change rather than a policy aimed at creating any real, lasting structural changes:

"I think it's, you know, how you get certain things that everybody's fired up with and now it's sort of on a back-burner for a while and it's not so important but it's still probably still there..."

"you sometimes feel that it's the idea of the month, you know, 'cause if you work here long enough there's all these ideas come in and you think 'hang on, we gave that up 15 years ago because of another idea' and then you get back to where you started from"

Overall, then, there is clear evidence from the interviews at North Leicestershire that real structural changes, such as the devolvement of work, are taking place under the "empowerment umbrella" in the District. However, there appear to be complaints that the pressure of increased work means that many employees feel unable to take part in empowering activities, and that kind of delegation is hardly empowering. The views of some employees that empowerment represented another *'one of those ideas of the month'* implies that they felt that either empowerment was not a lasting programme or that management were not genuine in their intentions. Either way empowerment was not seen by employees as changing the way they did their work: *"It might make a change to the way we actually plan things, the organization, but physically doing the job is just the same."*

Conclusion of The Benefits Agency

The interview and focus group data collected in the Benefits Agency seem to suggest that several structural changes have occurred in the Agency which necessitate the use of empowerment-type policies. In this sense, empowerment appears to be being introduced as a way of legitimising the "harder" aspects of organizational change such as down-sizing, de-layering, market testing and increased workloads. In both

Districts the managers and employees felt that it was difficult to attribute particular changes to the way they worked solely to empowerment because of the intervention of other factors such as the development of the organization as an Executive Agency and computerization. One of the particular changes associated with empowerment, the devolution of budgets, had not occurred in Preston due to its unpopularity with the management team, but had been introduced to North Leicestershire. Those managers at North Leicestershire who were now in charge of budgets said that the devolvement of tasks and responsibility to lower levels was essential due to the added workloads which the budgets had brought. The fact that there was not a similar driver in Preston might account for the more communication based strategies for empowerment which many of the interviewees talked of.

Overall the reactions of employees to empowerment, and the changes it had introduced, were remarkably negative. Employees in both Districts felt that suggestion schemes and consultation exercises were not taken seriously by staff and that they were not given the opportunity truly to participate in decisions about their job. It appears that employees resented management who they saw as just reasserting their control by deciding not to implement their ideas without giving an explanation. There is a broad indication that management is using such procedures to marginalise the unions influence by instilling a sense of employee ownership to ideas and suggestions taken by the District Management Teams, when, in reality, management continue to make their own decisions regardless. In this way, consultation is being made at the local level but the decision-making process remains firmly with the management teams. Because of these opportunities for employees to question traditional work practices, however, there was evidence that management may face covert resistance as employees implement their ideas with or without the consent of management. One member of the Preston focus group gave an account of a scenario in which he had an idea on how something could be done better and suggested it to his manager who said *"I'm sorry but we've always done it this other way". "So if I do it anyway, I've got to do it without getting caught"*, he said. Overall, then, empowerment in The Benefits Agency appears, on the basis of these qualitative data, to involve a number of structural changes, most prevalently - the devolvement of

work to lower levels. This delegation of tasks has angered employees who see their pay decreasing in real terms, whilst the demands made on them increase. Despite the number of structural changes, there is substantial scepticism regarding the use of more communication-type strategies in Preston, including posters and "message mugs", which seem to have led to a feeling amongst employees that empowerment is a management "fad". Although there are similar feelings of 'deja vu' in North Leicestershire, there seems to be a greater realisation in that District that empowerment is not only desired, but essential.

British Telecommunications Plc.

Payphones

There was a strong belief amongst the managers interviewed in Payphones that *'...for a better life'* was not a policy of structural change, as one manager stated, *"it's more ad hoc, more woolly than that"* whilst another manager agreed that the initiative had not been accompanied by changes in organizational policy and structure but rather that it related to culture and the ways in which people work. This was the feeling amongst the majority of managers who found it difficult to identify changes to their jobs, or those of their teams. The employees who took part in the focus groups confirmed these feelings of managers. When asked if they thought that *'...for a better life'* had changed the way they worked, one employee replied, *"No, not at all"*, whilst others stated:

"It gives you a better insight into some things but I don't think anything drastically has changed"

"Occasionally we say 'oh, we'll take a considered risk but it's got nothing to do with it and it's very facetious"

There were, however, some examples given by managers of changes which had occurred. Field Managers [line managers of the engineers] gave a number of examples of how their staff had used the *'...for a better life'* behaviours to react to customer needs. One manager said that he had seen an increase in the number of 'considered risks' which his team was taking and gave the example of a woman in a

Manchester Hospital who had been involved in a car crash on a visit from her home in the South. One of the manager's team, who was working in the hospital, took a considered risk by inserting a phone socket into her room so that she could keep in touch with her family, *"his work took less than an hour, cost us next to nothing, has gained revenue through phone bills, and made a customer very happy"* , said the manager, who continued by saying that he believed the new freedoms to complete such actions definitely made a difference to both the organization and the employees themselves. Other examples given were of office 'change rounds' and of managers doing engineers' jobs when no other engineers are free. However, the employees who took part in the focus groups, said that they had not experienced such examples of *'...for a better life'*, explaining instead that the initiative had created a lot more work, as one employee said of the 'champions' of *'...for a better life'* :

"I think they need to get in at the ground level and see how much work it has created, I don't think they ever realise that...plus there's other people who think they're higher than us who are handing out their work for us to do so we've got to do some of theirs as well as our own"

Not only did the employees interviewed feel that the empowerment initiative was giving them more work, but they also felt that they were not actually being given the opportunity to use the 'better life' behaviours. Asked whether they were given the opportunity to make informed decisions and considered risks, one employee replied, *"none at all, and if we do we get into trouble"* . Whilst some felt that their ideas were ignored: *"we suggest things , but nothing ever comes of it, it's just poo-pooed - 'oh it's not the time blah, blah, blah"*.

One employee said that he felt it was the increase in workload and other constraints which meant that employees ideas were never considered:

"The thing, is the idea is there, and you speak to a lot of people and they'll say 'oh, yeah, you go and mix with the engineers' [an idea suggested by the employee to improve communications between internal customers] *but, then, when it comes down to it there's not enough resources in the field for the engineers to come here or in the support office for you to go out, they say 'ooo we can't let you go 'cause there's too much work' and it's just working against the better life principles that everyone's trying to get over"*

There was an indication from the comments of the employees that this failure to see any real difference to their jobs since the introduction of *'...for a better life'* had led them to treat the initiative as another management 'fad', following in the shadow of the series of previous programmes brought in at BT. This was not only a problem which was recognised by managers but one which was shared by them. A number of managers commented that their first reactions to *'...for a better life'* were sceptical and most expected it to be a, *"flavour of the month thing"*, although some felt that the passion of Stafford Taylor, the Managing Director, and the fact that it was still *"hanging around"*, had made them less cynical. Despite this, managers were aware there were still feelings of scepticism amongst their staff who, through their worklife, had seen such things come and go and who expected *'...for a better life'* to follow the same pattern, as one manager said:

"BT has a history of management fads which are quickly forgotten about so many people are just keeping their heads down waiting for this initiative to go away"

Although some employees felt that *'...for a better life'* was sufficiently different from other programmes to be taken more seriously, most agreed that the history of management initiatives within the organization gave the empowerment policy little credibility:

"I think '..for a better life' is just like the old "Involving Everyone", I think that's what it is, it's just a new name"

"We've been here before with "Involving Everyone" so as far as we're concerned we've been there before and it just seems like another American idea....and it's just a nonsense"

Another manager felt that this association, of *'...for a better life'* with previous programmes such as "Involving Everyone", was heightened by the *"razzmatazz"* which surrounded the launch of the initiative. He described the launch as *"inappropriate, people find it irritating and Americanized"* and these views were borne out by the feelings of employees, as one said *"we want a better life but we don't want the bunting and the pens"*. For others, there was a sense of anger:

"The marketing for it was atrocious really, I mean if it was a kindergarten that would be another thing, I mean it's like something you get given at a kiddie's party"

"It's treating us with contempt. For me the nail in the coffin was when they came out with that little jiffy bag and I refused to take it. If I'd opened it I'd probably have thrown it back at them because I will not be treated with contempt and that is what it is"

Overall, then, it would seem from the interview data that there are few, if any, structural changes associated with *'...for a better life'* in Payphones and that it is receiving a pretty hostile response from employees. Whilst managers were able to give examples of changes to behaviour since the introduction of the empowerment policy, these were isolated incidents seemingly caused by changes in attitudes rather than new Directorate-wide or team-wide methods of working. For some employees the initiative appears to have led to an increase in workload and many commented that their views were still largely ignored. Employee comments also seem to imply that some of them remain afraid to adopt the 'better life' behaviours for fear of making a mistake, as one employee said, *"If you make a wrong decision you would still be in essentially the same position as you were 18 months ago"*. Both managers and employees talked at length of the comparisons between *'...for a better life'* and "Involving Everyone", with many fearing that the new empowerment initiative would fail like its predecessors. For employees, this cynicism was clearly exacerbated by the *"silly"* marketing techniques used to promote *'...for a better life'* which they considered to be both condescending and a waste of money.

Marketing

The general feeling amongst managers interviewed within the Marketing Directorate was that *'...for a better life'* had not had any change on their work or that of their teams because they had all worked using the 'better life' behaviours anyway. Some managers admitted that their team appeared to be making more of their own decisions and taking more considered risks than in the past however one manager said, *"I'm sure they were making some of these decisions before '...for a better life' but were just being a lot more covert about it"*. This belief that *'...for a better life'* had merely authorised the existing working practices which occurred within Marketing was confirmed by employees:

"I suppose it depends on the individual but it underlines, to some extent, what we were doing already...with this ['...for a better life'] it's really saying 'if you want to do it go ahead and we'll all support you"

"I think it makes these concepts, you know, 'I've been doing this' or 'I've been doing that' which has made you aware, put a name to it and say 'I did that for a better life..Own, Decide and Do but we'd do that anyway wouldn't we"

Some managers and employees, however, did comment on changes, both positive and negative, which *'...for a better life'* had made to their jobs. Positive changes, listed by employees, tended to include increased responsibility and variety and more general control over work, as one employee said:

"'...for a better life' has actually changed the way we work because, back in last year, as a result of '...for a better life', we started monthly meetings to improve the way that we were working and identify weaknesses within the [job area] *, we've reduced our call answering and lots of other things so that is as a result of 'for a better life' so yes it has changed the way we work"*

"Perhaps it's made people feel a bit more in control of what they're doing rather than feeling that they've got to check with a manager before they agree something with a customer. So I suppose you do feel slightly more in control of what you're doing"

"everybody's got their job to do but they're trying to get you to do that little bit extra to improve the quality and that is what '...for a better life' is all about, I don't think it's separate from the job I think it's supposed to be encased within the job"

Additionally, the promotional side of the initiative such as the videos, were felt by a number of employees to represent a welcome break from their normal working day, and that they might as well 'make the best of it':

"whether you're doing your job or doing something like making a video you're still getting paid by BT and my argument is well you're in work and you might as well make the best of it and if something like '..for a better life' comes along and it's fun, then make the most of it and don't be negative"

For some employees the changes were not perceived as so positive, the introduction of the initiative combined with recent job cuts meant that *'...for a better life'* was strongly associated with an increase in workload. As one employee said, *"It seems*

that in Marketing we take on a lot more responsibility than other areas" whilst another stated:

"All we do is get landed with some project or other, don't we, that's part of a better life, like the video diaries or something. That's stuff you could really do without 'cause we've got enough work to be getting on with anyway"

The scepticism surrounding *'...for a better life'* due to the apathy of the previous Director of Marketing was made worse, commented a number of managers, by the assumption that it was *"another of those kind of things"*. The fear amongst managers was that, if they got involved with the latest initiative, the feelings of cynicism amongst staff would worsen when it failed one or two years down the line. As a result of this, a number of managers felt that *'...for a better life'* had to be far more tied in to business objectives to be taken seriously by staff and many managers admitted not using the wording of the initiative in order to do this. Staff echoed these feelings of managers, one employee said that he felt new initiatives always followed a change in senior management (the "new broom" syndrome as discussed in the literature review):

"what these senior managers do is come in here for about two years, make these sweeping changes, and then go on to another company and we're all left to pick up the pieces"

Whilst a number of employees compared *'...for a better life'* to "Involving Everyone":

"Yeah, if you go back about 6 or 7 years there was this thing called 'Involving Everyone' and that was supposed to bring BT out of the Dark Ages and, um, from the Civil Service environment, it was supposed to change people's attitudes and I suppose '...for a better life' is a sort of continuation of that"

"with '...for a better life' it's sold to you and you think 'yeah, let's get on with it, it's a bit of fun' and there's something at the end of it because you benefit from it but it wasn't like that with 'Involving Everyone' it just didn't work"

Interestingly, whilst the managers were reporting that they felt the message of *'...for a better life'* had not yet got through to their staff and were planning to re-energise the initiative, employees felt that the initiative had been laboured enough:

"I don't know whether it's here to stay, I think they'll keep on plugging it but I think it's time to knock it on the head really"

"How far can you take it, you can drive something into someone for so long and then they think 'well, I'm not interested and I'm really cheesed off with it' and I think that's what happens"

"Well I think, '...for a better life' is getting a bit sour now, it's a bit old hat. I mean we all come in every day and see these bloody great suns all over the lifts and you think, 'Christ, when are they going to take those down' and that's it"

Conclusion Of BT

In both of the Directorates of BT, managers and employees alike found it difficult to identify any real, structural changes which had occurred as a result of *'...for a better life'*. In Payphones, managers referred to a few isolated incidents when their teams had displayed the 'better life' behaviours. In Marketing, both managers and employees felt that the 'better life' behaviours were part of the way of working in Marketing before the introduction of *'...for a better life'* and many felt that, as a result, lip service was paid to it. In both Directorates, employees felt that workloads had increased as a result of *'...for a better life'* . In Payphones this appeared to be due to the fact that work was being passed down from higher levels or across from other staff at the same level. In Marketing, however, the increase in workload was felt to be more related to the recent job rationalisation which had occurred in the Directorate. The *'...for a better life'* promotional events such as producing videos and taking part in competitions was felt by some employees in both Directorates to only add to their workload. There was a clear feeling amongst both managers and employees that *'...for a better life'* was a successor to previous employee involvement programmes. In Payphones the tackiness and razzmatazz which they felt had accompanied the initiative's launch, exacerbated these feelings of cynicism, whilst in Marketing there was a feeling amongst employees that it was a time to stop *'...for a better life'*. This latter perception was acknowledged by a manager within Marketing. He said that when he came across employees who wanted an end to the initiative, he used the words of Stafford Taylor, *"How can I send a memo round one day announcing that I'm stopping you from having a better life?"* . Moreover, the money which employees saw as being spent on the new initiative angered some, who not only saw the marketing as condescending and childish but also found the expense difficult to reconcile with the efficiency drive and cost-cutting which was threatening their jobs

and livelihoods. Additionally, the pressures of workloads to meet targets caused employees to avoid taking part in non-work activities such as making videos which they did not see it as relevant to business objectives and values.

CONCLUSION

This theme considers the extent to which employees were experiencing real changes to their job role and the organization of work (structural) or more intangible changes in behaviour and attitude (cultural) or indeed, both. In both organizations there seemed to be a difficulty amongst managers and employees to identify real changes, except increases in workload, which had occurred since the introduction of their respective empowerment policies. In The Benefits Agency this was said by managers to be due to the number of other changes which had occurred before, and alongside, empowerment. However, in BT, managers said that structural changes had not accompanied their empowerment initiative as such changes were not the intention of the policy. Hence, the most striking reported difference between the organizations was that, whilst empowerment in The Benefits Agency had brought a number of structural changes, the same was not true for BT. Following from this, whilst employees and managers in The Benefits Agency dwelled on increases in work and devolvement of responsibility, in BT the respondents were more concerned with the programme's relationship with previous initiatives and the issue of temporary fixes. So, whilst there were some comments about fads in The Benefits Agency and some feelings that workloads had increased in BT, the general findings seem to be that there was a reaction to structural changes in The Benefits Agency and to more cultural changes in BT. Despite this, there was some similarity in the data collected for the two organizations. In both cases, there was a feeling expressed by employees that, whilst their organizations used participative techniques such as suggestion schemes and stated that they welcomed their employees' opinions, in practice they believed that their opinions were largely ignored by management. Overall, however, one might hypothesise that whilst empowerment in The Benefits Agency was part of a wider move towards change, empowerment in BT was more of a cultural change aimed at changing the behaviours of individuals rather than the working practices of the whole organization. But, in both cases, the response from employers and

managers towards the initiatives appears negative, ranging from indifference to marked hostility.

The Benefits Agency

Preston

There did appear to be some appreciation amongst the managers interviewed at Preston that their role within empowerment was considered by The Benefits Agency to be an important one. This was particularly evident within the command which had introduced the certificates and other new forms of communication. The command manager was described by one of his line managers as a provider of, *"charisma, enthusiasm, support and guidance, the staff in this command would not be the same if it wasn't for him"*. The manager concerned confirmed that he was enthusiastic by nature and that he hoped this generated enthusiasm in his staff. He also said that he had a terrible conscience so, if he promised something to his staff, he would always deliver. He concluded that: *"Overall, I like people and think that everyone has potential and that it is in my best interests to exploit it. I just want to do the right thing, be happy and have fun"*. The positive effect of this manager was confirmed by comments made in the employee focus groups:

> *"That's to do with the manager because he's quite an outgoing person or whatever...and he's into all that sort of thing* [Empowerment/ Quality]. *He wants you to be in all these groups because he's involved himself"*

Employees also felt that this manager was genuinely interested in their ideas:

> *"He listens to you and says 'what do you think?' and I go 'well I think this' and he says 'right, OK, we'll do that' and I'm like 'What?' 'cause I'm so surprised"*

However, one might argue that this manager would have acted in this way regardless of empowerment. What is more important, it seems, is the generalised response of managers, as this is more likely to isolate the impact of the empowerment initiative rather than just one personality. A number of the managers interviewed in Preston admitted having trouble "letting go" of their work as the new empowerment environment requires. The District Manager said that he had found the transition to an 'empowered' culture hard due to the fact that he no longer knew everything that went on in the District. He stated that he felt that his old style of management was very 'hands on' to the point where he would know which of the employees were 'off-sick'.

He continued by saying that he had found it uncomfortable at first to let go of the reins but that now he had passed this stage and was aware that he did not know as much of what went on in the District now.

This difficulty in 'letting go' was found throughout the management interviews. Most of those interviewed denied that this was because they did not trust their staff, rather that it was difficult to accept that staff chose to use different methods to their tried and tested ones. One of the managers interviewed seemed to be in favour of delegation as part of the empowerment process but acknowledged that it required trust and getting to know the work of other people. He said that he believed this trust develops through results and having a 'no-blame' culture, and most particularly from refraining from stamping your own standards on to your staff. This concept of trust was reiterated by another manager who felt that it was very hard to 'let go'. He said that he had set up self-directed work teams, indicating a more structural change than the "softer" communication changes outlined above, but that he had had doubts as to whether his staff would be able to do the job, *"but they did and you have to learn to trust people that is the key"* he concluded. Despite these feelings that 'letting go' was difficult, most managers felt that they had succeeded in letting go of their work and authority to some extent. However, one manager seemed to find delegation particularly difficult and always wanted to check things other people had done. Despite this he said that he could see delegation was essential as he could not do all his work himself, *"it's still hard, though, you can't let go over night"*.

There was a feeling amongst the employees who took part in the focus group at Preston District that managers were merely passing down the work which they did not want to do, *"but the LO1s think 'oh great, they can do all that crap I don't like doing'"* and that managers just saw empowerment as an excuse to off-load their work to their staff. Staff tended to put these actions by management down to the fact that many of the managers in their District were unable to change their attitudes and continued to emphasise the importance of grades, as one employee said:

"They're stuck in their ways and don't want to change, you'll usually find LO1s will say 'oh grade doesn't matter', cause it doesn't to them 'cause they're an LO1"

whilst another felt that empowerment's success or failure was dependant on these attitudes of managers:

"It depends on your line manager doesn't it? Alright empowerment is meant to be an office policy but if you've got an old fashioned line manager who thinks that you should be grade conscious, because a lot of them do and they're not going to change, then there's no meaning to it"

Although many of the employees believed that their District Manager was committed to empowerment, they felt that a number of other managers were merely giving lip service to the policy:

"The manager's all for quality like, you know, empowerment and everything, and the HEOs are like 'Yes Joe' but then, as soon as they get back to their command they say 'it's all a load of rubbish really'"

One employee gave an example of a manager who had told staff that he supported an open door policy for staff, an idea set down by the District Manager, but who they felt did not do so in practice:

"the door was open so I thought nothing of walking in and it was made clear to me that I had done the wrong thing and that I should've been more respectful"

This belief that managers are merely speaking the rhetoric of empowerment was not just levelled at department managers, as one employee said, *"I think a lot of the LO1s say what they think the HEO wants to hear"*.

Overall, then, it appears from the interviews and focus group at Preston District that, whilst managers admitted having difficulty letting go of their status and authority, in the most part they felt that they had begun to do this. Employees, on the other hand felt that managers were blocking empowerment by relying on the status and authority bestowed upon them by the grade structure and that they were paying lip service to the ideals of empowerment. There was some admission amongst managers that empowerment threatened their security. The majority of managers interviewed saw the necessity for managers to move from "control" managers to "coaches", although realistically the civil service environment necessitates managers to do both at once. Managers were aware this change meant a complete overhaul in the way that things

were done and some felt it endangered the future of their role, but were placed in a difficult position by having to deliver this utopian rhetoric to their staff. As one manager stated, *"empowerment means that staff could probably function without a manager"*.

The apparent success of one manager in motivating employees and creating an empowered environment highlighted the importance of managers in the empowerment process. By generating enthusiasm and commitment it seemed that this manager had not lost status but gained it in the eyes of many employees. Despite the criticisms laid at the door of managers in the Preston focus group, there was an appreciation that some managers were 'empowering', however the fear remained amongst employees that many of the managers would never change:

"A lot of it's attitudes, it's the way we see it and the way they see it. Most of the HEOs think they're doing a good job, and some of them are, but it's trying to convince the others that they're not...if our LO1s won't tell them how can we do it?"

North Leicestershire

The District Manager at North Leicestershire stated that, although he had 'been empowered', he had never felt so controlled and monitored in his life, suggesting that staff at all levels were feeling the "harder" aspects of empowerment. He said that he found it difficult to advocate empowerment to his staff when the area and territorial managers above him could not seem to 'let go'. This was reiterated by another manager who said that the District remained to be evaluated in terms of performance targets rather than what was being done culturally. Moreover, the District Manager continued by saying that he had personally found it hard to let go and reconcile himself with the fact that he could not, and should not, know everything about what was going on in the District. He emphasised that, although he anticipated that his management team would face similar difficulties, he expected them to show the same commitment to empowerment. As he said, *"it is important they work hard at being flexible and empowering, after all surely it makes their job more interesting too"*.

The inability to 'let go' was mentioned by several managers as a barrier to empowerment. The majority of those interviewed felt that there were still managers in the District who were finding this transition hard and that this had meant that the move towards an empowered culture had been slow. The employees who took part in the focus groups said they felt it was important that there was commitment to empowerment at all levels of management as, if some managers were not committed to empowerment, the whole process was liable to break down:

"That's the problem, because the office is 'Yeah, OK, no problem at all' but if the next chain of command, if they're getting things wrong and their view of empowerment is telling people below who are getting things right, you will be at odds, there will be conflict"

One manager confirmed that empowerment was very much to do with individual management style and that this in itself brought complications, as the Benefits Agency had traditionally recruited managers with an autocratic style. This feeling that the traditions of the Benefits Agency, and its old style of management, were hampering empowerment, was confirmed by the comments of employees:

"They are still operating as they did 15-20 years ago and they don't want to change and don't see why they have to. I mean a lot of them are quite old and they still want things the way they've always done them and they don't like any of these new things and they try to ignore them and hope they'll go away"

"A lot of the LO2s were taking on the new ideas, the new drives, a lot quicker than the LO1s so you were ploughing against a wall all the time, it was frustrating"

"they have this attitude, 'I'm in charge of this and no-one's taking it away from me, it's my responsibility and I don't like these new things'"

There was an appreciation amongst both managers and employees that the change in the role of the manager in empowerment had brought stresses and strains for many managers, particularly at the LO1 level. Department managers stated that many of their line managers had been promoted on the basis of their technical rather than their management skills but that now they were expected to become managers of people rather than be technical experts. Yet, some employees suggested that the devolvement

of budgets had meant that this "coaching" had to be combined with increased financial control (Armstrong, 1989):

"All the jobs are so different now from when we first started, it was about managing people, it was about caring for staff and then hopefully you would meet your targets but they're not really managers of people now, they're sort of away from it all, it's all to do with budgets and things so you don't really know what they think or do they care how you feel because their jobs are different from our jobs"

"I think the LO1 grade and upward are trying to turn far more into managers than technicians that's the big culture change really, because in the past LO1s have become technical experts"

"I think we might be unfair to them in that they've worked hard to get where they did and everything they've worked hard to get is being handed down to people of a lower grade, you can see their point to that degree. But, on the other hand, that's the way we're going, they're not going to stop it, there's no point in resisting, you've got to make it work best for you"

One employee at the Leicester office thought that, not only were managers fearing the change in their roles, but that empowerment may also have been seen by middle managers as a policy which threatened their future role within The Benefits Agency:

"you end up doing somebody else's job as well as your own, you're getting the same pay and then the person above you, they might see themselves going out of the window 'cause they're not doing so much"

One manager admitted that he felt many middle managers were only showing commitment to empowerment due to the threat of recent de-layering to their jobs, *"When you're in the top grades that's it, you're in a straight jacket, you've got a lot to lose if you speak up against it"*. This feeling was mirrored by employees who said that they felt that many managers, despite saying that they were committed to empowerment, were not backing this up with their actions in practice:

"I think some of them genuinely support some of the initiatives like the Quality Framework and some of them say they do and then ignore it when the people who support it's backs are turned"

"They support it because they have to, it's part of their job, if they're told to introduce something then they do"

Overall, then, on the basis of the qualitative data from North Leicestershire District, it appears that managers, both within the District, and at Area level, are facing difficulty in 'letting go'. The general feeling amongst interviewees was that, this resistance was due to management fears that by 'letting go' they may effectively be doing themselves out of a job and that realistically they can not afford to take this risk. Whereas before the empowerment initiative line managers were technical experts who checked and validated all their employees' work, now they were being forced to take a more managerial role whilst their managers tackled with devolved budgets. Some managers and employees suggested that these threats were leading some managers to feign their compliance to management while actively blocking empowerment further down. There also seemed to be a feeling amongst employees and managers alike that some managers, who had been with the organization a long time, had been instilled with the values of the old Civil Service structure. Hence, it was felt that these managers believed those at a higher grade warranted more status and responsibility and that they perceived empowerment as striking at the heart of this traditional hierarchical structure. For these managers their length of tenure and experience will have meant that they may have seen their methods of working succeed over a long period of time and that they, therefore, do not see any requirement for a change. However, both managers and employees saw such attitudes as damaging to the organization. As one manager said:

"They're trying to get the message across to them, there are plans afoot to make sure everyone knows exactly what this means in no uncertain terms...I don't think some are going to be given any choice because if some of them don't do it, it's going to have a detrimental effect on the whole District, if you're not part of the solution, you're not playing"

Conclusion Of The Benefits Agency

There appear to be several similarities between the two Benefits Agency Districts on the basis of the qualitative data presented here. In both Districts there seems to be a widespread belief amongst managers and employees that the role of middle managers in empowerment is very important. The success of one of the managers from Preston in motivating his staff reflects this, although the attribution of his behaviour merely to

empowerment is unlikely. Clearly individual management personalities are important, as the following quote from the Loughborough focus group suggests:

"It depends who's in charge of you basically and depending on your team leader you can be actively encouraged or discouraged but it does stop with them"

Despite the recognised importance of middle managers in motivating and coaching their staff, there was a general consensus in both Districts that many of the managers were having trouble 'letting go' of their work and responsibility. There was evidence from the interviews that middle managers feared empowerment represented a threat to their future role within the organization. This evidence was particularly striking in the North Leicestershire District due to the fact that there has been widespread structural change with budgets having been devolved to department level. This has left the line managers, trained in technical competencies, to coach and manage their staff. As a result of such changes the evidence from both Districts suggests that managers will either actively block empowerment, or pay 'lip service' to it in front of managers, due to their awareness of the pressure on them to conform, whilst reasserting their status and authority in practice.

A further reason for manager's resistance to empowerment appeared to be peculiar to the Civil Service environment. Middle managers, who had generally worked their way up from the lowest grades of the Agency and who had long been immersed in the importance of traditional command and control structures were being asked, with the advent of empowerment, to change their attitudes to embrace a policy which challenged all their values of grade, status and authority. There was evidence in both Districts that 'old-fashioned' managers were finding the move to empowerment hard and there was an appreciation of these difficulties amongst those in North Leicestershire. Overall, then, whilst middle managers are seen as important in the success of empowerment, their inability to 'let go' of their responsibility and authority also highlights them as one of empowerment's largest barriers in The Benefits Agency.

British Telecommunications Plc

Payphones

One of the managers interviewed in Payphones stated that the amount of support which management gave to initiatives like *'...for a better life'* was crucial to their success:

"workers know if the top management team is cohesive or not, they need to be able to reconcile the behaviour of top management with the actions which "...for a better life" expects of them. What is also important is that staff will tend to look at their boss's boss as an indication of whether top management are behind the initiative, this puts a lot of pressure on line managers"

The importance of senior management in supporting such initiatives was also highlighted in the employee focus groups:

"It's got a lot of support and the support generally comes from the top and, if the main person thinks that's what he wants then he'll support it, and I think most of the senior management these days are really convinced that's what they want to do, improve the working of the staff and the team"

However, the employees also commented on the importance of their line manager's support, as one employee said of the initiative, *"In the right group with the right manager this concept could have taken off"*. Whilst another employee said of his immediate manager:

"Yeah, I'm sure he believes in it 'cause otherwise the events wouldn't happen or they wouldn't be as good as they are if he wasn't in full support"

Most of the managers interviewed claimed that their style of management was 'empowering'. One manager said that he felt that *'...for a better life'* was made for him as he had always liked to talk directly to his staff, something which he believed the 'them and us' philosophy had stopped him doing in the pluralist IR structure of the past. Other managers commented that the success of empowerment relied heavily on whether they were able to encourage and motivate their staff whilst creating an atmosphere where employees felt their manager would listen to them and support their decisions. Most managers also felt this style of management relied upon the

support of senior management and open and frequent communications between themselves and more senior management. The success of some managers in achieving this style of management was commented upon during the focus groups, as one employee said:

"If the manager's handy you might say 'what do you think of that?, Is that OK?' but nine times out of ten they'll say you do it and I'll cover you. I'd never say in Payphones there's been a situation where we've been undermined in any way"

Whilst other participants in the employee focus groups suggested that, whilst this style of management was working for engineers, things were not as positive in the support offices:

"the managers have got more of a free rein to do things like reward and recognition and, if they've [the engineers] got a problem, then they can say 'well we can sort that out, we'll decide on that 'for a better life' and we'll take ownership' and its made their life a lot easier 'cause they haven't got to ask people to do things, they'll just do it. So, I think from an engineers point of view it has had quite a big effect, it's made things a lot easier but, as I say, being in an office is obviously a different thing altogether"

However, despite these positive views of management there was some indication in both the management and employee interviews that the support of management was not ubiquitous throughout the Payphones Directorate. One manager suggested that there were some managers who thought they were behaving in an empowering way but who were demotivating their staff and adding control to the situation by saying things *like "you're allowed to fail but not all the time"*. The same manager continued by saying:

"It is important for managers to learn to use the behaviours advocated by '...for a better life' instead of dismissing them by saying they use them anyway"

There was some indication by one of the more senior managers interviewed that there had been a number of managers when *'...for a better life'* first started who had been very poor at implementing the initiative, *"they were good technically"*, he said, *"but were very much old style"*. The manager said that most of these managers had been transferred or released since then as there had been a strong awareness throughout the

Directorate that *'...for a better life'* relied upon trust and only needed one dissenter to destroy it.

Despite the removal of those whom senior management regarded as the worst managers, there was still a feeling amongst managers and employees alike that a number of managers were finding the transition to an 'empowering' style of management hard. Whilst a few managers commented that they found it difficult to recognise and reward their staff, another felt that the 'glitzy' side of *'...for a better life'* put many of his staff off so he concentrated on its role as a business driver and avoided using the terminology of the initiative. Additionally, employees complained that often their views were not even considered, as one employee said, *"The field managers and the field operation managers designed our action month submission, none of us had any involvement in it"* . Whilst other employees felt that, whilst their immediate manager and senior managers were committed to empowerment, the middle management were blocking their ideas:

"Well the thing is a lot of our managers do have ideas and branch out but the others won't let them speak, the other managers block any ideas our managers put to them"

"It's just that middle management level, we would have full backing from senior management"

Some employees felt that this resistance was an overhang from BT's public sector background, and the emphasis which older staff place on grades:

"They've still got that class distinction... 'when I become a manager my blood turns from red to blue', that feeling is still there and they have to get rid of it"

"From the engineer on the street to the Director, everyone's the same, we're all people, we've all got feelings, we've all got problems, we just do different jobs but some people don't see it as that, they see it as if they go up a grade then they will have more power and they can tell people what to do"

The final theme which emerged from the interviews within Payphones was the effect of the threat of redundancies on managers. There was a feeling amongst both employees and managers that jobs were not only at risk at lower levels of the Directorate, but that those in senior management were also in a precarious situation. One manager said that he was not sure whether the promotion of *'...for a better life'*

was due to the true enthusiasm of senior management or a fear that not promoting it would damage their career prospects. He said that he felt that many managers at all levels of Payphones were just following rules rather than having any real belief or enthusiasm in the concepts of *'...for a better life'*. Other managers converged on this view that it was important for them to *"display"* their belief in the policy at all the crucial times, as one manager said, *"it is important we present the initiative in the right style and that our body language indicates our belief in it"* . Comments from employees suggested that they were aware that a number of managers were under pressure to show their support for the initiative:

"There's no way the Field Operations Manager can afford to be negative about this and, if I was sitting in his seat, I would be saying exactly what he is. He will stick to the rules 'cause he's got no choice"

"I think the commitment starts at the Direct Reports' level and then goes upwards from there. I think below that everyone's obliged to do it and they're aware of that"

"Put it this way he believes in it [*'...for a better life'*] *when he's in front of us. What he believes when he's talking to his wife are two different things"*

Overall, then, it seems that employees and management both felt that the commitment of all levels of management was crucial to the success of *'...for a better life'* within the Payphones Directorate. The managers interviewed said that they saw their role as one of encouraging and motivating their staff and, whilst there was evidence that some managers were achieving this particularly in the engineering fields, comments from employees in the support offices implied that this was not true there. There was evidence given by employees that messages and ideas were being blocked by middle management and some employees put this resistance down to the old-style, Civil Service type attitudes which were still evident in some managers. Additionally, there appeared to be some concern amongst managers that their jobs were insecure and that they felt a need to display commitment to *'...for a better life'* for this reason. This pressure to conform appeared to be recognised by employees who felt a certain amount of cynicism, towards *'...for a better life'* and management attitudes to it, for this reason.

Marketing

On the basis of the interviews and focus groups held within the Marketing Directorate, it seemed that there were a number of problems concerning management support. Central to this seemed to be the original lack of commitment to *'...for a better life'* of the previous Marketing Director. One manager stated that because the previous Director had seen the initiative as a side issue, there had been a certain amount of apathy which had cascaded downwards:

"unless people are able to see the Director on board with these crusades, the message is diluted and it gives people a good excuse to ignore it too"

Another manager commented that, despite the fact that it was clear Stafford Taylor was committed to empowerment, there was little commitment below that level and that senior level managers were reacting to the actions of Stafford rather than being more proactive and driving ideas forward. A similar attitude was taken by another manager who felt that this lack of direction from senior management was partly due to the constant changes in the management team and hence a confusion of roles and accountabilities.

One factor which was mentioned by nearly all managers was the arrival of a consultant who had been brought in to change the fortunes of the Marketing Directorate. Many of the managers interviewed felt that this consultant had his *"hands around the throat of the business"* and that his sole focus on results and action was working against many of the ideals of *'...for a better life'* . Indeed, one manager felt that Stafford was creating confusion by advocating an empowerment initiative whilst condoning the actions of this consultant. This again emphasises the "hard" and "soft" side of organizational change and the effect which conflicting initiatives can have on employee perceptions. Employees' comments during the focus groups appeared to confirm that, despite his success in making Marketing more competitive, the consultant was not working to the 'better life' principles:

"too much power in one man's hands that's what they say. We haven't met him, he wouldn't touch us with a barge pole....he just says that's the way things are going to be and nothing's going to change it"

"[the consultant] *says 'jump' and BT say 'how high?'...he knows what he wants and he'll get it, people just say what they think he wants to hear"*

Over and above these factors at the senior management level, the interviews also revealed the perceived importance of line management on the success of *'...for a better life'*, as one employee said, *"it depends how much your manager bought into it"*. As regards the behaviour of these managers, many of those that were interviewed felt that they had not really had to change their style of management in accordance with *'...for a better life'* as they believed that it was very much the way that they had worked anyway. One manager said that in some situations his staff had criticised him for being *"too hands off"* but that he felt that, *"you get a lot more out of people if you give them freedom and let them go off and do things themselves"*. This feeling, that it was the new role of management to take a step back from their staff, was echoed by the comments of other managers , particularly one who said that, *"It is a temptation to say 'why didn't I know about that?' when something goes wrong but that makes 'for a better life' fall back a step"*. There did appear to be some confirmation by employees, particularly within the customer-facing areas of Marketing, that managers, both at the immediate and more senior levels, were being successful in empowering their staff and facilitating *'...for a better life'*:

"Our manager is very good because he does support '...for a better life' and instead of saying it, I mean there's a way of saying things isn't there?, and, instead of saying 'You've done that wrong', he'll say, 'well if you do it this way, have you considered so and so?, what if you turned it round, have you considered the other possibilities?' so if there was any major change to what we were doing we would always talk to him first and if he didn't agree with it he wouldn't say 'well that's a silly idea' he wouldn't just say 'No' he'd give reasonings as to why it wouldn't work and he would put an idea forward for us to consider. It's not just dismissed"

The same group of employees said that members of the senior management team had been down to their office and had spent a day doing their job as part of a *'...for a better life'* activity:

"Joe really appreciated doing it and said that he didn't realise how much knowledge you had to do have to do the job and I think he got a real insight into our work. I would say right up to that level [direct reports] you can see '...for a better life' being endorsed, past that you don't really see"

However, such positive views of management were not gathered amongst those employees who were interviewed from the more statistical area of Marketing. Whilst employees did not imply that their managers were resisting the empowerment

initiative, they said that they felt that, due to the rationalisation of staff in their area of work, line managers were in a similar position to them in that they were fed up and were unable to treat *'...for a better life'* seriously, due to the fact that they could not reconcile it with their present problems:

"It's not just us it's the line managers too, they say we haven't got enough people to do the work, how are we going to cope? and we just don't know. The work's still got to be done and we don't know how we're going to do it, so it's not just us that are worried, it's the line managers as well"

"It's [*'...for a better life'*] *not taken seriously within the Directorate, you could get another set of people who would probably say much the same , I mean if I say '...for a better life' to my line manager, it's just laugh, laugh, you know"*

"I think our line managers are in a similar position to us though really and their line managers, you know, you've got to go up quite a way before there's a degree of influence over this"

Despite these comments by employees indicating that their managers were not really committed to empowerment, most still admitted that their managers outwardly advocated the 'better life' values and behaviours, as one employee said:

"They just accept it's there. I think it depends on your relationship with them. I think if you've got a genuine relationship with them it's different...they go through the motions but I'm not convinced that they're convinced"

"I don't think the line managers support it but they have to appear to be otherwise they'd be in trouble"

"I think the attitude of my line manager towards '...for a better life' is that Stafford forced him into it so we've got to do it as well"

The belief that managers feel pressured into pushing the ideas of *'...for a better life'* was confirmed, to some extent, by the managers themselves. They recognised the precariousness of their jobs and the amount of work which had to be done, saying that they had been told numerous times that empowering behaviour was the only way forward. Despite the fact that that none of the managers actually admitted backing the initiative due to these pressures, there was a consensus amongst employees that this was the case. This, and the feeling of insecurity within the Directorate, were summed up in two further comments by employees:

"The trouble is everyone's looking out for themselves now, the bosses are looking over their shoulder 'cause they know it's not safe, and it's getting to the stage where instead of having a team where everybody looks after each other, it's a case of dog eat dog now"

"I think the farther up the hierarchy you go, probably the more enthusiastic people are going to be , because if it's something they don't feel enthusiastic about, it's going to be very career limiting"

Overall, then, there appears to be a disturbance caused in Marketing by the constant changes at senior management level and there is evidence of apathy caused by the lack of commitment from the previous Director. The message of *'...for a better life'* was mentioned by many as having been further diluted by the presence of an external consultant who was reported as working against the principles of the initiative and causing mixed messages to be received further down the management hierarchy.

Although the majority of managers interviewed felt that they worked in an empowering way anyway, there was evidence that, in the more statistical areas of Marketing, managers were feeling overworked and threatened in their roles and that there was a lack of commitment amongst such managers to *'...for a better life'* , with some reported as treating it like a joke. Because of this, employees felt that many of their managers were only going through the motions of the initiative due to their feelings of insecurity within the Directorate.

Conclusion Of BT

It appears from the qualitative data obtained from the Directorates of BT that, whilst there are a number of similarities in the levels of management acceptance and resistance, there are also a number of notable differences between the Directorates in how and why these factors emerge. In both Directorates there appears to be an appreciation of the importance of support for *'...for a better life'* at all levels of the management hierarchy. However, whilst in Marketing the gravity of this importance seems to be directed at the senior management level and the influence of Stafford Taylor, the managers and employees interviewed within Payphones placed more salience on the effect of immediate and middle managers. The importance placed on

senior management by those in the Marketing Directorate appears to be due to the problems which have occurred at that level, and perhaps also because of the relatively centralised nature of the Directorate. Whilst in Payphones, the geographical diversity of the Directorate coupled with the belief that there were many 'old-style' managers at line and middle management level, may explain the concentration which was placed on these management strata. Additionally, there seemed to be consensus amongst those in the Marketing and Payphones Directorate regarding the level to which managers are truly committed to the *'...for a better life'* crusade. In both cases it was suggested that managers were, to some extent, 'acting' their compliance to the initiative, and this was attributed to the threat of job losses within these Directorates. However, there is some implication that the insecurity is somewhat higher in the Marketing Directorate and that, because of this, some managers were more likely to identify with their staff than with management. In conclusion, whilst there does appear to be some enthusiasm for the 'better life' principles and behaviours amongst managers in both Directorates of BT, there is also evidence that many managers may merely be complying with the values of the crusade in an attempt to keep their jobs.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the qualitative data presented here suggest that managers and employees in both organizations recognised the importance of management commitment to the empowerment process. Whilst comments from employees tended to dwell on the actions of their line managers, there was an indication from managers that they, themselves, felt constrained by the actions of more senior management. The importance of senior management was highlighted in the Marketing Directorate of BT where apathy; constant re-organization; and the condoning of a consultant who was perceived as working against the "Better Life" values, had caused confusion and disinterest in *'...for a better life'* in that Directorate. The motivation of employees, created by the empowering behaviours of line management, was evident in the Preston District of The Benefits Agency and the Marketing Directorate of BT. For example, the Preston manager appeared to enjoy empowering his staff and was rewarded by employees who commented that he was motivating and made them want

to be involved. Yet, whilst this highlights the benefits of good management, it is unlikely his style is solely due to empowerment. However, whilst the commitment of management at all levels was considered important in both organizations, employees complained that often this was not occurring. Moreover, the extent and nature of this management resistance appeared to differ between the two organizations.

In The Benefits Agency, managers stated that they agreed with the principles of empowerment but that, in reality, they were having trouble 'letting go' of their responsibility. This was echoed by employees who believed that managers were just "passing down the rubbish" and, in some cases, actively working against the principles which empowerment advocates. The behaviour of managers in BT appeared to be quite different. Many managers felt that they worked in an empowering way anyway and some appeared to be as wary of the 'glitzy' packaging of *'...for a better life'* as their staff. There was some evidence that, as in The Benefits Agency, there were some old Civil Service-type managers who were blocking empowerment at the middle management level.

However, the general feeling amongst managers and employees alike, was that many managers were outwardly advocating *'...for a better life'* because of a threat to their jobs (a phenomenon found to some extent in The Benefits Agency as well), whilst inwardly feeling fed up and cynical about the initiative. It would be understandable, therefore, that middle managers may experience cognitive dissonance as a result of being required to implement a senior management policy which they see as threatening their own role. As a result, it appears that they are, to varying extents, "acting" the role of a believer in the initiative due to the precariousness, as they view it, of their career. This situation appears to be accentuated in The Benefits Agency where the threat is heightened by a real change in the nature of work since empowerment and the implications of recent and proposed Government cost cutting. This may explain why managers in The Benefits Agency are displaying a more extreme reaction to their cognitive dissonance by what appears to be "deep acting". In BT, the fact that the nature of middle managers' jobs have not really altered and the fact that they have encountered similar management "fads" before, possibly indicates

that they have learnt to "surface act" convincingly to senior management, whilst adapting the policies in a way that suits themselves and their teams. Despite the fact that the pressure to conform does not seem so intense in BT, one might still hypothesise that the managers suffer as a result of their dissonance. Overall it seems that, on the basis of the qualitative data, although middle managers can adjust easily to involvement techniques that operate largely at the level of rhetoric, they have much more difficulty when the initiative puts their entire role and job at stake.

In conclusion, the importance of management commitment and behaviour was highlighted in both organizations but the nature of management acceptance and resistance appeared to differ between the two organizations. Whilst most managers in both organizations were outwardly 'towing the organizational line', managers in The Benefits Agency were finding their transition of roles, which the structural changes necessitated, hard to adjust to. Meanwhile the more cultural nature of change in BT meant that managers were often continuing to work in the way they always had done, and merely 'displaying' the right behaviours at the right times.

ACCEPTANCE OF AND RESISTANCE TO EMPOWERMENT - EMPLOYEES

The Benefits Agency

Preston

Whilst some managers in this District reported that many of their employees were more motivated and enthusiastic since the introduction of empowerment, and that their attitudes were really changing, most perceived that the empowerment initiative was being accepted quicker in some areas than others. This was suggested by one manager to be due to the sudden and dramatic culture change that has accompanied empowerment, although the suddenness and impressiveness of the culture change is questioned by other statements expressed in this chapter. The same manager stated that people who had been in the organization for a long time were less comfortable with the idea of empowerment because they had long been exposed and trained in the virtues of the "tell and do" culture and were not used to this new way of working. Another manager stated that *"inevitably people step on the train at different stations"* and put this down to a number of factors such as the fact that people have very different desires and expectations of what they want out of their job. A number of managers acknowledged that some people often just want to come to work, do their job, and go home again. One manager said that he felt they should not be penalised for this because empowerment was about making all employees feel as fulfilled as possible and if some people are more fulfilled by activities outside of work then, however disappointing this may be, the managers should accept it. Yet, despite this seemingly altruistic attitude, employees argued that they were "expected" to take on extra work to the extent that it was tied in to their appraisal scheme, as discussed in Chapter Six. The impression that empowerment is often down to the individual was confirmed by employees who took part in the Preston focus group. As one employee stated:

> *"A lot of it's just the kind of person you are anyway, I mean if you're going to do something and you've got the go-ahead"*

Whilst another claimed:

"Personally I don't feel I need to be empowered - it's just the way I am"

Another theme, referred to by several managers in Preston, was the existence of "comfort zones", apparently an idea championed by the District Manager. Managers claimed that although capability could be tackled through training, some people did not want to try new ways of working. For example, one manager stated that people were often nervous of stepping out into the unknown and moving out of their comfort zone. This was confirmed, to some extent, by the employees who took part in the focus group at Preston. Most participants agreed that they were not prepared to take risks due to the threat of the possible consequences. This implies that employees, and some middle managers as suggested in the previous section, are not convinced that the no-blame culture which is advocated by management, exists. Yet, employees believed there were a number of other factors which led to employee resistance and this was reflected in the opinions of managers.

There were a number of constraints mentioned by interviewees. These involved the strict targets set for the districts by the Treasury regarding numbers of cases that had to be cleared. Time, targets and legal constraints were seen as hampering the empowerment process. One manager said that, in his department, it was difficult for people to take ownership because of the strict targets which are set by the Treasury, whilst another felt that these targets meant that empowerment was often ignored, not just by employees but by senior management too. Another important factor appeared to be the use of public funds. One manager stated that because employees were dealing with public money, there need to be tight constraints on allocation of funds and that employees had no way of learning from their mistakes because mistakes were never allowed to happen. The manager felt that learning from mistakes was one of the keys to empowerment and that the inability for managers to give their employees these freedoms was a major barrier to empowerment. The issue of work-related constraints was also highlighted by employees, as one stated:

"When you're on a section there's a lot of constraints which make it very difficult to have quality in your sights at all times, if you've got loads of work and no staff".

Whilst another employee claimed that the tight legal constraints made it difficult to really take personal ownership, *"You can't design a new Giro or something"*

The employees interviewed stated that it was the norm to criticise new management initiatives. As one said, *"It's fashionable to be negative about things"*. Whilst another claimed that: *"If you say 'quality' a lot of people think it's a dirty word"*. However, despite this, employees seemed to feel that they were justified in their resistance to empowerment. Some claimed that whilst, in theory, being consulted on their opinions and having more control over their jobs was a good idea, this is not what they perceived empowerment as offering within the District:

"It's happened before, people have empowered themselves, have thought of new ideas and then been, like, shot down kind of thing"

Another employee stated that, whatever happens, employees get the blame if things go wrong. This indicates why many are sceptical about the no-blame culture:

"I think it's like the department manager will say, "we're going to do it this way" and when it doesn't work they don't say "well it was my fault, we should have perhaps done it another way", they just say "why have you done it wrong?" there's never an appreciation of the difficulties...they seem a bit blinkered, I don't think they ever think it's their fault"

Whilst many of the employees stated that they would like to have the opportunity to 'have their say', it appeared that they remained fearful to voice opinions. As one focus group participant said:

"I think if all of the employee grades got together and signed a petition that said "we want things to change" then they might think "oh right" but, although we talk like this, we wouldn't dare"

Whilst another employee stated that:

"It's all very nice having these opinions and saying, "oh yes, I'd change it and I'd do it that way" but, at the end of the day, it's all about keeping your job and not getting blackmarked"

An additional factor mentioned by the employees at Preston was the appraisal scheme which requires employees to show evidence of empowering behaviours as well as

meeting their benefit targets. They stated that it proved very difficult to ever achieve more than an average appraisal score which they perceived as demotivating. As one employee stated, *"To get a good report you're expected to do your job and more"*

Overall, the employees agreed that they were feeling stressed and unhappy but could not qualify this with any specific responses and, whilst they couldn't blame empowerment entirely for this, it had not helped:

> *"you can't pinpoint anything* (for the unhappiness of staff), *you couldn't turn around to anyone and say "it's that", you know, it's a lot of feelings and if we turn around and say we're not happy, there's not a lot we can do".*

So, to sum up, the interview data from Preston District suggested that both managers and employees felt that there were some constraints to empowerment, most particularly due to the nature of The Benefits Agency's work and the targets set by the treasury. Some comments from employees suggested that, even if they did get the opportunity to 'have their say', the culture and tradition of the organization meant that their comments were likely to be ignored.

North Leicestershire

There seemed to be an awareness amongst the North Leicestershire District managers that several staff problems had stood in the way of empowerment being accepted. Empowerment and the Quality Framework had been introduced initially in 1992, but reductions in the workforce had meant that it had had to be revived two years later. Many managers felt that this "re-launch" had made some staff cynical. One manager talked of his embarrassment at having to tell people that empowerment was no longer a top priority:

> *"I..stood in front of a room full of people telling them how brilliant it was and then to be told well we're not bothering with it just now and then I had to go back and get the ball rolling again so, can you imagine?"*

Another important contextual factor which seems to be a source of friction is that the North Leicestershire District consists of two offices, one in the city and one in a nearby town: Loughborough. The District Manager admitted that there seems to be a

belief that the "power base" is in the city and that the employees in the Loughborough office often feel left out. This tension was confirmed by employee comments. The employees at the city office stated that they felt Loughborough was apathetic towards empowerment. One employee who had moved to the city office from Loughborough, stated that:

"none of the others (in the Loughborough office) *felt inclined to get involved because they could see the problems facing the next grade up, when we were there you just had to get out there and do it, you couldn't take 'no' for an answer. You had to more or less tell people "well I'm going to do this and I'm not asking you for permission". But some of the others don't feel quite so inclined to do that...we were more established...felt we could take on some semi-confrontational episodes with the supervisors, but the others didn't feel they ought to do that"*

However, whilst those employees interviewed at Loughborough argued that they were not apathetic, they acknowledged that some members of staff were and that these people stopped those who wanted to develop themselves from getting on:

"If you want to develop and you want to take on more, there isn't always the opportunity because you have people who won't be forced to do anything else, so you can't move around and you can't have flexibility or self-motivation because there's just nothing else to do"

Whilst another stated that those in the town felt isolated from the main office:

"The old District staff development manager wasn't as interested in us so we felt that we got left out so, as a result, people didn't bother with Personal Development Plans. They didn't bother with anything, he was either never there or didn't give us enough information so it was like flogging a dead horse"

In general there appeared to be a feeling at Loughborough that not much had changed since empowerment and their anger was vented at the main office and at apathetic members of staff. One of the Loughborough managers stated that he was aware of the problems existing in the office:

"It doesn't gel, there are quite different personalities and they don't work as a team - some just don't want to be team players, they're cliquey".

Overall, there was a clear difference between the attitudes of employees at Loughborough and Leicester. At Loughborough the focus group participants reported

that they were stressed and concerned for their jobs and that many were afraid to actively resist empowerment for this reason, *"You're frightened that if you don't do what they say you might be the next one to go"*. They felt that as concern for customers became more important, they were not being considered, *"everyone goes on about customer care when does staff care come in to the equation?...there seems to be very little reward or incentive for anyone"* . Although they did not necessarily blame empowerment for their feelings of unhappiness, they did not believe that empowerment could work in the present climate at Loughborough:

"If you've got discontented staff, you can't expect to bring through new procedures and policies"

Conversely, employees in Leicester perceived things as changing for the better:

"Personally, I certainly wouldn't go back for any money to how it was before, there's still a long way to go but I certainly wouldn't go back any steps"

Whilst some of the comments made by managers suggested that they appreciated the problems which employees face, it also appeared that some managers think that a number of employees are not embracing the empowerment concept because they do not wish to take on the extra responsibility. One manager stated that although some employees embraced the idea of having a say, they dodged the responsibility. When things go wrong, he explained, they say it is my fault for not helping them. There also appeared to be a feeling amongst some managers that certain people do not want empowerment. One stated that *"if people just want to come to work, pay benefits and go home then that is their decision but it is sad that some people just do not want to be empowered"*. Another claimed that there were some employees who were frightened and found that dealing with people brought *"stresses, strains and anxieties"*. A number of comments from employees suggested that there was a tendency for some people and areas of the District to accept empowerment more quickly than others. One employee who had been in a team which was slower to get involved, explained why he felt these differences existed:

"You had a lot of people who had been in the same job for a long time, I think there was one person who'd been doing the job for 20 odd years, so to that degree we were set in our ways. I don't think we were slower to pick up on things like empowerment

but it was frustrating to me personally and a lot of the others where, within the section, we were moving at different rates"

Despite these feelings, most of the managers appeared aware of the constraints on empowerment and the effect that they had on employees. One manager stated that, because the area of work was imposed by the government, it was difficult for people to get excited about their work or take ownership. Whilst another manager admitted that he thought time and targets were not conducive to an empowered environment, but added that legal constraints should not be a problem because ideas are sought as to how to reorganise working practices rather than the rules which govern their work, *"there's never enough staff so we like people to come up with short cuts"* he said.

Similarly, time and work constraints figured highly in the employees' comments about why they felt empowerment was not taking hold in North Leicestershire, as one said:

"Unless you choose to do it (take part in empowering activities) *out of work, you know, that by the time you've finished work the last thing you want to go and do is to go out and develop yourself further. You don't feel you can go and do things because you know you're just going to go back to a pile of work"*

and as another claimed:

"You're now expected to go off and do other things beside your job like quality, you're encouraged to do things like that but your work gets left so it's a vicious circle"

So, in summary, the interview data from North Leicestershire suggested that managers and employees feel that there are constraints to empowerment, the largest of which appear to be the re-launch effect and the splitting of the office between Leicester and Loughborough. There was evidence that different people were taking on the extra responsibilities associated with empowerment quicker than others, and that managers believed some employees just did not want to change. Some comments from employees suggested that there is some disunity within North Leicestershire with employees accusing each other of apathy and blaming them for the slow pace of empowerment acceptance within the District.

Conclusion of The Benefits Agency

From these interviews it appears that there are a number of similarities between the two Districts. Employees in both seem to be accepting empowerment at different rates with substantial resistance occurring amongst many. and this is recognised by the managers. Additionally, the managers interviewed in both Districts appear to be resigned to the fact that there will always be cynics who will resist new managerial policies. However, more central to the resistance appears to be the existence of constraints (legal, organizational, time and workload) which mean that employees simply feel that they "can't" take on the extra responsibility which empowerment brings.

Particularly interesting is the difference between the two offices at North Leicestershire. It appears that a lack of communication has caused the two sides to blame each other for the resistance to empowerment. Those in the city see Loughborough as apathetic and frightened of responsibility whilst those in the town feel that they are left out of any development activities. The Leicester Office seems far more in favour of empowerment than either Preston or Loughborough. One explanation of this could be the presence of a middle manager in the Leicester interview or, alternatively, it could be that those interviewed in the city were those 'types' who were able to take on the extra responsibility and were not scared, as one said, of *"semi-confrontations"*. For those at the other offices, however, the future of empowerment appears bleak with staff morale low and stress levels high.

The reasons why these changes are being resisted also seems, to some extent, to be due to issues of trust and blame. Whilst managers report that employees are blaming them for mistakes, employees see the situation as reversed. This suggests that there is poor communication between managers and employees in both Districts. There is further evidence for this in that, whilst managers see employees as not wanting responsibility, employees highlight the lack of opportunity for them to take this

responsibility on. Additionally, employees in both Districts express a fear to take decisive action in case they are disciplined or lose their job.

British Telecommunications Plc

Payphones

Comments from the managers in the Payphones Directorate seemed to reveal that they were relatively positive about the initiative and that they perceived their staff as similarly optimistic. One manager stated that engineers, who are strongly unionised, were traditionally cynical, hard-nosed and difficult to excite and that he was impressed how many of his staff had thrown themselves into the empowerment initiative and taken part in some of the various activities, such as the Videos, associated with it. The same manager said that the strict targets which have to be met in Payphones make it difficult for the staff to get together but that they had shown real dedication to the cause by getting involved. Another manager felt that the ideas behind the initiative were getting through to his staff and that when he had asked them, during a team briefing, whether and how the initiative was helping them, most of the team admitted that it had lifted many of the constraints which had originally surrounded their job. However, employees who took part in the focus groups felt that many of these constraints remained, as one employee said:

"I can't believe that anybody doesn't want a better life, it's just whether we're given the opportunity. There's got to be restraints, there's got to be things you can't do that someone else will have to do, but the jobs that you do do, you want to do well"

Some of the managers interviewed commented that there were still some employees who were resisting getting involved. One manager claimed that the loss of headcount which had been occurring in BT in recent years and the threat which advancing technology made to engineers' jobs made people more aware of the precariousness of their career. This was confirmed by references to employee comments; it appeared that the reductions in workforce before the introduction of the initiative, and the threat of more in the future, made people both sceptical and cynical about empowerment:

"When the release scheme came out, they let so many people go and so many qualified people go, they let too many people go and they're getting rid of more people and there just aren't the men to do it"

"He (the office manager) *probably sees the concept that if we do enjoy our job, we will work harder but, at the end of the day, you don't need this* (the empowerment policy) *all you need is the basic rules of life: survival and security. That's all he has to do - I'm sick of management theory, it's been overdone. It's so prevalent, you even know why they're doing it so you can just give the right answers"*

Some managers appeared to be resigned to the fact that some cynics would always remain. One manager stated that, whilst he saw his staff getting on board with the concept, it was not going to happen overnight and that some were clearly still cynical, adding that he wondered if he would ever reach them. Another manager put the existence of cynics down to the fact that everyone is different and that clearly there are eternal pessimists, just as he saw himself as an eternal optimist. The manager continued by saying that he felt that, whilst the hearts and minds of those who sat on the fence had been converted, there were those who would never change, adding that these people would become increasingly isolated within BT. However, the insecurity which is being clearly felt by employees suggest that they are not cynical but are resisting due to very real and practical fears for their future livelihood.

However, whilst those employees in the support office seemed to think the initiative was beneficial to the engineers, they felt that the ideals were not reaching them. This appeared to make them feel even more left out:

"Out in the field ...I think it's seen as pretty good, that it has changed"

"I think from the engineers point of view it has had quite a big effect, it's made things a lot easier but, as I say, being in an office is obviously a different thing altogether"

"seeing what's happening with the engineers, the engineers are being pushed and getting rewards and things, and seeing that happening there and for it not to be happening in the office where I work, you think, 'why not?'"

It seemed that, whilst the focus group participants perceived that real changes had occurred 'in the field', the same was not true for the support offices. Some of the

employees felt that they were not given the opportunity to take responsibility and that there was no evidence of structural changes to facilitate their empowerment:

"The principles are absolutely fantastic, second to none, but when you can't actually take responsibility for doing anything and get told off for doing anything. The idea is brilliant but it's just not happening"

"That's why this thing doesn't work 'cause there's always this underlying problem that you're going to come back to, whether your two days away were nice or not, you're just going to come back to how it was first"

Additionally, there seemed to be a perception amongst the employees interviewed that, rather than involving any structural changes, the *'...for a better life'* initiative was more of a marketing ploy (see "Cultural or Structural Change?"). A number of comments by employees implied that they found the nature of this marketing condescending:

"They're undermining our intelligence with this and we're all pretty intelligent, some a lot more than others, but even the lowest level like me have got some intelligence and I think that's undermining it"

"Without a doubt morale is down and it's been dropping for the last six or seven years and there is a boost required but this has done the opposite, it's just antagonised people really"

"I don't know if they expected everyone to be totally positive when it was briefed and to think 'oh wow, what a good idea, this is going to change my life' but they must have done really"

It appears from the interview data that the initiative was found belittling, not only because of the way it was marketed, but also because they were not consulted about the policy beforehand:

"We heard of it through the Field Support Manager, we weren't consulted about it, it was just the fact it was there and it is going to be done"

"I think whoever figures this stuff out should come and do some market research 'cause it appears to me that those who need it to work aren't really taken into account"

"If they put a survey out and asked 'what have you gained from it?' then they'd get the truth"

The lack of consultation was seen as particularly important to those interviewed as they felt that they were doing these things anyway:

"The ideas of the initiative are good but we're all doing them so that's why we find it so condescending because they're saying 'you should do this, you should make decisions but we already do"

"The initiative doesn't do anything for me because I make my own decisions and I've been doing it for years. I've always been customer orientated"

"The whole thing's stupid because when it came out, when we had the team briefing me, in particular, criticised it at the time because I said everyone in this office, if not 90% of the people who work for Payphones, are actually doing what this thing is promoting"

Employees felt that these negative feelings towards *'...for a better life'* were made worse by the existence of co-workers who had been with the organization a long time and who stood in the way of their empowerment:

"They've got more power, they've been given the opportunity and they're backed up 100% by the manager whether they're right or wrong...it's the length of service within the department"

"In our office we've got a lot of staid people that have been here and who have got set ideas and will not branch out at all. They don't like anything new, they're blinkered"

Overall, it appears that whilst managers appear relatively positive about empowerment and *'...for a better life'*, employees in the support office are failing to get involved due to the fear of redundancy and the feeling that they are being 'sidelined' by managers who are more interested in the empowerment of engineers. Two very negative comments made by employees reflect these feelings:

"I'm so negative about this it's unbelievable. We're all in the same office and, because of that, and because of the pressure of work, no-one can really get involved in this"

"At the end of the day we feel demoralised, it's soul destroying and that's what makes you feel "Better Life" huh, what a waste of time"

Marketing

There was a feeling amongst all of the managers interviewed in the Marketing Directorate that the empowerment initiative had really not taken hold there. One manager said that Marketing had not stood up to the challenge of empowerment yet and that he wasn't sure if they would. *"No that's pessimistic"*, he added, *"I'm sure we can but we've got a long way to go"* . This was confirmed by comments from other managers. For example, one manager felt that, since the introduction of *'...for a better life'*, the empowered culture seemed to have gone backwards rather than forwards. Another manager stated that what was happening in Marketing was the reverse of the empowerment initiative's ideals and said that he thought this was because there was a lack of trust in the Directorate. A different manager, who had been specially brought in to try and improve people's reactions to the initiative, commented that he thought that only about 25% of the Directorate, both managers and employees, were actually on board with *'...for a better life'*.

Most managers identified a number of factors which they felt contributed to this apathy in Marketing. These included the behaviour of the former Director of Marketing who many felt had not been concerned with *'...for a better life'* and who they believed had not pushed the ideas within Marketing. Comments from employees confirmed that this had made the introduction of the initiative disjointed, as one employee said:

> *"no-one ever told us about it. I mean, as far as we're concerned we don't even know what it's supposed to be...it's just something that's always been there. The first thing we heard about it was the formal launch and it was kind of rolled out from there, it was a bit haphazard really"*

Additionally, general issues were raised regarding the organizational instability and insecurity of the Directorate, claiming that this was leading to employees, and some middle managers, resisting empowerment due to a fear for their job. Managers commented particularly on the constant reorganization of the Marketing Directorate with the most senior managers constantly coming and going and the lack of clear direction or strategies. Managers talked of employees feeling "unsettled" and

"uncomfortable" due to this shifting and changing. This was confirmed by the focus group participants, one of whom stated:

"there's no way anyone can feel that their job is secure because they have a change around now and then they'll have another one and another one. So, who's to say I'll be here next year? They need to settle down and work out exactly what it is they're going to do and how many people they need. Until then, no-one's going to take "..for a better life" or anything else seriously because there's so many people being messed about"

Employees' comments implied that they felt that this instability was accentuated by the recent set of redeployments which had occurred within Marketing. They said that the rumour was that BT were trying to replace all non-managerial staff with managers in the Marketing Directorate and that, inevitably, they would be out of a job:

"at the end of the day the people here, whether they've been redeployed or not, are unhappy and a lot of people are really pissed off with BT. There's a lot of people within the company who are very upset for one reason or another, been messed around...so trying to roll out something like this and expect it to be taken seriously, I think it will be a long time before anybody does"

"at BT they expect you to give a lot but they don't expect to give it back. Like they want people to be so full of enthusiasm to do the job and people are being made re-deployed so people are thinking, why should I bother?"

"I think a lot of people are frightened of that though, of saying 'right, I'm going to do this and make all the decisions and do it 'cause you'll only get slated for it in the long run"

The loss of jobs meant that workloads had increased and employees felt that, because of this, they did not have time to get involved in *'...for a better life'*. As one employee explained :

"They want all the work done and then they come round saying 'I'm looking for people to do a video' and you think bugger off, leave me to get on with my job and do my work"

Another theme which emerged from the management interviews was the nature of the Marketing Directorate itself. One manager said that the programme is not considered meaningful because of the "managerial loading" of the Directorate and that, because of this, the initiative is having a less tangible impact as Marketers are by nature arrogant, selfish and overly confident. The same manager said that he felt many of the

managers believed that they took considered risks in their work anyway and, therefore, did not see the relevance of *'...for a better life'* to themselves. Another manager commented that the "cynicism" displayed in Marketing was particularly dangerous as Marketers regularly liaise with other divisions of BT and outside agencies.

Some managers felt that this scepticism could have been overcome if *'...for a better life'* had been differentiated to take into account everyone's needs and the range of cultures existent in the organization. Employees supported this belief as their opinions appeared to differ according to the nature of the work they did within the Directorate. Those employees who worked on the statistical report side, were more negative about empowerment and its relevance to them, as one who worked in that area said, *"I don't think anybody sees the benefit of it, you know, why have we got it?"*, whilst another stated that, *"it's too remote and impersonal"*. However, those who dealt with customers felt that they could see more clearly how the initiative could benefit both themselves and their customers. As one customer-facing employee said:

"I think it's more the customer facing teams that benefit from it. I think if you're in a stats team that's purely looking at forecasting or something then they're not that interested 'cause always figure orientated and I don't think they like it much to be honest"

However, this generalisation was moderated by some of the employees interviewed, who had previously worked in the Customer Service Centres and the "150" environment (Customer Enquiries). They said that they felt that *'...for a better life'* had been pushed too hard in this customer-facing environment and that the change in culture was difficult for many:

"They'd been so educated not to do that sort of thing, don't break laws of their procedures and for some people who were so set in their ways it just didn't work"

Those who wanted to change, and follow a complaint all the way through, were restricted by the target of taking 20 calls an hour:

"it was going to be a total change that you were going to be able to see things through from beginning to end but then, after a while, it went back to 'you can do that

but you've got to make sure you keep to your targets' which just wasn't possible really, you can only do one or the other"

There was a feeling amongst the managers interviewed that there were a considerable number of people within the Directorate who still did not accept *'...for a better life'* and that it was important that the initiative remained high profile with renewed support from senior managers. However, comments from employees suggested that they felt maintaining *'...for a better life'* would have little effect on those who remained sceptical:

"I think the people that were going to, or who were working that way anyway, will carry on, maybe some people will have changed but the ones who won't just will never change, you can only encourage people for a certain length of time"

"It's time to stop harping on about it and let it stay in the background...every time something new under the better life theme comes out, people start to lose interest. I don't think it's going to change the way people work anymore 'cause if you were going to change you would have already changed"

In summary, the interview data from the Marketing Directorate suggested that there had been some difficulty introducing *'...for a better life'* to both managers and employees. In particular the lack of immediate support from senior management and the constant reorganization of the Directorate, were highlighted as reasons for the failure of the initiative to be accepted. There was a clear distinction between the optimism of those who worked in the customer complaints department and who were able to see visible differences to their work since empowerment, and those who worked in the statistical reporting area and who faced threats of redundancy due to the introduction of new information technology. The majority of employees interviewed in this area said that they wanted to be empowered but that they felt under-valued and afraid. As one said,

"There are obviously a lot of people with a lot of enthusiasm, I'm not saying that there's not. But we're just knocked, knocked, knocked all the time. We're put back and we're put back and that's when we start to get cynical"

One manager welcomed people, such as these, who questioned management policy and argued that the presence of cynics was a good sign,

"it shows people are bright enough to understand that such things can not always be taken at face value. It's not that they don't want empowerment, it is just that they want to take the initiative their own way, after all that's true empowerment"

Conclusion Of BT

There appears to be a clear distinction between managers' comments within the two Directorates in BT. Whilst in Payphones, the management seemed optimistic about the initiative, those in Marketing appeared worried that the initiative would never really take hold there. Yet, this distinction was not convincingly borne out by the attitudes of employees. Whilst those interviewed in Payphones felt that the engineers were benefiting from *'...for a better life'*, they remained sceptical about whether the policy held any advantages for themselves. Perhaps the fact that engineers make up the majority of the employee base within Payphones has led to the feelings of employees in the support offices being largely un-noticed or ignored.

In both Directorates there was an awareness amongst managers that factors stood in the way of acceptance, particularly the incompatibility of an empowerment programme with the ongoing redeployments in Marketing and the threat of further job cuts in Payphones. Comments by employees confirmed that, in both Directorates, the insecurity of their employment was affecting their attitudes towards *'...for a better life'*. The effect of this may have been rather accentuated in Marketing due to the fact that a large number of the focus-group participants had only very recently been redeployed. The differentiation in both Directorates between those who worked with customers and those who worked 'behind the scenes' seems to imply that those who do not see the visible effects of adopting the *'...for a better life'* behaviours were more likely to be negative about its implementation. This finding suggests that BT must focus on making the initiative more relevant to those who work for the benefit of internal customers.

Overall, again employees appeared to be relatively negative about the empowerment initiative and the pattern of acceptance and resistance within the two BT Directorates was remarkably similar, not accurately reflecting the diverse opinions of managers.

The larger differences appeared to be within the Directorates themselves, between customer-facing and 'back room' staff. However, as previously noted, the fact that there is a very high incidence of engineers within Payphones, who were reported to be generally accepting of empowerment, may explain the optimistic attitudes of these managers.

CONCLUSION

From the qualitative data presented here, there seems to be consensus on the idea that acceptance of empowerment is neither immediate nor comprehensive. All the interview data implied that there was widespread scepticism within the different units but the reasons why, and the incidence of them, differed. Interestingly, there seems to be more differentiation on this issue between and within operating units than across organizations. This is, to some extent, expected as the operating units were chosen on the basis of their differing views of empowerment, but it also infers that reactions to empowerment are relatively stable across diverse organizations. A belief emerged both from managers and employees that acceptance of empowerment is essentially dependent on personality and that cynics might always be expected due to their pessimistic outlook or, as employees stated, a fashion to be negative. However, there also seems to be evidence that acceptance is also affected by external events such as the issues of job security and redundancies which were highlighted in both organizations, particularly in BT. In the current atmosphere of job cuts and consequent job insecurity in both organizations there is a feeling amongst many of the employees that empowerment is, essentially a waste of time, and that it is more important to them to keep their heads down and avoid being "blackmarked". Whilst empowerment encourages them to make their own decisions, the insecurity which they face makes employees in both organizations reluctant to make changes which could cost money and risk further job cuts, implicating themselves as prime contenders. This, therefore, may play a prime role in why employees are perceived by their managers as reluctant to move out of their comfort zones and this is likely to be accentuated by the history of command and control structures in both organizations

and the remaining existence of many managers who still hold these values. Yet, despite this reluctance, employees are aware that they are placed in a dilemma. In The Benefits Agency, the fact that staff are evaluated for Performance Related Pay, according to their involvement in empowering activities, mean that they are, in essence, forced to make such decisions and are forced to compete with other employees, destroying the essence of teamwork and causing, in some cases, tension between staff. This was also evident between different sections of staff in BT, as is discussed in more detail, below.

A high number of employees complained that there was a lack of opportunity to take on empowerment due to constraints of workload and time. Additionally, there were some constraints particular to the operating units, such as the unstable nature of Marketing, and the power battle between the two offices of North Leicestershire District, and these constraints contributed to some of the main differences between the operating units. One major difference across the organizations is the fact that those interviewed in The Benefits Agency dwelled on the issue of responsibility. The managers accused employees of not wanting to take on the added responsibility associated with empowerment whilst employees blamed managers for not giving them that opportunity. It would be expected that similar issues were not raised in BT for, whilst in The Benefits Agency empowerment is providing real changes to employees' jobs, BT has introduced a more superficial, cultural change (see "Cultural or Structural Change?").

In conclusion, there was evidence from employees in both organizations that they felt both stressed and unhappy, and whilst they did not see this as necessarily a direct result of the empowerment initiatives, they did not find issues of empowerment compatible with the present organizational climate. The constant changes in the Marketing Directorate of BT and the uncertain future of The Benefits Agency, heightened staff's insecurity and cynicism towards empowerment. Interestingly, the most positive employees appeared to be in the city office of North Leicestershire District and the Customer Complaints department of the Marketing Directorate. These both formed parts of operating units which were selected for the research as

negative examples of empowerment. These results, therefore, might suggest that, even in seemingly negative work areas there are pockets of optimistic and enthusiastic employees. Or, alternatively, that the nature of empowerment per se may have little effect on the attitudes of staff with other contextual factors having a stronger impact.

CONCLUSION OF THEMES

Table 11 below summarises the main issues to have arisen out of the four themes emergent from the qualitative data. Whilst, the themes were discussed separately there does appear to be some level of interdependence between the themes and these will be discussed.

TABLE ELEVEN: The Main Issues Arising From The Qualitative Data

THEMES	THE BENEFITS AGENCY		BT Plc	
	Preston	N. Leicestershire	Payphones	Marketing
Training and The Essence of Empowerment	External Consultant Training by grade Mgt v E'ees	External Consultant Not all e'ees trained Diff. Mgt Definitions	Internal Training Abstract Training Teamwork	Internal Training Not all e'ees trained Competitiveness
Cultural or Structural Change?	Structural Changes Communications More Work	Structural Changes Devolved Budgets More Work	Cultural Changes Management Fad More Work	Work like it anyway Down-sizing More Work
Acceptance and Resistance of Empowerment - Managers	Difficulty 'letting go' Passing rubbish down Grade conscious Lip Service	Difficulty 'letting go' Passing rubbish down Threat to jobs Lip Service	Middle Mgt blockage Fail to reward e'ees Redundancies Display 'belief'	Apathy - senior mgt. Work like it anyway Re-organization Display 'belief'
Acceptance and Resistance of Empowerment - Employees	Depends on Individual Constraints eg Targets No involvement	Depends on Individual Constraints eg Targets Two offices Re-launch	Good for engineers Redundancies Faddish marketing No involvement	Good for customer-facing staff Re-deployments Apathy of ex-Director

On balance, the qualitative data suggest that employees are displaying a generally sceptical response towards empowerment although their level of visible resistance is low. Whilst there is evidence of differences across the units and organizations under research, one aspect of the empowerment policies which appears relatively stable is the fact that some individuals are accepting empowerment quicker than others. In both cases this seems to be due, in part, to the unstable nature of the organizations as they undergo organizational change and the job insecurity which this causes in both middle managers and employees alike. Moreover, there also appear to be other reasons for these differences which are more related to the contextual differences between the organizations. In The Benefits Agency this seems to be due to the length of tenure in the organization, and the values of the Civil Service environment which are inherent in those exposed to the virtues of a "command and control" structure. In BT, the individual differences seem to be related to the level to which employees

have contact with customers and, hence, see the effects of the "Own, Decide and Do" policy on the outside market place. Yet, there also appeared to be evidence in BT, particularly in Payphones, that the effects of previous exposure to the public sector are still evident there.

These factors, which are hypothesised to affect the extent to which individuals differ in their acceptance and resistance, also appear to be related to the nature of the empowerment policies themselves. In particular, the fact that the Benefits Agency's empowerment initiative involved structural changes to work, meant that many employees found themselves with increased workloads as menial tasks were "dumped" on them from higher levels. Interestingly, it seems that this passing down of work was not welcomed by managers either, indeed the interview data implied that these changes were being perceived as a threat by middle management both in terms of wider down-sizing initiatives and the changes in managers' roles which empowerment necessitates. There was evidence from the interviews and focus groups held in The Benefits Agency that those managers who used to be promoted on the basis of their technical expertise, were now being expected to manage people and that this may affect some of the power and responsibility which they saw as accompanying their previous expert role. These structural changes, therefore, seem to be affecting the extent to which both managers and employees are accepting the initiative. Those who see grade and status as synonymous with authority and power are unlikely to welcome a policy which directly goes against such policies. For those employees and managers who sought comfort in the structure and culture of the Civil Service environment, the emergence of empowerment must be unsettling, and will cause some to overtly or covertly resist empowerment. There is evidence that this is occurring, particularly at middle management levels and this will be discussed later in this conclusion.

The acceptance and resistance of employees in BT does, as was discussed above, appear to be partially dependent upon the extent to which employees are exposed to customers. This seems to be related to the nature of the *'...for a better life'* initiative which was brought in, to a large extent, as a reaction to competition and the need to

improve customer relations. Additionally, the behaviours which are associated with the policy emphasise their importance on the customers: "taking personal ownership for *customer* requirements"; "taking considered risks to delight the *customer*"; and "taking decisive action on behalf of the *customer*" . For those employees who are not in direct contact with the customer, they are unlikely to perceive the significant impact of their actions on the customer and may, therefore, be unable to reconcile the policies of '*...for a better life*' to their immediate work area. This isolation from '*...for a better life*' may lead these people to ignore, or even resist, the principles and promotion of the initiative.

These feelings of isolation seem to be exacerbated, particularly in the Marketing Directorate, by the number of re-deployments and redundancies which employees face. The threat, felt by those in Marketing, that all employees will be replaced with managers has caused many to treat the principles of '*...for a better life*' as little more than a joke. The insecurity of those who remain, precludes them from taking risks due to the feeling that management are merely looking for reasons to release more staff. Even for those who do not face such threats the number of previous, similar initiatives which BT have adopted lead many to be scepticism about the genuine intentions of management. The discussion of the acceptance and resistance of the empowerment policies by management imply that very similar threats face the middle management levels of these organizations. Despite espousing the rhetoric of empowerment to staff, there seems to be an indication by managers and employees interviewed in both organizations that managers are showing commitment to the policies on a surface level out of concern for their careers. There did appear to be some differences between the organizations on the level of, and reasons for, this "acting".

In The Benefits Agency managers appeared to believe that they were acting in an empowering way and talked of their acknowledgement that an empowered environment represented the only way forward. Yet, the employees interviewed in the two Districts implied that managers were having trouble 'letting go' of their work and responsibilities, accusing management of only passing the 'rubbish' down and of reasserting their control in practice. However, in BT managers appeared more

apathetic towards the empowerment initiative and openly admitted that it was important they 'displayed' their belief in the policy. This almost nonchalant approach to managing these changes is likely to be due to three factors. Firstly, the changes which have occurred in BT are of a more cultural nature than The Benefits Agency and, therefore, although there still remains the threat of redundancies, these do not appear to be as a direct effect of *'...for a better life'* . Secondly, the experience of tackling previous, similar initiatives, is likely to have prepared management for the various issues which they face. And, thirdly, managers were able to train their own teams so they are likely to have adapted the initiative to be more suited, and therefore less of a threat, to their workplace. Hence, it seems that whilst The Benefits Agency managers are facing problems of their changing role and the necessary change in attitudes which accompany the empowerment initiative, managers within BT are drawing on established ways of managing change and, whilst some appear genuinely enthusiastic about empowerment procedures, others will merely go along with it on a surface level in order to maintain their careers within BT. Overall, it does appear from the qualitative data presented in this chapter, that the behaviour of managers is central to the enthusiasm of employees towards empowerment. The positive reactions of employees to the manager in Preston District, and the customer-facing Marketing manager imply that the behaviours of management may well have a direct effect on employees' perceptions of their own empowerment. Hence, management behaviour and their perceived commitment to empowerment may be two crucial factors in the empowerment of individuals. Yet it should be noted that middle managers are also prisoners of the overall organizational policy. Their work demands have increased with the requirement to be both "coaches" and financial controllers whilst also being expected to implement the senior management empowerment rhetoric which threatens their job.

The empowerment training which managers and employees received appears to have had negative, if any, effects on employees' empowerment. The training, which in both organizations was considered to be rather abstract, seems to have accentuated the confusion which surrounds the term "empowerment". This was particularly true of The Benefits Agency which invites this ambiguity, to some extent, by using a

contested concept without offering a clear and applicable definition at the senior management level. The training of employees by grade also seem to have invited different levels of the organization to adopt their own interpretations of the term causing clashes of expectations between levels and, in the case of North Leicestershire, across levels. In BT, the fact that the empowerment concept was adapted by the organization as *'...for a better life'* with a number of widely recognised, required behaviours has meant that the whole message of empowerment within BT seems to be a lot clearer. There is some evidence that the Directorates are adapting the initiative to meet their own requirements, but the underlying assumptions are clearly set out. However, there is a danger that these messages have been clouded by the isolation of some employees from customer reactions, as discussed above, and the cynicism amongst many that *'...for a better life'* is just another management fad resembling the "Involving Everyone" programme which failed earlier in this decade.

Although some of these differences did seem relatively universal across the organizations and units studied they are also seemingly dependant upon the structure and nature of the respective organizations and units. For example, in Marketing, the highly managerialised structure and the nature of the work performed, seemed to imply that the majority of managers and employees worked in an empowering way anyway and that the resulting apathy of the managers, including the previous Director, were, to some extent, related to the fact that they did not believe *'...for a better life'* could offer them anything new. Additionally, the Government constraints which restricted the work of the Benefits Agency, in terms of the law which must be observed and the targets which must be met, appeared to hamper the empowering practices of the managers and employees alike.

In conclusion, then, there is a general scepticism surrounding the empowerment initiatives in both organizations which is evident in both middle managers and employees. It appears that the acceptance and resistance of empowerment by employees is dependant upon a number of factors including the nature of work; organizational structure, culture and climate; industrial relations context; management behaviour and genuine commitment; organizational sector and

competitiveness; and other issues related to training and the expectations which people at different levels place on empowerment. Yet, despite the effect of these factors, many of the interviews and focus groups discussed in this chapter involved discussions of individuals and the importance of personality on the empowerment process. There was some indication that certain types of people, both managers and employees, were more suited to empowerment than others. Indeed, returning to the first issue of this chapter, individual differences in reactions to empowerment may be the effect of two phenomena. Firstly the socialization of individuals within a particular role or operating unit (eg Civil Service; customer-facing environment) may affect the values which people have and the reactions which they display to empowerment. The effects of the wider industrial relations context and organizational culture and climate seem those factors most likely to impinge on the ways in which empowerment is interpreted. Secondly, reactions may, to a greater degree, rely on personality factors and the differences between units may merely be due to the fact that people self-select themselves into these particular jobs. That is, those who work in a Civil Service environment may resist empowerment policies because they go against their individual values and beliefs rather than those of their organization.

The main issues raised here were further developed in the creation of the questionnaire which looks at employees' perceptions of empowerment as they relate to issues such as management behaviour; organizational culture and individual personality. Unfortunately, due to the confidentiality which was assured to all respondents, information about their actual job role was not gathered. For this, and other reasons, the depth of context which this qualitative data has provided, acts as a suitable backdrop for an analysis of the quantitative data which follows.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Questionnaire Results

"He that nothing questions, nothing learns"

An English Proverb

INTRODUCTION

The following chapter seeks to evaluate the results of the questionnaires which were received from 342 employees, 235 from The Benefits Agency and 107 from BT. The questionnaires were designed on the basis of previous literature and from issues arising from the focus groups. In this way, it is hoped that the results presented in this chapter can be better understood in the light of the qualitative data presented in Chapter Seven and vice versa. The qualitative data suggested that there are several different factors which are affecting whether individuals feel empowered and, indeed, whether they even feel positive towards the empowerment process. Aspects of the individual such as personal background, orientations to work, feelings of job insecurity, previous exposure to empowerment, trade union membership and personality attributes such as feelings of control, desire for achievement and challenges at work all appeared to emerge as important to individuals' perceptions of the empowerment process. Moreover, the characteristics of the organizations such as management behaviour, bureaucratic procedures, and organizational culture seemed to affect how employees feel about empowerment and the extent to which they believe they can be empowered in practice. Hence, the questionnaire which was distributed to employees in BT and The Benefits Agency, sought to quantify these relationships and discover to what extent individual attitudes, organizational reality and characteristics of the empowerment initiative itself impact on feelings of empowerment. The results presented in this chapter, therefore, consider the orientations of individuals and how they differ across the two organizations, concluding by determining which variables are most central to feelings of empowerment.

OVERVIEW OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Table 12, overleaf, shows the Correlation Matrix of the various interval variables. It shows that, in general there were low to moderate correlations between the variables

TABLE 12: Correlation Matrix of Independent Variables - Whole Sample

	A/IND	CHA	AVRE	TORI	LOC	IND	ACH	AUT	IMF	FRE	CUST	VISN	SEC	MGR	BUR	POW	IMM	BOSS	MD	MATC
A/IND	.	0.118*	-0.181**	-0.105	-0.047	0.167**	0.329**	0.773**	0.003	0.078	-0.095	-0.102	-0.009	-0.042	0.141**	0.014	0.023	-0.026	-0.012	-0.015
CHA	0.118*	.	-0.307**	0.106	-0.163**	-0.209**	0.677**	-0.027	0.207**	0.193**	0.030	0.064	0.028	0.101	0.077	-0.006	0.009	0.082	0.156**	-0.031
AVRE	-0.181**	-0.307**	.	-0.086	0.196**	0.107	-0.479**	-0.022	-0.118*	-0.254**	-0.023	-0.049	-0.120*	-0.027	0.066	0.170**	-0.115*	-0.116*	-0.070	-0.010
TORI	-0.105	0.106	-0.086	.	-0.101	-0.424**	0.096	-0.635**	0.053	0.097	0.213**	0.126*	0.029	0.094	-0.050	-0.024	-0.011	0.014	0.048	-0.003
LOC	-0.047	-0.163**	0.196	-0.101	.	0.175**	-0.140*	0.059	-0.015	-0.330**	-0.368**	-0.391**	-0.369**	-0.225**	0.269**	0.355**	-0.152**	-0.213**	-0.167**	-0.306**
IND	0.167**	-0.209**	0.107	-0.424**	0.175**	.	-0.163**	0.401**	-0.162**	-0.196**	-0.302**	-0.201**	-0.142**	-0.252**	0.114*	0.142**	-0.176**	-0.158**	-0.115*	-0.101
ACH	0.329**	0.677**	-0.479**	0.096	-0.140*	-0.163**	.	0.037	0.258**	0.198**	0.047	0.017	0.092	0.063	0.103	-0.079	0.064	0.092	0.078	0.029
AUT	0.773**	-0.027	-0.022	-0.635**	0.059	0.401**	0.037	.	-0.074	-0.032	-0.218**	-0.181**	-0.068	-0.112*	0.133*	0.038	0.012	-0.052	-0.053	-0.028
IMF	0.003	0.207**	-0.118*	0.053	-0.015	-0.162**	0.258**	-0.074	.	0.175**	0.046	0.057	0.075	0.090	-0.032	-0.088	0.114*	0.075	0.091	0.049
FRE	0.078	0.193**	-0.254**	0.097	-0.330**	-0.196**	0.198**	-0.032	0.175**	.	0.354**	0.458**	0.484**	0.392**	-0.368**	-0.498**	0.288**	0.191**	0.215**	0.234**
CUST	-0.095	0.030	-0.023	0.213**	-0.368**	-0.302**	0.047	-0.218**	0.046	0.354**	.	0.600**	0.465**	0.374**	-0.386**	-0.431**	0.276**	0.260**	0.303**	0.298**
VISN	-0.102	0.064	-0.049	0.126**	-0.391**	-0.201**	0.017	-0.181**	0.057	0.458**	0.600**	.	0.580**	0.352**	-0.435**	-0.515**	0.238**	0.272**	0.294**	0.328**
SEC	-0.009	0.028	-0.120*	0.029	-0.369**	-0.142**	0.092	-0.068	0.075	0.484**	0.465**	0.580**	.	0.349**	-0.412**	-0.962**	0.231**	0.201**	0.234**	0.299**
MGR	-0.042	0.101	-0.027	0.094	-0.225**	-0.252**	0.063	-0.112*	0.090	0.392**	0.374**	0.352**	0.349**	.	-0.308**	-0.326**	0.495**	0.277**	0.205**	0.183**
BUR	0.141**	0.077	0.066	-0.050	0.269**	0.114*	0.103	0.133*	-0.032	-0.368**	-0.386**	-0.435**	-0.412**	-0.308**	.	0.408**	-0.192**	-0.274**	-0.223**	-0.247**
POW	0.014	-0.006	0.170**	-0.024	0.355**	0.142**	-0.079	0.038	-0.088	-0.498**	-0.431**	-0.515**	-0.962**	-0.326**	0.408**	.	-0.261**	-0.211**	-0.231**	-0.278**
IMM	0.023	0.009	-0.115*	-0.011	-0.152**	-0.176**	0.064	0.012	0.114*	0.288**	0.276**	0.238**	0.231**	0.495**	-0.192**	-0.261**	.	0.451**	0.216**	0.329**
BOSS	-0.026	0.082	-0.116*	0.014	-0.213**	-0.158**	0.092	-0.052	0.075	0.191**	0.260**	0.272**	0.201**	0.277**	-0.274**	-0.211**	0.451**	.	0.524**	0.311**
MD	-0.012	0.156**	-0.070	0.048	-0.167**	-0.115*	0.078	-0.053	0.091	0.215**	0.303**	0.294**	0.234**	0.205**	-0.223**	-0.231**	0.216**	0.524**	.	0.316**
MATC	-0.015	-0.031	-0.010	-0.003	-0.306**	-0.101	0.029	-0.028	0.049	0.234**	0.298**	0.328**	0.299**	0.183**	-0.247**	-0.278**	0.329**	0.311**	0.316**	.

* significant at the 5% level ** significant at the 1% level

KEY TO INDEPENDENT VARIABLE ABBREVIATIONS

INDIVIDUAL A/IND: Desire for Autonomy and Independence CHA: Desire for Challenge and Hard Work AVRES: Avoidance of Responsibility TORI: Team Orientation LOC: Locus of Control IND: Individualism ACH: n(Achievement) AUT:n(Autonomy) TMF: Importance of Freedom **ORGANIZATION** FRE: Freedom and Autonomy CUST: Customer and Staff Care VISN: Vision and Direction SEC: Power, Security and Morale MGR: Positive Management Behaviour BUR: Bureaucracy POW: Powerlessness IMM: Immediate Boss Commitment to Empowerment BOSS: Boss's Boss Commitment to Empowerment MD: Managing Director Commitment to Empowerment MATC: Matched interpretations of Empowerment

suggesting that they are measuring different aspects of the individual and the organization and, therefore, provides a rationale for including these different factors in the analyses which follow. There are two exceptions to this: firstly, the Powerlessness scale of Ashford et al (1989) correlates highly with the Power, Security and Morale ($r = 0.962$) factor from the Organizational Culture and Climate scale. This is expected due to the fact that the same items were included in both variables. Secondly, for the same reason, the n(Autonomy) scale correlates highly with the Autonomy and Independence factor from the Propensity to be Empowered scale. Due to problems of multicollinearity, the two established scales will be removed from subsequent regressions.

Overall, from Table 12 it can be seen that the general pattern of correlations demonstrates that characteristics of the individual significantly correlate with other aspects of the individual and characteristics of the organization significantly correlate with other aspects of the organization as one might expect. However, what is particularly interesting is that Locus of Control and Individualism appear to affect nearly all of the variables. The direction of the correlations implies that those with an internal locus of control are more likely to have a team orientation, enjoy challenge and hard work, and have a need for achievement and are less likely to be individualistic. They are also more likely to perceive their organization positively. Individualistic individuals appear to correlate with these variables in the opposite direction.

The correlations of these various independent variables with the dependent variables "I consider myself to be empowered", "I am really not interested in being empowered" and the belief that empowerment is a "good thing" are discussed later in this chapter. The possibility of combining these dependent variables into a scale was considered but the reliability of such a scale was low and, moreover, the difference between the responses to the three questions suggest that they are each measuring quite different aspects of empowerment. Indeed, overall it seems that a relatively small proportion of the sample actually consider themselves to be empowered (41.3%, $n = 139$). Over one quarter of the respondent sample (25.5%, $n = 86$) did not consider themselves to be

empowered, with the rest of the sample undecided yet attitudes to empowerment are visibly more positive. Indeed, only 18.5% of respondents reported that they are not interested in being empowered (n = 62), with 49.4% (n = 166) of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that this is the case. Moreover, 61.7% of respondents (n = 198) reported that they feel empowerment is a 'good thing' on balance or is certainly a 'good thing'. The average was 2.40 where "2" on the Likert scale represented "Yes, on balance". Only 9.7% (n = 31) feel that empowerment is not a 'good thing' on balance or is certainly not a 'good thing'. Hence, whilst it remains important to determine what aspects of the individual and organization affect attitudes towards empowerment, what emerges as central is the isolation of those factors which prevent these relatively positive attitudes towards empowerment translating into feelings of empowerment. As discussed above, this chapter will look at the effect of organizational context, individual background and attitudes and the nature of the empowerment programme itself. This review of the questionnaire results will be divided into two sections: the first section of Chapter Eight will support and build upon the qualitative data reported from the focus groups, by investigating whether perceptions of the organizations and their empowerment programmes differ according to individual differences and organizational membership. The second section will then take this analysis further still by determining which factors are most central to feelings of empowerment amongst staff in these two organizations.

Hence, the second section considers which variables directly affect feelings of empowerment through the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlations and the SPSS Means procedure on the interval and categorical data respectively. Additionally, to consider the contribution of the different variables to the prediction of attitudes towards empowerment, multiple regressions were conducted for both the entire sample and the different organizations to show how the contextual effect of organizations can impinge on this predictor model. However, the contingency approach which this thesis has taken would suggest that an individual's background characteristics may well affect how they perceive organizational characteristics and whether these are translated into feelings of empowerment. For instance, the literature discussed in Chapter Four suggested that those who have a more instrumental

orientation to work may be less affected by issues such as Organizational Vision and Direction and more affected by job security and staff care. To consider this, separate correlations were conducted for each of these personal characteristics and significant differences between these correlations were calculated. These are also presented in Section Two.

SECTION ONE: Perceptions of the Organizations, Management and Empowerment

A general description of the respondent sample was given in Chapter Five (Tables can be found in Appendix T). It considered the differences between the two organizational samples through the use of t-tests and chi square analysis. The chi squares were calculated using raw frequencies but, in the main, the results have been presented using percentages as it is a common metric and is more easily comparable in the light of the different sample sizes. T-tests and chi squares were also calculated to compare the two operating units in each organization to see if there were any internal differences. This introduction to the sample revealed that overall, individuals from the two case-study organizations have quite different biographical characteristics. Firstly, the gender compositions are very different with The Benefits Agency consisting of a predominantly female workforce doing mainly clerical tasks, whilst those in BT are male dominated, particularly in Payphones where it seems there is a "traditional" male engineering workforce with a very high unionisation rate of 85%. Due to these very different gender compositions of the two sub-samples the possible effect of gender has also been considered. Those in BT are generally older than those in The Benefits Agency and they have a longer organizational tenure. Men are more likely than women to have dependents at home, and this is particularly true in the male-dominated Payphones Directorate of BT where men seem to have a more "traditional" family role with 36.1% of respondents being the main earners in their household. Yet, those in Payphones are less likely to have formal, educational qualifications than the more highly qualified staff in The Benefits Agency and Marketing. Interestingly, BT respondents stated that they were less likely to have been exposed to empowerment previously in their careers than those in The Benefits Agency. This does not seem to equate with the fact that BT had had similar previous initiatives whereas The Benefits Agency had not. Hence, it suggests that either those in The Benefits Agency do not

consider empowerment to still exist in their organization, implied by the quotes presented in this section, and answered this question in relation to the present initiative. Alternatively, respondents may be using the term loosely to ascribe to other activities which they have found empowering.

One way analyses of variances were also performed on the four operating units in the two organizations using the post-hoc procedure of "Tukey B". This is used for sub-groups of three or more and allows one to see if one group (operating unit) has a significantly different result to any of the other groups by carrying out a number of between-group tests. The rationale for testing for this effect was to check whether the results gained were not due to differences between the two organizations but rather to the effect of four very different operating units. However, these analyses showed no significant differences between the operating units, which were not already accounted for by the t-test and chi square procedures between organizations and, between operating units in the same organization. Where there are such differences between the units, these have been noted in the text. Additionally, where appropriate, qualitative data obtained from the open questions on the questionnaire have also been included to substantiate the statistical relationships obtained.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

Table 13, below, shows the results for the different scales used to investigate the culture and climate of the organizations under study in this research, including the derived scales from the "Organizational Culture and Climate" scale. It shows the mean score and the standard deviation of the entire sample as a norm for each scale. However, where similar questions have been asked in broader attitude surveys, these will be included for comparative purposes. Table 14 shows the mean and standard deviation for each organization and the results of the t-tests which were performed to examine the differences in responses between them.

Organizational Culture and Climate

Freedom and Autonomy: Mean of whole sample = 21.18

The literature discussed in Chapter Three stated that empowerment is generally advocated as involving a change in the level of freedom and autonomy which individuals are afforded within their workplace. Yet, in this case the mean score of an individual who chose the median value on each item would have been 21, so it seems that, in general, respondents do not view their organizations strongly either way as regards the amount of freedom and autonomy which they offer. Moreover, respondents in The Benefits Agency (Mean = 20.51) are less likely than those in BT (Mean = 22.66) to believe that their organization offers opportunities for freedom and autonomy ($t = -4.57$, $df = 331$, $p < 0.005$). For example, those in The Benefits Agency are less likely to think that their organization allows them to be creative, gives them the authority to correct problems when they occur, and gives them control over how they do their job. This perception does not differ with regard to gender or operating unit.

TABLE 13: Organizational Characteristics of Entire Sample

ORGANIZATIONAL VARIABLES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
	n = 342 (unless stated)	
ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND CLIMATE:		
Freedom and Autonomy (n =333)	21.18	4.08
Customer and Staff Care (n=338)	14.69	2.58
Power, Security and morale (n=337)	9.66	2.82
Vision and Direction (n =336)	11.85	3.08
Bureaucracy (n = 338)	7.41	2.05
MANAGER'S BEHAVIOUR	17.82	3.87
	NUMBER (n = 328)	PERCENTAGE
SEX MANAGER: Male	129	39.3
Female	199	60.7

TABLE 14: Organizational Characteristics by Organization

ORGANIZATIONAL VARIABLES	THE BENEFITS AGENCY			BT			T-TEST		
	n	Mean	sd	n	Mean	sd	t	df	p
ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND CLIMATE:									
Freedom and Autonomy	230	20.51	3.80	103	22.66	4.31	-4.57	331	0.000
Customer and Staff Care	234	14.83	2.49	104	14.37	2.76	1.53	336	0.127
Power, Security and morale	233	9.76	2.83	104	9.45	2.82	0.910	335	0.364
Vision and Direction	232	11.65	2.95	104	12.31	3.34	-1.82	334	0.069
Bureaucracy	233	7.65	2.01	105	6.86	2.03	3.36	336	0.001
POWERLESSNESS	234	7.67	2.30	104	7.31	2.13	1.37	336	0.172
MANAGER'S BEHAVIOUR	234	17.90	3.95	105	17.65	3.70	0.55	337	0.583
	n	M	sd	%	n	M	sd	%	t	df	p
SEX MANAGER: Male	229	1.77	0.42	23.1	99	1.23	0.42	76.8	10.53	326	0.000
Female				76.9				23.2			

Customer and Staff Care: Mean for whole sample = 14.69

As well as heralding a more autonomous working environment the optimistic management literature covered in Chapter Three suggested that empowerment involves a new way of looking after and caring for staff and customers. Although there is some debate about whether this change is occurring in reality, the results presented here show that individuals are more likely than not to believe that their organization cares about its staff and customers, as the mean score of an individual who chose the median value on each item would have been 12. However, women (Mean = 14.99) are more likely than men (Mean = 14.17) in this sample to believe that their organization cares about its staff and customers ($t = -2.83$, $df = 336$, $p < 0.005$). That is women are more likely to believe that their organization believes in teamworking, cares about its customers, and encourages staff to train and learn. No similar differences were found on the basis of organizational or operating unit context.

Power, Security and Morale: Mean for whole sample = 9.66

The more critical literature which was reviewed in Chapter Three suggested that empowerment was generally being introduced at a time of down-sizing and that this was causing insecurity and feelings of powerlessness amongst staff. The results presented here confirm this as a neutral respondent would have scored 12 on this scale suggesting that respondents mostly disagreed that they felt in control of their job and that morale was high in their organization. Respondents do not differ on this factor on

the basis of gender, organizational or operating unit context.. Hence, it seems that in both organizations considered in this research, there is evidence that employees feel insecure and powerless as was suggested by the literature and also highlighted in the employee focus groups. In 1996, the ISR survey of employees found that only 39% of their national sample reported that they had positive morale at work, hence this perception may not merely be isolated to these two organizations, but might suggest that low morale is a broader phenomenon.

Vision and Direction: Mean for whole sample = 11.85

The Industrial Society report (1995), which was referred to in Chapter Three, found that the most general change which has occurred amongst organizations during the process of empowerment is the clarification of vision and values. There was no strong evidence that this was occurring in either BT or The Benefits Agency. The score of an individual who chose the median value on each item would have been 12, so it seems that, in general, respondents do not feel strongly either way that their organization offers vision and direction. Moreover, respondents from these organizations do not differ on the extent to which they believe their organization offers vision and direction, with the mean for The Benefits Agency being 11.65 and for BT, 12.31. That is that all employees, regardless of gender or organizational context, do not differ on the extent to which they perceive that their organization provides strong leadership, has a clear vision of what needs to be done and how to achieve it or values the ideas of staff.

Bureaucracy: Mean for whole sample = 7.41 (Reverse Coded)

Generally, empowerment is considered to be the antithesis of bureaucracy but this was not borne out by the results presented here. The mean score of an individual who chose the median value on each item would have been 9, so it seems that in both organizations individuals are more likely than not to believe that their organization is bureaucratic. Respondents in The Benefits Agency (Mean = 7.65) are less likely than those in BT (Mean = 6.86) to believe that a feeling of "us" and "them" exists in their organization; that their organization believes in having a lot of layers of management; and that they have to go through a lot of red tape to change things ($t = 3.36$, $df = 336$,

$p < 0.005$). This is surprising in that it does not reflect many of the comments made by Benefits Agency respondents on the questionnaire:

"Empowerment is still too grade conscious and until this changes it will never make a success of empowerment" **Female, Age 27**

"Empowerment only works if your job has a lot of freedom, when laws govern your work changes are not always possible" **Female, Age 22**

"Empowerment is an excellent concept - however, my organization severely limits any real chance of it becoming feasible" **Male, Age 30**

"Very hard to be empowered in this organization as the level of bureaucracy, rules and regulations mean we work within strict guidelines, can vary these rules so everything is set down for us" **Female, 24**

"The civil service is all about tradition - until attitudes change - empowerment will never enter their vocabulary. People need freedom to make their own decisions. The civil service needs to come into line with most other large organizations if they are to survive in the 21st century" **Male, Age 41**

However, the fact that this scale had a relatively low reliability, suggests that this difference, must be treated with some caution.

Managers' Behaviour. Mean for whole sample = 17.82

The role of line managers is considered crucial in the empowerment process and this was not only advocated in the literature, but was also highlighted as of particular importance to both organizations in their official documentation. In this study, the mean score of an individual who chose the median value on each item of this scale of perceived management behaviour would have been 15, so it seems that generally individuals are more likely than not to make positive attributions about their immediate manager. This reflects a general satisfaction with one's immediate supervision amongst UK employees, with 68% in the 1996 ISR survey giving a favourable response. Moreover, women (Mean = 18.16) are more likely than men (Mean = 17.24) to perceive their immediate manager as willing to listen to their ideas and support them. This difference is significant at the 5% level ($t = -2.14$, $df = 337$, $p < 0.05$). No differences emerged on this factor as a result of organizational or operating unit context.

The Effect of Gender on Management Effectiveness

60.7% (n = 199) of immediate managers were female. This is an unusually high proportion of women managers who are thought to make up only about one fifth of the approximately 3 million managers in Britain (Davidson, 1996). However, the proportion of women managers differed between the two organizations with 76.9% of immediate managers being women in The Benefits Agency and 23.2% immediate women managers in BT. Chi squares were calculated to test for a relationship between gender, organization and operating unit and immediate managers' gender. These revealed that 73.4% of those who had a female manager were women whilst 51.9% of those who had a male manager were men. This relationship between gender and the gender of one's manager was significant (χ^2 = 21.60, $p < 0.005$). A similar relationship was found between organization and managers' gender (χ^2 = 83.29, $p < 0.005$), with 88.4% of female managers being in the Benefits Agency and 58.9% of male managers being in BT. It is likely that this may relate to the type of industries and occupations covered by the organizations in this research. For instance the strong engineering base in BT may account for the larger proportion of male managers in that organization. Indeed, 37.2% of all the immediate male managers were in BT Payphones whilst 52.8% of female managers were in the Preston District of The Benefits Agency. This relationship between regions and the gender of immediate managers was also significant (χ^2 = 89.13, $p < 0.005$). Separate chi squares were conducted for each organization to test for the effect of gender. These found that whilst in The Benefits Agency there was no relationship between gender and the gender of one's manager, there was such a relationship in BT with 68.4% of those with male managers being men and 56.5% of those with female managers being women (χ^2 = 4.69, $p < 0.05$). This relationship reflects the two very different operating units in BT, the strongly engineering based traditional male workforce with predominantly male managers and a more female orientated, clerical function in the Marketing Directorate. A t-test and correlation were performed to explore the relationship between manager's gender and their 'positive' behaviour, no significant difference or correlation was found. This does not match the finding by Bass and Avolio (1994) that women make more empowering managers or the speculative

comments made in the Benefits Agency Preston District about the association between gender and management behaviour:

> *"The best three empowering HEOs in this office are all women..I'm not trying to be sexist but there's three female HEOs and they are the ones who are prepared to listen to you"*
>
> Female Participant in Benefits Agency Focus Group

Involvement in Participative Activities

The fact that other employee involvement techniques often run alongside empowerment programmes was discussed in some length in the literature review. Later in this Chapter, it will be considered whether participation in these techniques is perceived to contribute to individuals' empowerment. However, the extent to which these participative techniques are adopted in empowering organizations is also of interest. Generally, respondents are most likely to take part in team briefings and training and development but this varies with organizational membership and gender. There are three relationships between participation and gender. Firstly, a higher proportion of women (51.2%) than men (37.3%) take part in peer group meetings; secondly, a higher proportion of men (39.1%) than women (22.4%) take part in multi-skilling and thirdly, a larger proportion of women (54.9%) than men (31.5%) receive Performance Related Pay. The inclusion of "peer group meetings" relates to formal gatherings rather than social get-togethers but it is possible that some respondents interpreted this activity as more informal. If this is the case, then the above result merely proves that women are more sociable than men, which is also indicated by their scores on the individualism scale (see below). However, the fact that both organizations do use the term "Peer Group Meetings" in reference to formal meetings between employees of the same grade, suggests that most employees were responding to the question as intended.

Five of the eight participative activities listed differed in respect to organization. A far larger proportion of BT respondents take part in team briefings 98.1%; multi-skilling (46.7%); and have personal action plans (76.6%); than those in BA (91.9%; 20.3%; and 51.5% respectively) whilst a higher proportion of those in BA (50.4%) take part in peer group meetings than BT (36.2%) and receive performance related pay (65.2%

compared to 4.7%). It is plausible that these differences between participation in peer group meetings, multi-skilling and Performance Related Pay are due to gender differences rather than differences in the organizations themselves. Chi square analyses were conducted for each organization regarding the relationship between participation and gender. Performance Related Pay does not differ on the basis of gender in either organization suggesting that the relationship between PRP and organizations is a direct one. However, in BT 57.4% of men take part in Multi-skilling compared to 28.2% of women ($\chi^2 = 8.46$, $p < 0.005$), and women (48.7%) are more likely than men (28.8%) to take part in peer group meetings ($\chi^2 = 4.22$, $p < 0.05$). Hence, in BT participation in these activities does differ on the basis of gender, this is likely to be related to the widespread use of multi-skilling in a technical, craft-type workforce such as Payphones which is male dominated.

There are also some interesting differences on the basis of operating unit with 100% of Payphone respondents taking part in team briefings compared to 88.4% in North Leicestershire and the highest proportion of those with personal action plans being in Payphones (80.3%). One interesting difference, which cut across the two organizations is the large proportion of those in Preston (90.7%) and Payphones (93.3%) who take part in training and development compared to percentages in their 70s for their respective operating units. Finally, suggestion schemes involved a larger proportion of staff in Preston than any other operating unit, particularly Marketing, where only 8.4% are involved in suggestion schemes.

Conclusion of Characteristics of The Organization and Management

Overall, it seems that whilst empowering organizations are advocated in the literature, and to some extent by both organizations concerned in this study, as offering freedom and autonomy, caring about staff and customers, providing vision and direction and reducing bureaucracy; there is, with the exception of Customer and Staff Care, little evidence in either organization that this is occurring. Moreover, one might have expected employees from the two organizations, which have considerable differences as discussed in Chapter Six, to perceive the characteristics of organizational culture and climate in different ways. However they were only seen to differ significantly on

two of the four organizational characteristics. Firstly, respondents in The Benefits Agency were more likely than their counterparts in BT to believe that their organization offered freedom and autonomy and yet in BT employees were more likely to consider their organization as bureaucratic. Whilst this seemed to contradict many of the comments which Benefits Agency respondents made on their questionnaires, it is suggested that whilst The Benefits Agency is seen as restricting employees' freedom because of its legal obligations and civil service structure, the stronger trade union tradition and culture in BT may have sustained feelings of "us and them". Indeed, some of the BT respondents comments reflect this:

"A good idea in theory but the same old story in practice. If senior managers actually listened, rather than paying lip service to these schemes, most of the staff would be a great deal happier" **Female, Age 49**

"Managers should have a mind of their own and not just spout the company ideas/values etc. because it will benefit them and not the workforce. Too many take the glory for others work, despite claiming to recognise the contribution of others" **Male, Age 30**

Indeed, despite constant reorganizations since privatisation, there is still evidence that BT harbours bureaucratic procedures:

"Too much red tape and too many procedures to get the job done quickly and efficiently. In these circumstances empowerment is not possible" **Female, Age 52**

However, as noted above, items only loosely fitted to this factor in the two organizations so this result must not be drawn on too conclusively. Overall, immediate managers' behaviour was reported more favourably by female respondents, possibly suggesting that women have a better relationship with their manager. As might have been expected by the different workforces and gendered occupations covered by this sample, women were more likely to be managed by a woman and men by a man. However, no difference was found between the gender of managers and their behaviour.

THE ORGANIZATION AND THE INDIVIDUAL.

Having considered how organizational characteristics are perceived in general, this Section now considers how these perceptions differ on the basis of individual differences. This consideration of the individual will include biographical statistics, orientations to work and aspects of personality and individual attitudes.

Biographical Statistics

The literature discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis discussed the possibility that individuals' prior expectations and orientations to work affect how objective external events are perceived and the social meaning which is placed upon them. These interpretations were considered to be both a result of personality traits such as locus of control and personal background such as age and earner status. Hence, in this section, the effect of individual characteristics on perceptions of one's organization and empowerment programme are considered. Throughout this discussion, the reader will be reminded of the nature of the sample and how individuals from the two organizations differed in relation to their characteristics. In this sense, it is hoped that a clearer understanding of the role of the individual in the empowerment process will be developed.

The literature indicated that age has a positive relationship with job satisfaction but that length of tenure may often affect this relationship in that those with longer tenures tend to be more dissatisfied. In this sample, age significantly correlates with organizational ($r = 0.626$, $p < 0.01$), role ($r = 0.396$, $p < 0.01$) and grade ($r = 0.588$, $p < 0.01$) tenure, which is not particularly surprising as older respondents are likely to have worked in their organizations for longer. However, what is of particular interest here is that older people display more need for autonomy ($r = 0.153$, $p < 0.01$) and less of a team orientation ($r = -0.196$, $p < 0.01$) than younger staff yet age does not seem to have any effect on the perception of organizational characteristics.

The same is true for organizational tenure. Whilst those who have been working in their organization for a long time are less likely to have a need for achievement ($r = -0.113$, $p < 0.05$), an internal locus of control ($r = 0.131$, $p < 0.05$) and a team

orientation ($r = -0.139$, $p < 0.05$), organizational tenure does not significantly correlate with perceived characteristics of the organization. The only exception to this appears to be for those who have worked in the same role for a long time. Tenure in one's role correlates significantly with Organizational Vision and Direction in a negative direction ($r = -0.117$, $p < 0.05$) suggesting that those who have remained in the same role for a long time will be less likely to perceive their organization as having a clear vision of what needs to be done, valuing employees' ideas, providing strong and clear leadership and are less likely to be proud of telling people who they work for. One might suspect that the frustration and boredom which remaining in the same role can cause could explain this relationship. Hence, these results do not appear to reflect those in the literature which suggest that age is positively related to job satisfaction but do, to some extent, confirm the belief that tenure is positively related to dissatisfaction. This has implications for BT respondents who, as was discussed in Chapter Five, are significantly older and have longer tenures than those in The Benefits Agency.

As regards earner status, one might have considered that those who were sole or main earners would differ in their perceptions of organizational culture and climate than those who had less financial pressure on them such as joint earners or those who lived with their parents. However, in this research no such relationship was found and the only significant difference which emerged was that those who live with their parents are less likely to perceive that their organization offers them freedom and autonomy ($t = 2.89$, $df = 331$, $p<0.005$) than those who do not. Whether this is related to the youth of the sample (the average age of those who lived with parents was 23.26 years) who may have higher expectations or related to the fact that they can afford to be less instrumental about their work, is unclear but both of these factors might be suggested to play their part. Additionally, those respondents who live with their parents are significantly less likely to believe that their managing director is committed to empowerment than those who do not ($t = 2.29$, $df = 331$, $p<0.05$).

Educational qualifications were seen to differ significantly according to gender, organization and operating unit in Chapter Five. Moreover, the literature discussed in

Chapter Four suggested that those workers who are more highly educated are more likely to have an intrinsic enjoyment of work and challenge and, therefore, it was considered that they would be more likely to welcome empowerment and characteristics of organizations which offer such challenges. Interestingly, however, those respondents who have A-levels are less likely than those who do not to believe that their organization offers vision and direction ($t = 2.15$, $df = 334$, $p<0.05$). Whilst those who have an apprenticeship are significantly more likely to believe that their organization offers vision and direction than those who do not ($t = -2.24$, $df = 334$, $p<0.05$). This may suggest that those who begin work at an earlier age and have fewer educational qualifications have lower expectations of the organization than those who are more educated and are, therefore, likely to be less dissatisfied by organizational reality than those who have studied for A-levels. This theory appears to be further confirmed by the fact that those who have a degree are less likely to think that their organization provides freedom and autonomy ($t = 2.04$, $df = 331$, $p<0.05$), power, security and morale ($t = 2.13$, $df = 335$, $p<0.05$) and vision and direction ($t = 2.94$, $df = 334$, $p<0.005$) than those who do not. Interestingly, those who possess an NVQ are significantly less likely to think that their Managing Director is committed to empowerment than those who have not ($t = 2.40$, $df = 331$, $p< 0.05$) whilst those respondents who possess a professional qualification are significantly more likely than those respondents who do not to believe that their managing director is committed to empowerment ($t = -2.34$, $df = 331$, $p<0.05$). This difference may be more related to organizational context than educational qualifications per se as the majority of respondents with a professional qualification were in BT Marketing who work more closely with their Managing Director than any of the other respondents.

The majority of the sample work as members of a team and these respondents are more likely than those who do not work in a team to believe that their organization cares about staff and customers ($t = 2.95$, $df = 336$, $p<0.005$). However, this result may be misleading in that one of the items in the factor Customer and Staff Care was "My organization believes in teamworking" which may explain this significant difference. Moreover, those who work as part of a team were also significantly less likely to believe that their understanding of empowerment matches that of their organization than those who do not ($t = -1.98$, $df = 332$, $p<0.05$). This is interesting in that it may

suggest that those who work in a team discuss their understanding of empowerment as a group and that this "Group Think" creates a more optimistic, utopian definition of the term than the organization offers in reality. Alternatively, as was suggested in the focus groups, respondents may associate empowerment with Performance Related Pay and Personal Action Plans which are more individualistic management tools and which work against the team ethos they are used to.

Those who have previous experience of empowerment in their career are less likely to consider their organization bureaucratic ($t = 3.15$, $df = 329$, $p<0.005$) and more likely to believe that their organization cares about customers and staff ($t = 2.69$, $df = 329$, $p<0.01$) than those who have not. Although this result must be treated with some caution (due to the low reliabilities obtained for the Bureaucracy factor), this result suggests that those who have previously been exposed to empowerment feel more positively about their organization. One possible interpretation of this result is that, if those who state that they have previously been exposed to empowerment are relating it to former programmes in their present organization, then respondents may believe that empowerment has had a positive effect on their organization.

Orientations To Work.

This section of the results looks specifically at feelings of job insecurity and responses to the "lottery" question. In doing so it considers how individuals' orientations to work affect how they feel about their organization. Firstly, however, it broadly discusses the general responses to these two questions with regard to organizational membership and gender, allowing the relationships between these orientations and perceptions of one's organization to be placed in context.

When asked what they considered to be the most likely reason for them leaving their present job, the largest percentage of respondents in the sample stated that they are most likely to leave their organization due to their own decision (39.5%), but this was found, not surprisingly, to be related to organizational membership ($\chi^2 = 11.54$, $p < 0.005$). A higher proportion of those in BA (45.5%) than BT (26.2%) feel that they would leave as a result of their own decision. Similar results were not found for men

and women, so one can confidently assume that this finding is related to the organizations themselves. Secondly, a higher proportion of BT employees (29.9%) than BA employees (12.8%) stated that they are most likely to leave through redundancy ($\chi^2 = 14.55$, $p < 0.005$). Indeed, as one BT employee from the Marketing Directorate commented:

> *"BT is going through a period of 'downsizing' the workforce through a series of muddled re-organizations. Everyone feels uncertain about their future"*
>
> **Male, 37**

There was also found to be a relationship between redundancy and gender: a higher proportion of men (23.4%) than women expect to be made redundant (15%). For this reason, separate chi squares were calculated for each organization to test whether this effect of gender was found in both organizations. These found, surprisingly, that gender did not relate to the belief that one would leave because of redundancy in either organization, although this is likely to be due to the small sample size of those who expected to leave due to redundancy (30 respondents in The Benefits Agency and 32 in BT). Additionally, there is a relationship between reasons for leaving and operating unit, most noticeably this involves a higher proportion of Marketing respondents (15.2%) than those in other operating units to expect to be relocated and a lower proportion (6.5%) expecting to leave through retirement. Also, only 7.9% of Preston respondents expect to be made redundant, considerably lower than the other regions, whilst 32.8% of Payphones expect to leave through this route. These results are difficult to compare with other surveys on job security which generally ask questions such as "Are you satisfied with your level of job security?" (ISR, 1997). But if we consider those who are happy with their level of job security as those who believe they were most likely to leave their organization as a result of their own decision or retirement (57.9% for whole sample, 48.6% for BT, and 62.1% for The Benefits Agency), then this sample compares favourably with the 1996 ISR national norm of 43%.

The literature discussed in Chapter Four suggested that those respondents who face threats of redundancy will become narrowly instrumental in their orientations to work and may withdraw from their work. The fact that faith in the organization and in

management will also be damaged by job insecurity suggests that those respondents in this sample who believe that they are most likely to leave due to redundancy or relocation will be more likely to feel negatively about their organization. Indeed, this pattern does seem to have been borne out in the results. In this sample, those individuals who believe that they are most likely to leave due to redundancy are significantly less likely to perceive Power, Security and Morale ($t = 2.94$, $df = 335$, $p < 0.005$), Vision and Direction ($t = 3.48$, $df = 334$, $p = 0.001$), or Customer and Staff Care ($t = 3.68$, $df = 336$, $p < 0.001$) within their organization than those who expect to leave for some other reason. These respondents also appeared to be more cynical about management commitment, being significantly less likely to believe that their Managing Director was committed to empowerment than those who think that they would leave for some other reason ($t = 2.07$, $df = 331$, $p<0.05$). Moreover, a similar cynicism regarding management commitment was found amongst those who feel they are most likely to be relocated, although this was directed at immediate managers with those who feel that they are most likely to leave their organization due to relocation being significantly less likely to believe their immediate manager was committed to empowerment than those who think that they would leave for some other reason ($t = 2.13$, $df = 335$, $p<0.05$). Finally, those who stated that they could not say what they felt was the most likely reason for them leaving their organization are more likely to perceive their organization as offering power, security and morale than those who gave another answer ($t = -2.45$, $df = 335$, $p<0.05$). This final result also appears to confirm this pattern of insecurity leading to negative evaluations of organization and management as those who could not say why they were most likely to leave may simply not think about leaving and, by implication, are happy and secure in their job.

The "lottery" question which asked whether people would continue to work if they could receive the same money without doing so, raises some interesting results. Nearly half of the entire sample (44.7%, n=153) stated that they would still prefer a paid job with only 19% (n=65) stating that they "wouldn't bother" to work; 20.8% would do voluntary work; 5.8% did not know what they would do. Interestingly, nearly a tenth of the sample (9.6%) chose the "other" category, stating such activities as starting their own business or following a hobby. The only relationship with gender for this

variable was that a considerably higher proportion of men (24.2%) than women (15.9%) state that they wouldn't bother to work if they could still receive the same money ($\chi 2 = 3.61$, $p < 0.050$). These results are not only much lower than the findings gained when others have asked the same question (for example Hakim (1992) found that 70% in 1984-1985 and 74% in 1989 of a sample of male and female employees would still prefer a paid job), but also suggests that men are less likely to continue working, in some form, than women. This may add weight to Hakim (1992)'s argument that working women are more committed to their careers or to working life than men. It was also found that a higher proportion of BA employees (22.6%) than their counterparts in BT (11.2%) would not bother to work ($\chi^2 = 6.14$, $p < 0.01$) and separate chi squares were calculated for the two organizations to see if the differing gender compositions of the two organizations had an effect on this result. Whilst there was a significant relationship between gender and the "lottery" responses in The Benefits Agency with 48% of women preferring to still work and 36.7% of men stating that they would "not bother" ($\chi^2 = 9.50$, $p < 0.05$), this was not the case in BT. No association was found between responses to this question and operating unit in either organization.

Regarding the effect of these attitudes on further attitudes to the organization and empowerment, those who stated that they would continue with a paid job regardless of whether they could receive the same income without doing so, according to the literature discussed in Chapter Four, have an intrinsic enjoyment of work and are likely to be more positive about their organization. This is confirmed in this study by the fact that those who would continue in a paid job are more likely to perceive their organization as offering freedom and autonomy ($t = -2.33$, $df = 331$, $p<0.05$), power, security and morale ($t = -3.51$, $df = 335$, $p=0.001$) vision and direction ($t = -3.68$, $df = 334$, $p<0.005$) and customer and staff care ($t = -2.81$, $df = 336$, $p=0.005$) than those who would not. The causal order of this relationship is open to speculation in that the more positive evaluations of the organization may explain why such individuals would continue to work or alternatively, the fact that these people have a less instrumental attitude to work may affect how they evaluate the culture and climate of the organization. Additionally, those who might be considered to have a more

instrumental attitude to work - that is those who would not bother to work if they could receive same income - are less likely than other respondents to perceive freedom and autonomy in their organization ($t = 3.53$, $df = 331$, $p<0.005$). Again the causal order of this relationship is open to some debate. Not only did these groups differ in their perceptions of organizational culture and climate but also on perceived managerial commitment with those who would not bother to work if they could receive the same income being significantly less likely than those who would take some other option to believe that their managing director was committed to empowerment ($t = 2.07$, $df = 331$, $p<0.05$). In contrast, those who would continue with their paid job were significantly more likely to think that their managing Director was committed to empowerment than those who would take some other option ($t = -2.36$, $df = 331$, $p<0.05$).

Those respondents who stated that they would do voluntary work if they were placed in this situation produced some interesting results. Firstly, they were less likely to believe that their organization offered power, security and morale ($t= 2.51$, $df = 335$, $p<0.05$) than those who would take some other option. This may suggest that, whilst enjoying the process of work enough to want to continue working in some form, these respondents did not feel secure or happy enough in their organization to want to continue in that organization. Or, alternatively, these respondents may have a more altruistic nature which, due to the need for economic security, they have not been able to exercise in the past making them feel powerlessness at work. Secondly, those who stated that they would do voluntary work were significantly less likely to believe that their understanding of empowerment ($t = 3.41$, $df = 332$, $p = 0.001$) matches that of their organization than those who would do something else. This is particularly interesting in that it may suggest that those who have a more altruistic nature and who may well have wished to work in the voluntary sector in the past may have different interpretations of empowerment than those who have not. Indeed, these respondents may well have had exposure to the different usage of empowerment in relation to the disadvantaged (for example: battered women, the disabled and illiterate) where it represents the overcoming of oppression and regaining of equality, as discussed in

Chapter Two, and may have created their expectations of organizational empowerment on this basis.

Aspects of Personality and Individual Attitudes

Table 15, below, shows the results for the different personality scales used in this research, including the derived scales from the "Propensity to be Empowered" scale. It shows the mean score and the standard deviation for each scale. Due to the fact that the majority of the scales used cannot be compared to a norm, because of the adaptation of the scales (Locus of Control; Job Insecurity Scale; Collectivism & Individualism) or the lack of information as to how the norm scores were derived (needs for Achievement and Autonomy), the means for the entire sample are shown as a norm and these are then compared by organization, gender and operating unit.

Propensity To Be Empowered

Challenge and Hard Work: Mean for whole sample = 20.26

It was suspected that those individuals who thrive on challenge and hard work are more likely to welcome empowerment programmes which often require individuals to take ownership for their own actions and to improve on past performance. The mean score of an individual who chose the median value on each item of this scale would have been 15, so it seems that in all cases individuals are more likely than not to enjoy challenge and hard work. Table 16 reveals that respondents from the two organizations are extremely similar in their desire for challenge and hard work and this factor did not differ according to gender or BT Directorate either. That is that respondents do not differ in their desire to improve on their past performance or do their best when their targets are fairly difficult et cetera. However, in The Benefits Agency, respondents in the North Leicestershire District are more likely than their colleagues in Preston to enjoy challenge in their work ($t = 3.25$, $df = 229$, $p < 0.005$). Challenge and Hard Work correlates with the belief that one's organization provides freedom and autonomy ($r = 0.193$, $p < 0.01$) perhaps suggesting that those who enjoy challenge seek opportunities for autonomy within their organization. Moreover, this

factor also positively correlates with the belief that one's Managing Director is committed to empowerment ($r = 0.156$, $p < 0.01$).

Avoidance of Responsibility: Mean for whole sample = 17.20 (Reverse Coded)

The literature discussed in Chapter Four, and some of the feelings expressed in the management interviews and employee focus groups, suggested that there will be some individuals who will not welcome empowerment due to its association with responsibility and making one's own decisions. However, the mean score of an individual who chose the median value on each item of this scale would have been 15, so it seems that individuals were generally unlikely to want to avoid responsibility in this study. Table 16 shows that respondents from the two organizations are extremely similar in their desire to avoid responsibility, again this factor did not vary according to gender or operating units. This means that employees are similar in the extent to which they prefer to shy away from making decisions and like to follow rules rather than taking the initiative, and that this is true regardless of gender or organizational context. However, it should be remembered that reliabilities for this scale were relatively low and hence these results should be treated with caution. Indeed, although Avoidance of Responsibility correlates with the perception that one's organization does not offer freedom and autonomy ($r = -0.254$, $p < 0.01$) or power, security and morale ($r = -0.120$, $p < 0.05$), the low reliability of this scale suggests that drawing any conclusions from these correlations would be misleading.

TABLE 15 : Personality Characteristics of Entire Sample

PERSONALITY VARIABLES	MEAN n = 342 (unless stated)	STANDARD DEVIATION
PROPENSITY TO BE EMPOWERED:		
Challenge & Hard Work (n = 336)	20.26	2.37
Avoidance of Responsibility (n=337)	17.20	2.66
Autonomy / Independence (n = 340)	11.64	2.38
Team Orientation (n = 340)	4.96	1.34
LOCUS OF CONTROL (n=329)	12.34	2.07
'EMPOWERING' JOB FEATURES	19.86	3.27
INDIVIDUALISM	14.96	2.59
n (ACHIEVEMENT)	18.22	2.46
n (AUTONOMY)	13.54	2.49
IMPORTANCE OF FREEDOM	19.87	3.27

TABLE 16 : Personality Characteristics by Organization

PERSONALITY VARIABLES	THE BENEFITS AGENCY			BT			T-TEST		
	n	mean	sd	n	mean	sd	t	df	p
PROPENSITY TO BE EMPOWERED:									
Challenge & Hard Work	231	20.26	2.14	105	20.25	2.81	0.025	334	0.980
Avoidance of Responsibility	231	17.16	2.81	106	17.28	2.29	-0.379	335	0.705
Autonomy / Independence	233	11.38	2.53	107	12.19	1.91	-2.93	338	0.004
Team Orientation	233	4.77	1.27	107	5.37	1.40	-3.92	338	0.000
LOCUS OF CONTROL	229	12.38	2.14	100	12.25	1.90	0.52	327	0.601
IMPORTANCE OF FREEDOM	235	20.05	2.90	107	19.47	3.94	1.53	340	0.128
INDIVIDUALISM	231	14.87	2.47	103	15.17	2.85	-0.99	332	0.322
n (ACHIEVEMENT)	232	18.11	2.43	105	18.46	2.53	-1.19	335	0.234
n (AUTONOMY)	233	13.23	2.50	107	14.20	2.35	-3.36	338	0.001

Autonomy / Independence: Mean for whole sample = 11.64

Respondents from the two organizations differed significantly with regard to their desire for autonomy and independence ($t = -2.93$, $df = 338$, $p < 0.005$), with those in the Benefits Agency less likely to desire autonomy and independence than their counterparts in BT. However, it should be remembered that the reliability for this factor was relatively low and therefore should be treated with some caution when interpreting these results. A similar difference to that between the organizations was found on this factor between men and women with males (Mean = 12.13, s.d.= 2.41) more likely than females (11.34, s.d. = 2.31) to desire autonomy and independence, and this was significant at the 0.5% level ($t = 2.99$, $df = 338$, $p < 0.005$). The possible effect of gender on this factor was considered and a Simple Factorial Anova was conducted. This found that whilst gender is significantly related to the desire for autonomy and independence ($p = 0.039$), there is also a significant relationship between organization and autonomy and independence when the effect of gender is statistically controlled for ($p = 0.047$). Hence, this suggests that men are more likely to want to go their own way, and disregard rules which hamper their freedom, but regardless of this effect of gender, BT employees are also more likely than Benefits Agency respondents to desire this independence. The mean score of an individual who chose the median value on each item would have been 12, so it seems that individuals were slightly less likely to desire autonomy and independence than a neutral respondent. This desire for autonomy and independence correlates positively with the belief that one's organization is bureaucratic which suggests that respondents who

desire autonomy and independence are less likely to make positive evaluations about their organization.

Team Orientation: Mean for whole sample = 4.96 (Reverse Coded)

As is discussed in relation to individualism below, this scale was included in order to explore the relationship between empowerment and team work. The mean score of an individual who chose the median value on each item would have been 6, so it seems that individuals were more likely than not to have a team orientation. However, there was a significant difference between respondents from the two organizations as regards team orientation ($t = -3.92$, $df = 338$, $p < 0.005$). Those in the Benefits Agency were significantly more likely than those in BT to consider themselves team players and to not want to work alone. However, again it should be remembered that the reliability for this factor was low and therefore it should be treated with some caution when interpreting these results. There was a similar relationship found between gender and team orientation with women having a stronger team orientation than men ($t = 4.83$, $df = 338$, $p < 0.005$) and so a Simple Factorial Anova was conducted to test for the possible effect of gender on this relationship. This showed that although gender did have a significant effect on team orientation ($p < 0.005$) there was also a significant effect of organization when gender was statistically controlled for ($p = 0.018$). This suggests that whilst women have a stronger team orientation than men, there is also a significant effect of organizational context on this factor with those in The Benefits Agency displaying a stronger team orientation. A team orientation correlates positively with the belief that one's organization offers Customer and Staff Care ($r = 0.213$, $p < 0.01$) and Vision and Direction ($r = 0.126$, $p < 0.05$). However, the low alpha reliability of this scale suggests that no conclusions should be drawn from these relationships.

Locus Of Control: Mean for whole sample = 12.34

The two organizations did not differ significantly in regard to Locus of Control. Neither did this vary according to gender or BT Directorate. However, in The Benefits Agency, respondents from North Leicestershire had a more external locus of control than their Preston colleagues ($t = 1.97$, $df = 227$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that

respondents in North Leicestershire feel more controlled by external events than their counterparts in Preston and that this is an internal difference which is not caused by gender differences.

The literature discussed in Chapter Four suggested that locus of control or "Global Impact" may have an effect on satisfaction at work. It has been proposed that those who feel more in control of their own work and believe that good work will be rewarded are more likely to positively evaluate their organization than those with an external locus of control. As was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, locus of control was found to impact on perceptions of one's organization with those displaying an internal locus of control significantly correlating with the belief that one's organization offers Freedom and Autonomy ($r = -0.330$, $p < 0.01$) Customer and Staff Care ($r = -0.368$, $p < 0.01$), Vision and Direction ($r = -0.391$, $p < 0.01$), Power, Security and Morale ($r = -0.369$, $p < 0.01$) and that it does not offer Bureaucracy ($r = 0.269$, $p < 0.01$) or Powerlessness ($r = 0.355$, $p < 0.01$). An internal locus of control or "high global impact" also correlates with positive evaluations of one's immediate manager ($r = -0.225$, $p < 0.01$) and the belief that one's immediate manager ($r = -0.152$, $p < 0.01$), boss's boss ($r = -0.213$, $p < 0.01$) and Managing Director ($r = -0.167$, $p < 0.01$) are all committed to empowerment. Finally, those with an internal locus of control significantly correlate with the belief that one's understanding of empowerment matches that of one's organization ($r = -0.306$, $p < 0.01$). Hence, overall, it appears that those with a more internal locus of control are more likely to feel positively about their organization and the empowerment process as had been expected from the literature. The fact that this aspect of personality does not vary according to organizational membership suggests that it has a direct effect on these characteristics independent of organizational context.

Importance of Freedom: Mean for whole sample = 19.86

The two organizations did not differ significantly in regard to empowering job features, and neither did this differ according to gender, or organizational operating unit. That is that the freedom to schedule one's own work; to perform one's work in the manner one sees fit; to receive feedback from one's supervisor; a job where one

does a variety of tasks; and a job where one sees an entire piece of work through from start to finish; are salient to all employees regardless of gender or organizational context. A neutral respondent who chose the median score on each item of this scale would have scored 15, so it seems that these respondents are more likely than not to desire such empowering job features. The salience of these job features positively correlates with the belief that one's organization offers freedom and autonomy (0.175, $p < 0.01$) and that one's immediate manager is committed to empowerment ($r = 0.114$, $p < 0.05$). Although the causal order of these relationships is not known, it is suggested here that those individuals who place particular importance on control over their own work, seek out opportunities within their organization, particularly through their line manager, to exercise these aspects of their work. This therefore leads to positive evaluations of their immediate manager and of the autonomy the organization offers.

Individualism: Mean for whole sample = 14.96

The two organizations did not differ significantly with regard to individualism. However, a significant difference did emerge on this factor with regard to gender. Women were more likely to have a collectivist attitude (Mean = 14.69, s.d. = 2.29) than men (15.42, s.d. = 2.98) and this difference was significant at the 5% level ($t = 2.53$, $df = 332$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that women prefer to work in groups and place importance on their relationship with other team members. However, the fact that women are less likely to be union members suggests that they seek to exercise this collectivist attitude in a less formal way than through collective representation. This is suggested through some of the comments made by women, who referred to some of the activities which made them feel empowered:

"Organizing team activities e.g. arranging Christmas meal etc." **Female, Age 43**

"Equal opportunities user group" **Female, 25**

"I usually decide how to organize my work, in my previous job I worked as a team but I still organized myself" **Female, 57**

"Social club - fund raising and allocation of funds" **Female, 20**

The literature discussed in both Chapters Three and Four debated where individualism fitted in with empowerment policies. Whilst the policy tends to be introduced by an

individualistic management it, along with other forms of employee involvement, has commonly been associated with teamwork. Hence, the inclusion of this scale was somewhat exploratory in considering how employees with a more individualistic attitude perceived their organizational culture and the empowerment programme. The results shown in Table 12 at the beginning of this chapter suggest that those who are more collectivist in their attitudes perceive their organization and the empowerment process more positively. Indeed, individualism correlates negatively with the belief that one's organization offers Freedom and Autonomy ($r = -0.196$, $p < 0.01$), Customer and Staff Care ($r = -0.302$, $p < 0.01$), Vision and Direction ($r = -0.201$, $p < 0.01$); Power, Security and Morale ($r = -0.142$, $p < 0.01$) and positively with Bureaucracy ($r = 0.114$, $p < 0.01$) or Powerlessness ($r = 0.142$, $p < 0.01$). An individualistic attitude also negatively correlates with positive evaluations of one's immediate manager ($r = -0.252$, $p < 0.01$) and the belief that one's immediate manager ($r = -0.176$, $p < 0.01$), boss's boss ($r = -0.158$, $p < 0.01$) and Managing Director ($r = -0.115$, $p < 0.01$) are all committed to empowerment. Overall, then it appears that empowerment and organizational culture are more positively evaluated by those with a collectivist attitude.

n(Achievement): Mean for whole sample = 18.22

It was suggested in Chapter Four that the perceived "global meaningfulness" of work may be affected by one's n(Achievement) and n(Autonomy) but that the latter may be affected by whether or not empowerment is introduced in a team or individual context. Like one's need for challenge and hard work, n(Achievement) correlates with the perception that one's organization provides freedom and autonomy at work ($r = 0.198$, $p < 0.01$). As discussed above, this may suggest that those individuals who want to get ahead at work are likely to seek out opportunities for being creative and making their own decisions. The two organizations did not differ on their need for achievement and neither did this factor vary according to gender or operating unit. This suggests that employees do not differ on their need for achievement regardless of gender or organizational context.

n(Autonomy): Mean for whole sample = 13.54

Whereas n(Achievement) correlates with positive aspects of the organization, n(Autonomy) correlates negatively with the belief that one's organization provides Customer and Staff Care ($r = -0.218$, $p < 0.01$) and provides Vision and Direction ($r = -0.181$, $p < 0.01$) and positively with the belief that one's organization is bureaucratic (0.113, $p < 0.05$). It also correlates negatively with perceptions of positive management behaviour ($r = -0.112$, $p < 0.05$). These relationships indicate an inverse relationship to that of team orientation and a similar relationship to Individualism and a desire for Autonomy and Independence. Whilst this may indicate that empowerment is a more team based phenomenon as suggested earlier or that those respondents who want to work alone have higher expectations of the organization and empowerment policy than those who enjoy working as a team. There was a significant difference between BT and The Benefits Agency as regards n(Autonomy). Those in BT were more likely to display a need for autonomy than those in The Benefits Agency, this reflects the finding on the autonomy/independence scale. Again, a similar finding was found between men and women on this scale, with men displaying a greater need for autonomy than women ($t = 4.58$, $df = 338$, $p < 0.005$). However, unlike the autonomy/independence factor, when gender was statistically controlled for using a Simple Factorial Anova, the effect of organization on n(Autonomy) was no longer significant ($p=0.063$). Hence this suggests that men have a greater need for autonomy than women regardless of organizational context.

Summary of Personality and Individual Attitudes

Overall it seems that individuals do differ to some extent in their perceptions of organizational characteristics and the commitment of management, independently of organizational membership. This appeared to be particularly true regarding education, team membership, job insecurity and orientations to work. There appeared to be more job insecurity in BT with respondents being more likely to think that they would leave because of redundancy. Whilst in Payphones, this was particularly true, in Marketing there also seemed to be a widespread fear of being relocated. Those who felt insecure appeared to be more likely to perceive organizational characteristics in a negative way. Regarding orientations to work, Benefits Agency respondents reported that they were

more likely not to bother to work if they did not have to financially than those in BT, implying that they have a more instrumental approach to work, yet this was more true for male Benefits Agency respondents than female employees. Those who would continue to work are, as expected from the literature, more likely to perceive their organization in a positive light. Respondents in BT were more likely to take part in team briefings, multi-skilling and Personal Action Plans than those in The Benefits Agency who were more likely to take part in peer group meetings and Performance Related Pay. It is likely that participation in these different activities reflects the different types of work which are undertaken in these two organizations. Interestingly, despite the fact that the literature suggested that TU membership may affect the causal attributions which individuals make, there was found to be no significant differences between TU members and non-members in how organizational or empowerment characteristics were perceived.

Overall, respondents had relatively similar personality characteristics which did not differ between the organizations. The two exceptions to this were the fact that respondents in The Benefits Agency were less likely to desire autonomy and independence than their BT counterparts and were more likely to have a team orientation. The weaker team orientation in BT was reflected in one of the comments made by a BT employee on her questionnaire:

"BT tend not to act on better life principles. The organization tends to be too large to work as a team. Often we do not speak to each other enough" **Female, 57**

However, in both cases, these factors scored low reliabilities and therefore no strong conclusions on the basis of them should be drawn. What appears most interesting regarding the personality attributes of individuals was the fact that those who have a stronger team orientation are more likely to be positive about their organization than those who are individualistic or have a high need for autonomy. This suggests that either empowerment is introduced in a team based atmosphere and therefore is more suited to team orientated individuals or that those with more individualistic attitudes have higher expectations of their organization which are not being met. Evidence from the qualitative literature suggests that both theories are valid and may exist alongside each other. Finally, those individuals with an internal locus of control appear to be

more positive about empowerment suggesting that those who feel more in control of their environment and believe that hard work will be rewarded are more likely to feel positive about work and empowerment, as proposed in the literature.

This review of the questionnaire results will now address the perceived characteristics of empowerment in BT and The Benefits Agency. Direct relationships of the above variables on these characteristics will be explored in Section Two.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EMPOWERMENT

Definitions of Empowerment

Respondents were asked to give three words which described their understanding of empowerment. Table 17 shows the five most popular terms which respondents gave in each organization. Conjunctions such as "of" and "with" are not included.

TABLE 17: Frequency of Five Most Popular Words Given in Definition

The Benefits Agency n = 200		BT n = 87	
Responsible/ Responsibility	28%	Responsible/ Responsibility	20.7%
Decision	18%	Authority/ Authorize	19.5%
Authority/ Authorize	15.5%	Decision	11.5%
Control	9.5%	Delegate/ Delegation	10.3%
Power	8.5%	Freedom Permit	8.04% 8.04%

Table 17 shows that respondents from the two organizations define empowerment in very similar ways, using terms such as "Responsibility", "Decision" and "Authorize". Hence, it seems that despite the different ways in which the empowerment initiative has been introduced in the two organizations, definitions of empowerment remain relatively stable across both organizations. However, whilst 8.5% of Benefits Agency respondents defined empowerment in terms of "power", the same term was not amongst the most popular words in BT, who instead concentrated their definitions on issues such as enablement and freedom.

Two respondents defined empowerment in a contrary way to both the dictionary definition and all other respondents, for example one of them defined empowerment as, *"Being made to feel inferior, intentionally or unintentionally, small, unimportant"*. Whilst this may be perceived as sarcasm, all other responses seemed to suggest that this respondent defined empowerment differently. It was felt that these two questionnaires may contaminate the results and so they were excluded. Whilst it is accepted that this is necessarily a subjective decision and that excluding outlying data denies the fact that some of the population will define empowerment "wrongly", it was felt that the very small proportion of the sample that this accounted for, would not affect the validity of the results.

Feelings Of Empowerment

This section will consist of three parts: commitment to empowerment, empowering activities and important factors of empowerment. The first part looks at the commitment of respondents to empowerment and their perceptions of management commitment. In Table 18, below, the mean and standard deviation of the items for each organization are shown as are the results of t-tests which were conducted to see whether the organizations differed significantly on these items. Where further differences were found between the two operating units of each organization these will be noted in the text which follows.

TABLE 18 : Feelings Of Empowerment By Organization

COMMITMENT TO EMPOWERMENT	THE BENEFITS AGENCY			BT			T-TEST		
	n	Mean	sd	n	Mean	sd	t	df	p
"Good Thing"	225	2.48	0.88	96	2.21	0.79	2.66	319	0.008
'...for a better life'	.	.	.	103	3.05	0.99	.	.	.
Immediate Boss Commitment	233	3.47	0.78	104	3.44	0.81	0.32	335	0.75
Boss's Boss Commitment	233	3.54	0.91	104	3.34	0.90	1.87	335	0.062
Managing Director Commitment	229	3.43	0.88	104	3.41	0.89	0.14	331	0.890
Matched Interpretations	231	3.08	0.91	103	3.19	0.83	-1.06	332	0.288
Feel Empowered	233	3.13	0.95	104	3.12	0.95	0.12	335	0.905
Not interested in Empowerment	233	2.58	0.99	103	2.68	0.97	-0.86	334	0.390

It can be seen from Table 18, above, that in general, respondents were likely to give relatively similar answers to the questions regarding empowerment. Only approximately 19% (18% in The Benefits Agency and 19.4% in BT) of respondents in both organizations are not interested in being empowered, with about 40% of respondents in each case feeling that they are empowered. Although this was slightly higher for BT (42.3% agreed or strongly agreed) than for The Benefits Agency (40.8% agreed or strongly agreed), those who feel empowered are still in the minority in both organizations. Over half of BT respondents who expressed an opinion feel that *'...for a better life'* is about empowerment (54.9%). The only significant difference between the two organizations as regards feelings about empowerment is whether or not respondents see empowerment as a good thing. This was coded as 1-strongly agree to 6- strongly disagree so a lower mean indicates a more positive response. Respondents from BT are more likely than those in The Benefits Agency to regard empowerment as a good thing. Whereas 55.6% of Benefits Agency respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that empowerment was a 'good thing', the respective percentage for BT respondents was 76.1%. Similarly in BT, a significant difference emerged between those in Marketing and Payphones regarding the belief that empowerment was a "good thing", with respondents in Marketing significantly more likely than those in Payphones to consider empowerment to be a "good thing" ($t = -2.89$, $df = 94$, $p < 0.005$).

Interestingly, in The Benefits Agency, respondents did not differ between regions on their attitudes to empowerment but those in North Leicestershire are significantly more likely than their Preston colleagues to believe that their boss's boss ($t = 2.07$, $df = 231$, $p < 0.05$) and their Managing Director ($t = 3.30$, $df = 227$, $p < 0.001$) are committed to empowerment. This suggests, therefore, that Preston employees are more cynical about the commitment of senior management to the empowerment initiative. Moreover, despite both Directorates having similar views about the commitment of their immediate boss and their boss's boss, Marketing respondents are significantly more likely to believe that the Managing Director is committed to empowerment ($t = 2.13$, $df = 102$, $p < 0.05$). It is worth noting here that 47.5% of Payphones respondents "neither agreed nor disagreed" with the statement about the

commitment of their Managing Director, indicating that they may simply not know the answer.

The second part of this section looks at the empowering capabilities of participative techniques in the abstract and in practice. The differences between organizations in terms of participation in these various activities is discussed earlier in this chapter. Tables 19 and 20, below, show the mean given by respondents on a scale of 1 - strongly disagree to 5 - strongly agree as to whether they found, or if they had not taken part in them, whether they believed they would find, these activities contributed to their empowerment. In this sense, they consider individuals' perceptions of the empowering capabilities of these various activities in the abstract (by those who do not take part) and in reality (by those who take part). T-tests were performed for each organization to see if the belief that respondents found these activities empowering differed with regard to whether or not they had participated in them. Significant differences are discussed in the text which follows.

TABLE 19 : Empowering Capabilities of Participative Techniques in the Abstract and in Reality - The Benefits Agency

PARTICIPATIVE TECHNIQUES	TOOK PART			DID NOT TAKE PART		
	n	M	sd	n	M	sd
Regular Team Briefings	214	3.80	0.71	19	3.79	0.42
Quality Improvement Teams	116	3.63	0.79	113	3.27	0.87
Suggestion Schemes	123	3.52	0.83	51	3.43	0.90
Personal Action/ Development Plan	119	3.65	0.79	111	3.26	0.94
Peer Group Meetings	117	3.63	0.75	115	3.37	0.81
Training & Development	199	3.78	0.82	31	3.65	0.75
Multi -skilling	47	3.83	0.82	175	3.38	0.86
Performance Related Pay	147	2.94	1.18	81	3.19	1.13

TABLE 20 : Empowering Capabilities of Participative Techniques in the Abstract and in Reality - BT

PARTICIPATIVE TECHNIQUES	TOOK PART			DID NOT TAKE PART		
	n	M	sd	n	M	sd
Regular Team Briefings	101	3.55	0.90	2	4.50	0.71
Quality Improvement Teams	62	3.44	0.92	42	3.33	0.90
Suggestion Schemes	51	3.43	0.90	50	3.38	0.95
Personal Action/ Development Plan	80	3.78	0.80	23	3.30	1.11
Peer Group Meetings	36	3.31	0.79	65	3.15	0.83
Training & Development	88	3.69	0.81	15	3.80	1.01
Multi -skilling	49	3.59	0.86	53	3.49	0.87
Performance Related Pay	5	3.60	0.55	96	2.93	1.14

Regular Team Briefings

In The Benefits Agency, 91.9% of respondents take part in regular team briefings, whilst 78.6% find team briefings empowering (those who "agreed" or "strongly agreed"). There was no difference between those who had taken part in these briefings and those who had not in terms of whether or not they were considered "empowering". In BT a similar relationship was found with 98.1% taking part and 66.1% finding them empowering, but no significant difference existing between those who had or had not taken part. This unsignificant result is not surprising, however, due to the fact that only 2 employees did not take part in these team briefings. As regards the difference between the two organizations, however, there was a significant difference, with Benefits Agency respondents being more likely to consider regular team briefings empowering than BT respondents ($t = 2.51$, $df = 334$, $p < 0.05$).

Quality Improvement Teams

In The Benefits Agency, 50.2% of respondents take part in Quality Improvement Teams with 55.7% finding them empowering. Those who have taken part in such teams (Mean = 3.63) were significantly more likely than those who have not (Mean = 3.27) to find such teams empowering in The Benefits Agency ($t = 3.24$, $df = 227$, $p < 0.005$). In BT, 59.8% of respondents have taken part in quality improvement teams and 54.8% reported that they find these teams empowering, this did not differ in regard to whether or not respondents had taken part. Moreover, there were no differences between The Benefits Agency and BT as to how "empowering" these teams are perceived to be. However, the fact that in BT more people take part in Quality Improvement Teams than find them empowering whilst the reverse is the case in The Benefits Agency may be explained by the arguably disparate nature and meaning of teamworking for manual and clerical staff.

Suggestion Schemes

In The Benefits Agency, 53.2% of respondents take part in suggestion schemes and 57.3% find them empowering. There is no significant difference regarding perceived empowerability on the basis of participation in these schemes. In BT 50.9% of respondents take part in these activities and 54.9% feel that they contributed to their

empowerment. This again did not differ according to participation, nor did perceptions of empowerability differ between the two organizations.

Personal Action / Development Plan

In The Benefits Agency, 51.1% of respondents have a Personal Action Plan with 58.7% considering that they contribute to their empowerment. Those who have a Personal Action Plan (Mean = 3.65) are significantly more likely than those who do not (Mean = 3.26) to believe that they contribute to their empowerment in this organization. In BT, 76.6% of respondents have a Personal Action Plan but only 69% find these empowering, as in the Benefits Agency those who have an Action Plan (Mean = 3.78) are significantly more likely to find them empowering than those who have not had one (Mean = 3.30) ($t = 2.28$, $df = 101$, $p < 0.05$). There was not a significance difference between the organizations as to whether these plans were considered empowering, although there was a difference between the Benefits Agency regions with those in North Leicestershire (Mean = 3.62) significantly more likely than their Preston colleagues (Mean = 3.36) to consider such plans empowering ($t = 2.18$, $df = 230$, $p < 0.05$).

Peer Group Meetings

In The Benefits Agency, 50.2% of respondents take part in peer group meetings whilst 56.2% consider them to contribute to their empowerment. Respondents who have taken part in these meetings (Mean = 3.63) were significantly more likely than those who have not (Mean = 3.37) to believe that they contribute to their empowerment ($t = 2.61$, $df = 230$, $p < 0.01$). In BT, 35.5% of respondents take part in these meetings and 35.9% believe that they contribute to their empowerment, but this was not significantly different between those who take part and those who do not. Overall, Benefits Agency respondents were significantly more likely to believe that peer group meetings contribute to their empowerment ($t = 3.17$, $df = 334$, $p < 0.005$). Moreover within BT, respondents in Marketing (Mean = 3.41) are more likely than those in Payphones (Mean = 3.05) to consider Peer Group Meetings empowering ($t = 2.27$, $df = 101$, $p < 0.05$).

Training and Development

In The Benefits Agency, 86.3% take part in training and development whilst 72.7% feel that this contributes to their empowerment, although this does not differ in regard to participation. In BT, 85.8% of respondents take part in training whilst 73.7% find it empowering. Again, this did not differ significantly according to whether respondents were reporting in the abstract or not. The two organizations did not differ significantly in their belief that training contributes to their empowerment.

Multi - Skilling

In The Benefits Agency, 20.3% of respondents take part in multi-skilling and 51.3% stated that they believe multi-skilling contributes to their empowerment. Those who have taken part in multi-skilling (Mean = 3.83) are significantly more likely to consider it empowering than those who were answering this question in the abstract (Mean = 3.38) ($t = 3.23$, $df = 220$, $p < 0.005$). In BT, 46.7% of respondents take part in multi-skilling and 57.8% find it empowering. This does not differ according to whether or not the respondents had taken part or between organizations but it does differ between BT Directorate. Marketing respondents (Mean = 3.74) are significantly more likely to consider multi-skilling as contributing to their empowerment than their Payphone colleagues (Mean = 3.39) ($t = 2.08$, $df = 100$, $p < 0.05$). This difference may indicate that Payphone and Marketing staff have different interpretations of multi-skilling. Indeed, it is unlikely that multi-skilling in an administrative function such as Marketing would resemble multi-skilling in a semi-skilled engineering directorate.

Performance Related Pay

In The Benefits Agency, 65.2% of respondents receive Performance Related Pay, whilst 40% find it empowering. There was no significant difference between those who did receive this form of remuneration and those who did not in their perceptions of whether it contributes to their empowerment. In BT, only 4.7% of respondents receive Performance Related Pay with 29.7% considering it to be empowering. Whilst there were no significant differences in relation to participation or organization, Tables 19 and 20 do suggest that there is a pattern regarding Performance Related Pay in the two organizations. In The Benefits Agency it seems that those who receive PRP

find it less empowering than those who do not, whilst the reverse is true in BT where those who do not receive this form of remuneration are less likely to perceive it as empowering. Hence, this suggests that, in The Benefits Agency, respondents consider the reality of PRP to work against empowerment yet the opposite appears to be true in BT.

Ranking Of Factors

Respondents were asked to allocate rankings to a given list of 5 factors plus an "other" category, ranking the factors from 1-most important to 6-least important in terms of their perceived influence on empowerment. In the "other" category they were asked to specify, if relevant, what other factors they considered important. The results of these rankings for the two organizations are shown in Table 21 and Table 22, below. Due to the fact that some people gave factors the same ranking, the columns do not always add up to 100%.

From Tables 21 and 22, it can be seen that respondents from both organizations were most likely to rank their own personality as most salient to whether or not they could be empowered. However, whereas in The Benefits Agency, senior management attitudes were ranked as second most important, in BT, it was line managers. This suggests that line managers are considered more salient in BT than in The Benefits Agency, indeed, 93% of BT respondents ranked "line management attitudes" as one of the three most important factors compared to 87.5% of Benefits Agency respondents. Those who ranked "other" as the most important factor (n = 6) specified the following factors: "level of red tape" (BA, Preston); "trade union recognition" (BA, Preston); "treasury driven cutbacks" (BA, Preston); "teamwork" (BT, Marketing); "freedom" (BT. Payphones). One respondent who ranked "other" as most important did not specify what he felt this was.

TABLE 21 : Ranking of Factors By Organization: The Benefits Agency

	THE BENEFITS AGENCY Ranking of Factors from 1 -most important to 6 -least important					
	% 1	% 2	% 3	% 4	% 5	% 6
Own Personality	37.3	20.3	20.3	12.4	7.4	2.3
Senior Management Attitudes	33.2	10.1	20.3	19.8	15.2	1.4
Line Management Attitudes	22.7	38.4	26.4	8.8	2.3	1.4
Own Work	19.1	19.5	25.1	19.1	14.9	2.3
'...for a better life' /Strand 2 training	4.7	9.0	16.6	23.2	42.7	3.8

TABLE 22 : Ranking of Factors By Organization: BT

	BT Ranking of Factors from 1 -most important to 6 -least important					
	% 1	% 2	% 3	% 4	% 5	% 6
Own Personality	41	14	24	16	3	2
Line Management Attitudes	34	39	20	2	3	2
Senior Management Attitudes	31	16	14	23	11	5
Own Work	21	25	31	17	3	3
'...for a better life' /Strand 2 training	5.1	8.1	9.1	11.1	43.4	23.2

Conclusion Of Characteristics Of Empowerment

Overall, respondents from the two organizations displayed similar attitudes to empowerment with similar proportions in each case being disinterested in empowerment and believing that they are empowered. However, Benefits Agency respondents are less likely than their BT counterparts to believe that empowerment is a "good thing", and those in Payphones are less likely than those in Marketing to believe this to be the case. Perceived commitment to empowerment by management

did not differ between the two organizations but there were differences found within the operating units themselves, suggesting that management commitment varies between localities. As regards the various participative activities which respondents undertake, generally those who have taken part in such activities are more likely to find them empowering than those who have not. This suggests that generally, employee involvement-type techniques were having a positive effect on empowerment, with Team Briefings and Training and Development being perceived as the most empowering activities in The Benefits Agency and Training and Development and Personal Action Plans being considered most empowering in BT. In both organizations, Performance Related Pay was considered the least empowering involvement technique. However, perceptions of empowerability differed between the organizations with those in The Benefits Agency more likely to find activities such as Peer Group Meetings and Team Briefings more empowering than those in BT. This might further reflect Benefits Agency employees' greater team orientation. The implications of these findings and their linkage to the qualitative data will be discussed further in Chapter Nine.

Overall, then, the first half of this results section has mirrored the qualitative data in describing two very different organizations with different gender compositions, attitudes to work, and levels of job security. Yet, despite this those aspects of individuals' personalities which were assessed did not appear to differ much between the two organizations and, except for issues of freedom and bureaucracy, the characteristics of the organization were also remarkably similar. This might suggest, then, that the few differences between attitudes to empowerment are determined by the similarity between some of their factors. However, this would negate the possible effects of the very different orientations to work which these employees are seen to have. Additionally, the various predictors of empowerment for the two organizations may differ substantially. It is to a consideration of these factors that this Chapter now turns.

SECTION TWO: Predicting Feelings of Empowerment

INTRODUCTION

The first part of this section will consider the direct effects of the different independent variables on empowerment. This will be done through the use of the Means test for categorical variables and Pearson Product Moment Correlations for interval data. However the literature, which was discussed earlier in this thesis, suggested that an individual's orientations to work may have an effect on the relationship between organizational reality and feelings of empowerment. That is, some individuals may place more importance than others on certain characteristics of the organization to determine whether or not they feel empowered. Hence, in this section, correlations were conducted according to various biographical characteristics and were tested for significant differences. Relatively few statistical differences were found but those differences which were found are discussed below. In essence, these tests sought to test for the effects of independent variables on the relationship between organizational characteristics and the dependent variables. Because these issues are concerned with aspects of the individual, the statistics were conducted on the whole sample. However, by considering the differences between the sub-samples which were presented in the previous section, the possible effects of relationships for the two organizations can be ascertained.

Finally, regression analyses were conducted for the whole sample and by organization in order to identify the major predictors of the dependent variables: "I consider myself to be empowered"; "I am not really interested in being empowered"; and whether or not the respondents consider empowerment to be a 'good thing'.

IDENTIFYING INDEPENDENT VARIABLES FOR ANALYSIS

Prior to the regression analyses a series of Means tests, 'pilot regressions', and correlations were computed in an attempt to reduce the number of independent variables which needed to be included in the analysis by excluding those items which appeared to have little effect on the dependent variables. The identification of those variables which do have an effect, however, is interesting in itself as it suggests

which, of the many variables included in the questionnaire, are most directly related to feelings of empowerment. Pearson Product Moment Correlations and Means tests were conducted with cases excluded pairwise (as too many cases were lost if the regressions were conducted listwise) and, from this, the following independent variables (with the abbreviations to be used in this section in brackets) were included:

Biographical Characteristics

The SPSS Means procedure allows analysis of data when the dependent variables are interval and the independent variables are categorical. The dependent variable is broken down in terms of the independent variable and the mean and standard deviation for each subgroup of the independent variable are calculated. This allows the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variables to be examined. Results from these tests run for all the categorical variables in Section One of the questionnaire and from the Pearson Product Moment Correlations conducted on the interval variables such as age, found that the following variables were found to be related to the dependent variables.

It was proposed in the literature which was reviewed in Chapter Four suggested that more educated people will tend to be more positive about initiatives such as empowerment as they place more importance on how interesting and challenging their work is. Indeed, in this study, educational qualifications appear to be important to feelings of empowerment with the dependent variables varying by the possession of GCSEs/ O-levels, the attainment of a Degree, and a Higher Degree. But, whilst the possession of GCSEs or O-levels appears to predict that a person is more likely to feel empowered ($F = 4.05$, $df = 1,335$, $p < 0.05$), the possession of a degree is likely to have the opposite effect ($F = 4.60$, $df = 1,335$, $p < 0.05$). A similar finding emerged in the previous section in relation to the fact that those who had a degree were less likely to evaluate their organization positively. This suggests that, despite higher levels of education correlating with the belief that empowerment is a "good thing" (as demonstrated by the fact that those with a higher degree were more likely to think that empowerment was a "good thing" $F = 6.80$, $df = 1,319$, $p < 0.01$), this does not necessarily translate into feelings of empowerment. Perhaps, those who are more

educated expect more from empowerment than their organizations are presently offering.

Additionally membership of a trade union appears to be related to feelings of empowerment. Again, this was expected in Chapter Four which suggested that those who are members of specific groups will shape their attributions accordingly. The Means procedure found that the belief that empowerment is a "good thing" varies with Trade Union membership with members being less likely to think empowerment is a good thing ($F = 4.60$, $df = 1,318$, $p < 0.05$), and also that interest in empowerment varies with Union membership with members of a trade union being more likely to be disinterested in empowerment ($F = 6.78$, $df = 1,333$, $p < 0.01$). This seems to confirm this relationship as the documentation provided in Chapter Six suggested that the unions are sceptical about the reality of empowerment programmes. The final relationship between the dependent variables and the biographical data suggests that those who have previously been exposed to similar initiatives appear more likely to consider themselves to be empowered ($F = 3.89$, $df = 1,328$, $p < 0.05$). Interestingly, however, those biographical statistics which are not related to work or education (eg dependents, earner, age) do not appear to hold any direct relationship to the dependent variables.

Personality Characteristics

From Table 23, below, it can be seen that all of the personality variables correlate with at least one of the dependent variables, with the exception of the derived factor of Autonomy /Independence. The derived factors of Challenge and Hard Work; the n(Achievement) scale; and the importance of freedom are negatively correlated with the dependent variable - "I am not really interested in being empowered" and positively correlated with the other two. The reverse is true for Avoidance of Responsibility. Hence, it seems that those who enjoy challenge, do not avoid responsibility and have a high need for achievement were more likely to feel empowered, less likely to be disinterested and more likely to think empowerment is a 'good thing', as might have been expected. Locus of Control and Individualism both correlate positively with the dependent variable, "I am not really interested in being

empowered" and negatively with the other two dependent variables. This reflects their relationship with organizational characteristics which was discussed in the previous section. The reverse is true for Team Orientation, indicating that empowerment will be perceived most positively by those with a collectivist attitude, an internal locus of control and a strong team orientation. Need for Autonomy has a positive correlation with the variable "I am really not interested in being empowered", again this reflects such respondents' negative evaluations of the organization.

TABLE 23: The Relationship Between Particular Personality Characteristics and The Dependent Variables

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	Consider self to be empowered	Not really interested in being empowered	Empowerment is a "good thing"
Desire for Challenge and Hard Work	0.038	-0.221**	0.219**
Avoidance of Responsibility	-0.153**	0.297**	-0.139*
Team Orientation	0.046	-0.169**	0.090
Locus of Control	-0.300**	0.232**	-0.256**
Individualism	-0.185**	0.221**	-0.109
n(Achievement)	0.117*	-0.243**	0.238**
n(Autonomy)	0.000	0.124*	-0.032
Importance of Freedom	0.086	-0.181**	0.257**
KEY			
* significant at 0.05; ** significant at 0.01			

Characteristics of Organization and Management

Except for immediate supervisor's gender, which was evaluated using the Means procedure, all the organizational characteristics correlated with at least one of the dependent variables. As one would have expected in the literature, it appears that perceptions of the organization as providing freedom and autonomy; customer and staff care; vision and direction; power, security and morale; and 'positive' management behaviour correlate positively with the feeling that one is empowered, negatively with disinterest in empowerment and positively with 'good thing'. The reverse is true for Powerlessness and bureaucracy. Hence, Table 24 shows that organizations with these characteristics are more likely to contain employees who feel positively about empowerment.

TABLE 24: The Relationship Between Particular Organizational Characteristics and The Dependent Variables.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	Consider self to be empowered	Not really interested in being empowered	Empowerment is a "good thing"
Freedom and Autonomy	0.404**	-0.163**	0.181**
Customer and Staff Care	0.318**	-0.121**	0.233**
Power, Security and Morale	0.368**	-0.069	0.145**
Bureaucracy	-0.247**	0.102	-0.106
Vision and Direction	0.336**	-0.154**	0.238**
Powerlessness	-0.366**	0.073	-0.133*
'Positive' Manager's Behaviour	0.375**	-0.107*	0.179**
KEY * significant at 0.05; ** significant at 0.01			

TABLE 25: Correlations of the Dependent Variables with other Independent and Dependent Variables

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES	Consider self to be empowered	Not really interested in being empowered	Empowerment is a "good thing"
Consider self to be empowered	.	-0.181**	0.257**
Not really interested in being empowered	-0.181**	.	-0.322**
Empowerment is a "good thing"	0.257**	-0.322**	.
Commitment of Immediate Boss	0.444**	-0.096	0.115*
Commitment of Boss's boss	0.329**	-0.060	-0.008
Commitment of Managing Director	0.275**	-0.071	-0.012
Matched Understanding	0.444**	-0.10	0.102
KEY * significant at 0.05; ** significant at 0.01			

Feelings Of Empowerment

The initial analysis also considered the extent to which manager's commitment to empowerment and matched interpretations correlated with empowerment and how the dependent variables correlated with each other. Table 25 shows that the three dependent variables all significantly correlate with each other in the directions that one would expect. It also shows that the commitment of management and matched interpretations positively correlate with the belief that one is empowered but show no significant correlations with the variable "disinterest in empowerment" and only one variable shows a positive significant correlation with 'good thing' - the commitment

of line management. This latter correlation implies that if workers perceive their immediate managers as being committed to empowerment, they are more likely to think empowerment is a 'good thing'. Yet, overall it seems that whilst managers' commitment to empowerment seems to influence whether employees consider themselves empowered, it does not affect their evaluations of the programme.

For those in BT, correlations of the dependent variables with "I believe *'...for a better life'* is about empowerment" (FABL) were conducted, and are shown in Table 26. The sample size for these correlations is 103. Table 26 shows that the *'...for a better life'* variable correlates positively with the feeling that one is empowered and negatively with interest in empowerment.

TABLE 26: Correlations of 'better life' variable with the dependent variables

INDEPENDENT VARIABLE	Consider self to be empowered	Not really interested in being empowered	Empowerment is a "good thing"
I believe *'...for a better life'* is about empowerment	0.431**	-0.216*	0.072
KEY * significant at 0.05; ** significant at 0.01			

Participative Techniques

The Means procedure was performed to determine whether taking part in any of the participative techniques correlated with the dependent variables. As discussed in the previous section, it was proposed that often other involvement techniques which are not necessarily part of an organization's empowerment programme, may lead to feelings of empowerment amongst employees. With the exception of Performance Related Pay and Team Briefings, all of the participative techniques included in the questionnaire were found to be related to at least one of the dependent variables. The belief that one was empowered was seen to increase by participation in Quality Improvement Teams ($F = 9.36$, $df = 1,334$, $p < 0.005$); Multi-skilling ($F = 4.87$, $df = 1,331$, $p < 0.05$); Personal Action Plans (F ratio = 5.74, $df = 1,332$, $p < 0.05$); Peer Group Meetings ($F = 7.03$, $df = 1,332$, $p < 0.01$); and Suggestion Schemes ($F = 6.00$, $df = 1,332$, $p < 0.05$). Moreover participation in Training and Development ($F = 4.18$, $df = 1,332$, $p < 0.05$) and Peer Group Meetings were revealed to reduce disinterest in

empowerment ($F = 13.10$, $df = 1,331$, $p < 0.005$). Finally the belief that empowerment is a "good thing" was seen to vary with the development of a Personal Action Plan ($F = 7.93$, $df = 1,317$, $p < 0.005$). Those who had such plans were found to be more likely to consider empowerment to be a "good thing". One might consider here the possible causal order of these correlations. It is suggested that, because such activities are, in general, imposed on the staff, it is unlikely that the correlation represents a relationship such that that those who feel empowered are more likely to take part in these activities. Instead, it seems more likely that there is something about these activities which make people feel more positively towards empowerment or, indeed, make them feel empowered.

However, although correlations were found between the dependent variables and the extent to which these techniques were perceived as contributing to their empowerment, these variables, and the ranking variables were excluded from the multiple regressions. This is because such variables are, in effect, respondent's guesses of the output of the regression models and, as such, they would interfere with the results. Overall, then, 26 independent variables were included in the multiple regressions (27 in BT with the inclusion of FABL). However, due to the low reliabilities obtained for two of the factors from the "Propensity to be empowered scale": Avoidance of Responsibility and Team Orientation; and for the factor Bureaucracy from the "Organizational Culture and Climate scale" these variables were not included in the regressions. Nor was the scale Powerlessness included due to its high correlation with the factor Power, Security and Morale and the danger of multicollinearity. Hence those independent variables which were included were: GCSEs/ O-levels; Degree; Higher Degree; Trade Union membership, Previous Exposure to Empowerment; Desire for Challenge and Hard Work, Individualism; Locus of Control; n(Achievement); n (Autonomy), Importance of Freedom; Freedom and Autonomy; Customer and Staff Care; Power, Security and Morale; Vision and Direction, 'Positive' Management Behaviour; Commitment of Immediate Boss, Commitment of Boss's Boss; Commitment of Managing Director; Matched Understanding of Empowerment; and participation in Quality Improvement Teams,

Multi-Skilling, Personal Action Plans, Peer Group Meetings, Suggestion Schemes and Training and Development.

THE EFFECT OF THE INDIVIDUAL

The literature presented in Chapter Four suggested that biographical characteristics will affect the way in which individuals perceive their organization and this relationship was tested for in Part One of this Chapter. However, the literature also proposed that the importance which employees place on various aspects of their job (e.g. freedom and autonomy, security) will differ according to their orientation to work. The following section considers whether the correlation between perceived organizational reality and attitudes to empowerment differs according to characteristics such as gender, job insecurity, and trade union membership. For instance one might suggest on the basis of the literature that those respondents who are sole earners and, hence, the "breadwinners" in their family are unlikely to feel empowered unless they perceive that their organization offers them a level of job security. Correlations between two independent samples were tested for significant differences using the z-test (Ferguson, 1981). Where sample sizes for some variables were considered too small for reliable analysis, these were excluded. Moreover, due to some missing answers, sample sizes varied for each of the organizational characteristic variables, however these only tended to vary marginally.

Firstly, it can be seen from Table 27 that men are significantly more likely to associate a lack of Customer and Staff Care ($z = -2.73$, $p < 0.01$) and Power, Security and Morale ($z = -3.28$, $p < 0.01$) with disinterest in empowerment than women. The fact that, as discussed in Section One, men are more likely than women to perceive their organization as not offering Customer and Staff Care suggests that organizations must attempt to alter this perception in men by encouraging them to train and learn and by clearly communicating the organizational values to them as well as encouraging teamwork amongst male staff if disinterest in empowerment is to be prevented. Indeed, it may be proposed that the fact that men tend to be the main breadwinners in their families and are more likely to have dependents at home,

creates in them a more instrumental attitude to work where empowerment is of little interest to them unless it offers security and staff care.

However, as can be seen below, there was no similar relationship found for sole or main earners and respondents with dependents were significantly more likely to associate bureaucracy ($z = 3.33$, $p < 0.01$) and a lack of freedom and autonomy ($z = -2.27$, $p < 0.05$) with disinterest in empowerment than those without dependents. This suggests that respondents who have dependents at home are, contrary to the literature discussed in Chapter Four, likely to have a less instrumental orientation to work, placing more importance on issues of freedom and the opportunity to get one's work done without restriction than on job security or staff care. Indeed, this seems to contradict the assertion above that men are more likely to be instrumental in their attitudes because of their "breadwinning" role and suggests that the difference between men and women may be due to other circumstances or may merely be due to intrinsic differences between men and women in their perceptions of empowerment and orientations to work. Moreover, the fact that Trade Union membership, which was found in the previous section to be considerably higher for men than women, did not reveal significant differences between these associations suggests that this factor too must be discounted as contributing to this relationship.

Tables 30 show that whilst there were no significant differences between the correlations for sole, main and joint earners, those respondents who live with their parents were more likely to associate bureaucracy ($z = 2.10$, $p < 0.05$), a lack of power, security and morale ($z = 2.16$, $p < 0.05$) and freedom and autonomy ($z = 2.50$, $p < 0.05$) with disinterest in empowerment than those who live elsewhere. This seems to imply that those who live with their parents are able to place more emphasis on the power and freedom they are allowed at work due to the fewer financial pressures placed upon them. The young age of those who live with their parents (Mean Age = 23.26 years) may also suggest that they are more ambitious and will only be interested in empowerment if it offers them the freedom they believe they need to succeed.

TABLE 27 : Correlations Between Organizational Characteristics and The Dependent Variables by Gender.

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	Men (n = 124)	Women (n = 214)	Men (n = 125)	Women (n = 211)	Men (n = 118)	Women (n = 203)
CUST	0.413**	0.232**	-0.291**	0.014	0.220*	0.240**
BUR	-0.276**	-0.217**	0.157	0.054	-0.095	-0.109
SEC	0.430**	0.325**	-0.214*	0.039	0.144	0.145*
VISN	0.357**	0.321**	-0.199*	-0.119	0.162	0.236**
FRE	0.423**	0.321**	-0.215*	-0.125	0.162	0.195**

TABLE 28 : Correlations Between Organizational Characteristics and The Dependent Variables by Possession of Dependents.

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	Dependents (n = 143)	No Dependents (n = 192)	Dependents (n = 143)	No Dependents (n = 191)	Dependents (n = 136)	No Dependents (n = 183)
CUST	0.382**	0.276**	-0.130	-0.108	0.245**	0.252**
BUR	-0.331**	-0.171*	0.295**	-0.070	-0.152	-0.066
SEC	0.365**	0.381**	-0.077	-0.063	0.111	0.184*
VISN	0.358**	0.311**	-0.240**	-0.092	0.227**	0.233**
FRE	0.335**	0.449**	-0.303**	-0.056	0.203*	0.151

TABLE 29 : Correlations Between Organizational Characteristics and The Dependent Variables by Job Status.

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	Part Time (n = 51)	Full Time (n = 286)	Part Time (n = 51)	Full Time (n = 285)	Part Time (n = 48)	Full Time (n = 273)
CUST	0.380**	0.308**	0.068	-0.150*	0.385**	0.206**
BUR	-0.203	-0.256**	0.133	0.103	-0.092	-0.115
SEC	0.276	0.384**	-0.014	-0.079	0.278	0.127*
VISN	0.318*	0.339**	-0.114	-0.160**	0.338*	0.226**
FRE	0.357*	0.413**	-0.084	-0.179**	0.382**	0.149*

KEY

* Correlation significant at the 5% level

** Correlation significant at the 1% level

Shaded Area: Significant Difference between correlations

TABLES 30 :Correlations Between Organizational Characteristics and The Dependent Variables by Earner Status.

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	Sole Earner (n = 60)	Not Sole Earner (n = 276)	Sole Earner (n = 60)	Not Sole Earner (n = 276)	Sole Earner (n = 57)	Not Sole Earner (n = 264)
CUST	0.349**	0.315**	0.041	-0.151**	0.296*	0.233**
BUR	-0.213	-0.261**	0.037	0.113	0.108	-0.146**
SEC	0.194	0.402**	-0.091	-0.066	0.061	0.160**
VISN	0.184	0.367**	-0.095	-0.164**	0.103	0.260**
FRE	0.382**	0.421**	-0.056	-0.185**	0.013	0.220**

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	Main Earner (n = 46)	*Not Main Earner (n = 291)*	*Main Earner (n = 45)*	*Not Main Earner (n = 291)*	*Main Earner (n = 44)*	*Not Main Earner (n = 277)*
CUST	0.213	0.338**	0.093	-0.157**	0.282	0.228**
BUR	-0.233	-0.256**	0.310*	0.072	-0.199	-0.094
SEC	0.182	0.392**	-0.232	-0.045	0.175	0.142*
VISN	0.383**	0.327**	-0.146	-0.154**	0.331*	0.225**
FRE	0.383*	0.407**	-0.371*	-0.128*	0.032	0.202**

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	Joint Earner (n = 166)	Not Joint Earner (n = 171)	Joint Earner (n = 166)	Not Joint Earner (n = 170)	Joint Earner (n = 157)	Not Joint Earner (n = 164)
CUST	0.389**	0.239**	-0.213**	-0.014	0.234**	0.237**
BUR	-0.303**	-0.183*	0.156*	0.044	-0.113	-0.093
SEC	0.425**	0.297**	-0.099	-0.034	0.144	0.141
VISN	0.322**	0.357**	-0.225**	-0.080	0.247**	0.237**
FRE	0.402**	0.402**	-0.227**	-0.099	0.246**	0.110

KEY: * Correlation significant at the 5% level ** Correlation significant at the 1% level Shaded Area: Significant Difference between correlations

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	Live with Parents (n = 65)	Don't Live With Parents (n = 272)	Live with Parents (n = 65)	Don't Live With Parents (n = 271)	Live with Parents (n = 63)	Don't Live With Parents (n = 258)
CUST	0.191	0.348**	-0.179	-0.114	0.194	0.251**
BUR	-0.173	-0.264**	-0.140	0.156*	-0.209	-0.083
SEC	0.462**	0.346**	0.146	-0.115	0.194	0.134*
VISN	0.464**	0.302**	-0.009	-0.188**	0.255*	0.232**
FRE	0.487**	0.387**	0.135	-0.214**	0.232	0.160*

TABLES 31 :Correlations Between Organizational Characteristics and The Dependent Variables by Educational Attainment.

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	GCSEs (n = 312)	No GCSEs (n = 25)	GCSEs (n = 311)	No GCSEs (n = 25)	GCSEs (n = 298)	No GCSEs (n = 23)
CUST	0.321**	0.274	-0.100	-0.279	0.272**	-0.110
BUR	-0.236**	-0.310	0.064	0.455*	-0.096	-0.229
SEC	0.357**	0.479*	-0.079	0.020	0.176**	-0.140
VISN	0.368**	0.127	-0.176**	0.011	0.256**	0.056
FRE	0.411**	0.386	-0.174**	-0.067	0.203**	-0.068

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	NVQ (n = 24)	No NVQ (n = 313)	NVQ (n = 24)	No NVQ (n = 312)	NVQ (n = 23)	No NVQ (n = 298)
CUST	0.181	0.320**	-0.318	-0.104	0.266	0.233**
BUR	-0.069	-0.241**	0.085	0.107	-0.298	-0.092
SEC	0.004	0.352**	-0.113	-0.066	-0.035	0.162**
VISN	0.024	0.327**	-0.054	-0.163**	0.242	0.238**
FRE	0.000	0.376**	-0.268	-0.155**	0.268	0.172**

KEY: * Correlation significant at the 5% level ** Correlation significant at the 1% level Shaded Area: Significant Difference between correlations

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	A-Levels (n = 173)	No A-Levels (n = 164)	A-Levels (n = 172)	No A-Levels (n = 164)	A-Levels (n = 167)	No A-Levels (n = 154)
CUST	0.300**	0.344**	-0.190*	-0.046	0.179*	0.290**
BUR	-0.225**	-0.271**	0.099	0.107	-0.084	-0.131
SEC	0.370**	0.367**	-0.057	-0.081	0.159*	0.130
VISN	0.362**	0.311**	-0.152*	-0.157*	0.188*	0.298**
FRE	0.404**	0.412**	-0.182*	-0.142	0.181*	0.170*

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	Degree (n = 44)	No Degree (n = 293)	Degree (n = 44)	No Degree (n = 292)	Degree (n = 40)	No Degree (n = 281)
CUST	0.461**	0.283**	-0.423**	-0.075	0.360*	0.217**
BUR	-0.285	-0.249**	0.004	0.116*	0.093	-0.136*
SEC	0.506**	0.330**	-0.065	-0.077	0.128	0.154*
VISN	0.566**	0.278**	-0.145	-0.168**	0.132	0.265**
FRE	0.558**	0.363**	-0.107	-0.182**	0.017	0.217**

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	Professional Qualification (n = 31)	No Professional Qualification (n = 306)	Professional Qualification (n = 31)	No Professional Qualification (n = 305)	Professional Qualification (n = 29)	No Professional Qualification (n = 292)
CUST	0.109	0.341**	-0.261	-0.099	0.497**	0.199**
BUR	-0.250	-0.244**	0.164	0.091	-0.122	-0.101
SEC	0.387*	0.364**	-0.197	-0.051	0.162	0.141*
VISN	0.174	0.357**	-0.334	-0.129*	0.463*	0.210**
FRE	0.490**	0.397**	-0.523**	-0.119	0.414*	0.157**

KEY: * Correlation significant at the 5% level ** Correlation significant at the 1% level Shaded Area: Significant Difference between correlations

TABLE 32 : Correlations Between Organizational Characteristics and The Dependent Variables by Previous Exposure to Empowerment.

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	Previous Exposure (n = 166)	No Previous Exposure (n = 164)	Previous Exposure (n = 166)	No Previous Exposure (n = 163)	Previous Exposure (n = 155)	No Previous Exposure (n = 159)
CUST	0.151	0.447**	-0.108	-0.127	0.224**	0.258**
BUR	-0.304**	-0.200*	0.083	0.122	-0.183*	-0.030
SEC	0.385**	0.352**	-0.081	-0.048	0.148	0.147
VISN	0.271**	0.393**	-0.146	-0.150	0.289**	0.221**
FRE	0.456**	0.372**	-0.194*	-0.118	0.258**	0.145

TABLE 33 : Correlations Between Organizational Characteristics and The Dependent Variables by Trade Union Membership.

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	TU Member (n = 183)	Non TU Member (n = 153)	TU Member (n = 182)	Non TU Member (n = 153)	TU Member (n = 174)	Non TU Member (n = 146)
CUST	0.340**	0.288**	-0.106	-0.104	0.169*	0.300**
BUR	-0.245**	-0.240**	0.139	0.027	-0.060	-0.133
SEC	0.350**	0.385**	-0.099	-0.024	0.153*	0.126
VISN	0.405**	0.254**	-0.219**	-0.058	0.268**	0.186*
FRE	0.407**	0.410**	-0.237**	-0.097	0.203**	0.176*

TABLES 34 : Correlations Between Organizational Characteristics and The Dependent Variables by Reasons for Leaving.

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	Own Decision (n = 134)	Not Own Decision (n = 203)	Own Decision (n = 133)	Not Own Decision (n = 203)	Own Decision (n = 127)	Not Own Decision (n = 194)
CUST	0.243**	0.365**	-0.233**	-0.046	0.285**	0.202**
BUR	-0.172*	-0.294**	0.024	0.145*	-0.126	-0.095
SEC	0.400**	0.346**	0.004	-0.116	0.149	0.143*
VISN	0.380**	0.308**	-0.070	-0.194**	0.224*	0.245**
FRE	0.418**	0.399**	-0.091	-0.221**	0.112	0.229**

KEY * Correlation significant at the 5% level ** Correlation significant at the 1% level Shaded Area: Significant Difference between correlations

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	Relocation (n = 20)	Not Relocation (n = 317)	Relocation (n = 20)	Not Relocation (n = 316)	Relocation (n = 19)	Not Relocation (n = 302)
CUST	-0.069	0.345**	0.303	-0.149**	0.101	0.244**
BUR	0.016	-0.269**	-0.190	0.124*	-0.047	-0.111
SEC	0.086	0.387**	0.214	-0.087	0.258	0.135*
VISN	0.061	0.356**	0.069	-0.170**	0.323	0.230**
FRE	0.246	0.414**	-0.255	-0.156**	0.405	0.165**

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	Retirement (n = 61)	Not Retirement (n = 276)	Retirement (n = 61)	Not Retirement (n = 275)	Retirement (n = 59)	Not Retirement (n = 262)
CUST	0.397**	0.303**	-0.312*	-0.078	0.243	0.231**
BUR	-0.197	-0.258**	0.213	0.076	-0.006	-0.130*
SEC	0.250	0.384**	-0.179	-0.050	-0.020	0.178**
VISN	0.318*	0.337**	-0.358**	-0.115	0.151	0.258**
FRE	0.221	0.425**	-0.209	-0.163**	0.027	0.208**

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	Redundancy (n = 62)	Not Redundancy (n = 275)	Redundancy (n = 62)	Not Redundancy (n = 274)	Redundancy (n = 59)	Not Redundancy (n = 262)
CUST	0.474**	0.270**	0.244	-0.194**	0.158	0.235**
BUR	-0.289*	-0.231**	0.159	0.082	-0.046	-0.112
SEC	0.208	0.393**	-0.021	-0.065	-0.015	0.158*
VISN	0.210	0.354**	-0.094	-0.153*	0.119	0.248**
FRE	0.390**	0.406**	-0.180	-0.155*	0.243	0.163**

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	Couldn't Say (n = 60)	Other Reason (n = 276)	Couldn't Say (n = 60)	Other Reason (n = 276)	Couldn't Say (n = 59)	Other Reason (n = 262)
CUST	0.343**	0.313**	-0.163	-0.115	0.174	0.243**
BUR	-0.499**	-0.193**	0.183	0.087	-0.236	-0.078
SEC	0.586**	0.318**	-0.247	-0.034	0.285*	0.107
VISN	0.438**	0.312**	-0.230	-0.140*	0.370**	0.209**
FRE	0.525**	0.371**	-0.265*	-0.318*	0.293*	0.154*

KEY * Correlation significant at the 5% level ** Correlation significant at the 1% level Shaded Area: Significant Difference between correlations

TABLES 35 :Correlations Between Organizational Characteristics and The Dependent Variables by Responses to "Lottery Question".

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	Paid Job (n = 150)	Not Paid Job (n = 187)	Paid Job (n = 150)	Not Paid Job (n = 186)	Paid Job (n = 144)	Not Paid Job (n = 177)
CUST	0.317**	0.296**	-0.100	-0.140	0.202*	0.246**
BUR	-0.242**	-0.238**	0.170*	0.059	-0.085	-0.111
SEC	0.361**	0.346**	-0.073	-0.063	0.219**	0.064
VISN	0.227**	0.387**	-0.083	-0.206**	0.233**	0.227**
FRE	0.415**	0.378**	-0.217**	-0.125	0.250**	0.119

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	Wouldn't Bother to Work (n = 65)	Other Option (n = 272)	Wouldn't Bother to Work (n = 65)	Other Option (n = 271)	Wouldn't Bother to Work (n = 63)	Other Option (n = 258)
CUST	0.098	0.375**	-0.096	-0.123*	0.041	0.275**
BUR	-0.224	-0.249**	-0.104	0.162**	0.051	-0.140*
SEC	0.368**	0.365**	-0.059	-0.067	0.130	0.146*
VISN	0.415**	0.312**	-0.124	-0.156*	0.127	0.259**
FRE	0.395**	0.400**	-0.077	-0.173**	0.139	0.179**

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	Voluntary Work (n = 70)	Not Voluntary Work (n = 267)	Voluntary Work (n = 69)	Not Voluntary Work (n = 267)	Voluntary Work (n = 64)	Not Voluntary Work (n = 257)
CUST	0.366**	0.300**	-0.104	-0.131*	0.384**	0.208**
BUR	-0.133	-0.273**	0.148	0.095	-0.195	-0.090
SEC	0.232	0.393**	-0.046	-0.083	0.033	0.176**
VISN	0.383**	0.317**	-0.248*	-0.136*	0.302*	0.229**
FRE	0.369**	0.422**	-0.159	-0.161**	0.208	0.173**

	Empowered		Disinterest		"Good Thing"	
	"Other" (n = 33)	Not "Other" (n = 304)	"Other" (n = 33)	Not "Other" (n = 303)	"Other" (n = 32)	Not "Other" (n = 289)
CUST	0.526**	0.292**	-0.220	-0.112	0.373**	0.214**
BUR	-0.557**	-0.207**	0.162	0.093	-0.333	-0.078
SEC	0.527**	0.350**	-0.010	-0.076	0.046	0.155**
VISN	0.541**	0.316**	-0.280	-0.147*	0.298	0.229**
FRE	0.547**	0.384**	0.029	-0.188**	-0.004	0.209*

The literature outlined in Chapter Four suggested that those respondents who are more educated place more importance on the opportunity to use their abilities and the interest and freedom which their work offers. Tables 31 show that education has little effect on the correlations between perceived organizational characteristics and feelings of empowerment. However, it can be seen that those with a degree are more likely to associate Vision and Direction within their organization with the belief that they are empowered than those without a degree ($z = 2.13$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that these respondents are more likely to feel empowered if they believe their organization has a clear vision of what needs to be done and how to achieve it and that, hence, they take a more proactive view of empowerment. However, the fact that those with a degree are less likely than those without to believe that their organization offers such vision (as discussed in the previous section) suggests that organizations are failing to exploit this association. Moreover, those with a degree are significantly more likely to associate a lack of customer and staff care with disinterest in empowerment than those without ($z = 2.25$, $p < 0.05$) suggesting that they are more likely to be interested in empowerment if it involves benefits for staff and customers alike. The only other association between organizational characteristics and feelings of empowerment with regard to education is the fact that those respondents who have a professional qualification are more likely than those who have not to associate a lack of freedom and autonomy with disinterest in empowerment ($z = 2.33$, $p < 0.05$). One explanation for this could be that those who have worked for a professional qualification are likely to be ambitious and therefore are unlikely to be interested in empowerment unless it offers them the opportunity to be creative and have control over how they do their job. Moreover, perhaps they believe that freedom and autonomy in their job would allow them to meet what they see as "professional standards" for the job rather than the organizations' narrow or "lowest comon denominator" standards.

Chapter Four dwelled on the issue of job insecurity suggesting that those who fear for their job are more likely to take a more instrumental attitude to their work, although van Vuuren et al (1991) suggested that this need not be the case if employees feel they have some control over whether or not they keep their job. Chapter Six explained

that job losses in BT and The Benefits Agency are, in the main, externally determined and that even the Unions have little power in controlling them. Hence, one might expect that those respondents who feel that they are most likely to leave their organization as a result of redundancy or relocation will be negative about empowerment unless it offers them security and staff care. Because of the expectation that this would be the case, one tailed tests were conducted on these correlations. These found that those respondents who feel that they are most likely to be made redundant are more likely to "associate"[1] customer and staff care with the belief that one is empowered ($z = 1.65$, $p < 0.05$) and yet are more likely to "associate" this factor with disinterest in being empowered ($z = 3.08$, $p < 0.01$). The fact that these respondents were significantly less likely to perceive customer and staff care in their organization than those who expected to leave for some other reason, as discussed earlier in this chapter, suggests that they believe that they could feel empowered if they received clearly communicated organizational values, were encouraged to train and learn, and perceived that their organization cares about its customers and teamworking but that they feel this is not occuring. However, this relationship between customer and staff care and empowerment does not appear to be reflected by the finding that customer and staff care is related to disinterest in empowerment, perhaps indicating that interest in empowerment and the actual feeling that one is empowered are two distinct outcomes of the empowerment process. Finally, those respondents who could not say why they would leave their organization, and who might therefore be perceived as feeling happy and secure in their jobs, were more likely to associate Power, Security and Morale ($z = 2.35$, $p < 0.05$) and a lack of Bureaucracy ($z = -2.40$, $p < 0.05$) with the belief that one is empowered than those who gave some other reason for leaving.

Regarding responses to the "lottery question", it might be suggested that those who have a more instrumental attitude to work will be more concerned with security and staff care whilst those who are intrinsically motivated to work will associate empowerment with more challenging aspects of the organization. However, what

[1] The word associate is placed in inverted commas here to indicate that the author is aware that it is not the employees who are making this explicit association but the author on the basis of significant correlations.

emerges in Tables 35 is the finding that customer and staff care is less likely to be associated with the belief that one is empowered ($z = -2.07$, $p < 0.05$) amongst those who would not bother to work if they had the choice than those who would choose some other option. One particularly interesting finding is that those who chose the "other" category were significantly more likely than those who did not to associate a lack of bureaucracy with empowerment ($z = -2.18$, $p < 0.05$). The fact that these respondents tended to specify that they wanted to set up their own companies suggests that such respondents are confident in their own abilities to succeed and, therefore, can not feel empowered unless they feel unrestricted by rules and regulations. Finally, those respondents who stated that they had been exposed to empowerment previously in their career were less likely to associate customer and staff care with the belief that they are empowered. This may suggest that previous experience has taught them that empowerment is not about this issue and is more connected to other aspects of organizational culture and climate.

Conclusion

Direct correlations between personal background and the dependent variables were restricted to educational qualifications, trade union membership and previous exposure to empowerment. Indeed, although the rationale for looking at the effect of individual characteristics on the correlations between organizational characteristics and empowerment emerged in the literature, the absence of any direct correlations increased the need to consider this relationship. However, overall it seems that, contrary to expectations created by the literature, aspects of individuals' background and orientations to work do not impact heavily on the relationship between organizational characteristics and feelings of empowerment. There were some findings regarding job insecurity, firstly those who could not say what the most likely reason would be for their leaving were more likely to associate organizational characteristics with the belief that one is empowered and, secondly a perceived lack of customer and staff care appeared to be creating disinterest amongst those staff threatened by redundancy. However, overall personal background does not appear to encroach on the relationship between perceived organizational characteristics and feelings of empowerment. Moreover, if it does, it tends to affect the relationship

between organizational characteristics and interest in empowerment rather than the actual belief that one is empowered.

MULTIPLE REGRESSION

Multiple Regression was conducted using the stepwise multiple regression programme within the SPSS for Windows package. Original computations were conducted using backward elimination as this allows interdependent variables to be accounted for. However, it was found that stepwise regression produced the same model and so it is the results of this latter computation which are shown here. Whilst the researcher notes the controversy surrounding the statistical rather than theoretical inclusion of factors in the Stepwise procedure, it was felt that the large number of independent variables in relation to the sample size made Stepwise regression more suitable for regression than entering all independent variables together. The cut-off points for selecting independent variables with the optimal predictive power were determined by assuring the overall F value for the equation was significant at the 5% level and the partial regression coefficient for individual independent variables added was at the 5% level of significance.

Original multiple regression computations were done employing both Listwise and Pairwise deletion of missing variables but it was decided to present those findings which emerged from the latter. Although the coefficient of determination was higher with the employment of Listwise deletion, it was felt that too many cases were deleted (almost one sixth of the whole sample) and due to the fact that the best representation of the sample was desired, Pairwise deletion was considered to be more suitable. The following section will present the results in Tables indicating the R^2 (the coefficient of determination) and the adjusted R^2 (R^2 adj). In addition, the Beta coefficients are included to indicate the extent and direction of the relationship. Tables are shown for the three dependent variables for the entire population, and also by sub-groups of organization. Again, for ease of comprehension, all variables are positively coded.

PREDICTING THE FEELING THAT ONE IS EMPOWERED

Table 36 shows that five variables significantly predict the feeling that one is empowered and that these variables account for 36.5% of the variance. The strongest predictor of a sense of empowerment is whether a person perceives that their understanding of empowerment matches that of their organization, which accounts for 19.5% of the variance. Other factors include whether an individual believes that their immediate manager is committed to empowerment (accounting for 9.7% of the variance), whether their organization offers opportunities for freedom and autonomy (accounting for 5.8% of the variance) and provides power, security and morale (1% of the variance). Participation in Peer Group Meetings also predicts feelings of empowerment (0.5% of the variance). Hence, overall, feelings of empowerment appear to be predicted by characteristics of the organization and management rather than personality or biographical characteristics. Although, it might be considered that matched interpretations are, to some extent, affected by these aspects of the individual and this will be discussed in Chapters Nine and Ten.

TABLE 36: Multiple Regression Analysis - Consider Self To Be Empowered (n=319)

F = 37.75 df = (5, 314) p = 0.000	R^2	R^2adj	R2 adj (change)	Standardised Beta Coefficient
Matched understanding	0.197	0.195	0.195	0.268
Commitment of immediate boss	0.297	0.292	0.097	0.262
Freedom and Autonomy	0.356	0.350	0.058	0. 198
Power, Security & Morale	0.368	0.360	0.010	0.128
Peer Group Meetings	0.375	0.365	0.005	0.089

PREDICTING LACK OF INTEREST IN BEING EMPOWERED

Table 37, below, shows that a total of five variables predict whether a person is not interested in being empowered. The variables account for 14.5% of the variance, with low need for achievement being the strongest predictor accounting for 5.6% of the variance. Other predictors include an external locus of control (3.7% of the variance), not taking part in peer group meetings (2.6% of the variance), an individualistic attitude (1.3% of the variance) and membership of a trade union (1.3% of the

variance). Overall, lack of interest in empowerment appears to be predicted by personality characteristics, participation in peer group meetings and union activities.

TABLE 37: Multiple Regression Analysis - Not interested in being Empowered (n =319)

F = 11.82 df = (5, 314) p = 0.000	R^2	R^2adj	R2 adj (change)	Standardised Beta Coefficient
n (Achievement)	0.059	0.056	0.056	-0.191
Locus of Control	0.099	0.093	0.037	0.162
Peer Group Meetings	0.127	0.119	0.026	-0.145
Individualism	0.143	0.132	0.013	0.131
TU membership	0.158	0.145	0.013	0.123

PREDICTING FEELINGS THAT EMPOWERMENT IS A 'GOOD THING'

Table 38, below, shows that seven variables predict seeing empowerment as a 'good thing' and that these account for 16.8% of the variance. The strongest predictor is an internal locus of control accounting for 6.3% of the variance. Other predictors include n(Achievement), the belief that one's organization offers vision and direction, the unimportance to an individual of freedom at work and the development of a Personal Action Plan. Overall, it would seem that thinking that empowerment is a 'good thing' is governed by various personality characteristics but also involves characteristics of the organization itself such as the commitment of one's Managing Director. One particularly interesting predictor in this model is the negative effect on thinking empowerment is a "good thing" of placing importance on features of work which allow more freedom. This may suggest that organizations are not really offering these opportunities and therefore one is more likely to think empowerment is a good thing if salience is not attached to such job features.

TABLE 38: Multiple Regression Analysis - Thinking Empowerment is a 'Good Thing' (n =309)

F = 9.92 df = (7, 302) p = 0.000	R^2	R^2adj	R2 adj (change)	Standardised Beta Coefficient
Locus of Control	0.066	0.063	0.063	-0.149
n(Achievement)	0.107	0.102	0.039	0.244
Vision and Direction	0.133	0.124	0.022	0.198
Importance of Freedom	0.148	0.137	0.013	-0.122
Personal Action Plan	0.160	0.146	0.009	0.130
TU Membership	0.175	0.158	0.012	-0.127
Commitment of Managing Director	0.187	0.168	0.010	-0.116

The Benefits Agency

Table 39, below, shows that there are 6 variables which predict feelings that one is empowered in The Benefits Agency and that these account for 42.4% of the variance. The model includes three of the variables which made up the model for the whole sample but excludes the effect of Power, Security and Morale and Peer Group Meetings. Instead, immediate managers' behaviour, locus of control and possession of GCSEs emerge as predictors. The Freedom and Autonomy which The Benefits Agency is perceived as offering is the strongest predictor in this model, accounting for 21.9% of the variance, but as in the case of the entire sample, matched understandings of empowerment is a strong predictor, accounting for 11.6% of the variance. The 'positive' behaviour of one's immediate supervisor (4% of the variance), possession of GCSEs/ O-levels (2.6% of the variance), an internal locus of control (1.5% of the variance) and the commitment of one's immediate boss to empowerment (0.8% of the variance) are also included in this model. Interestingly, whilst aspects of personality did not occur in the model of prediction for the whole sample, the inclusion of locus of control in The Benefits Agency seems to suggest that these employees need to feel in control of their work situation in order to consider themselves empowered. This, and other aspects of these models will be discussed further in Chapter Nine.

TABLE 39: Multiple Regression Analysis - Consider Self To Be Empowered (n =222)

F = 28.29 df = (6, 216) p = 0.000	R^2	R^2adj	R2 adj (change)	Standardised Beta Coefficient
Freedom and Autonomy	0.223	0.219	0.219	0.257
Matched understanding	0.341	0.335	0.116	0.263
'Positive' behaviour of immediate boss	0.384	0.375	0.040	0.163
GCSEs/ O-levels	0.412	0.401	0.026	0.166
Locus of Control	0.429	0.416	0.015	-0.147
Commitment of Immediate Boss	0.440	0.424	0.008	0.128

BT

In each of the BT multiple regressions shown below, the variable "I believe *'...for a better life'* is about empowerment" was included as a factor in the computation. However, as can be seen, it did not appear to have an effect on any of the dependent variables. In the case of predicting empowerment for those in BT, only three variables are included and these account for 34.3% of the variance (Table 40). The two most important predictors are also the two most important for the whole sample and yet, the third predictor - the belief that one's organization offers Vision and Direction - is not included in the model for the entire sample and this suggests that it is peculiar to BT's organizational context. This will be discussed in more detail later. The strongest predictor of feelings of empowerment is the commitment of one's immediate manager (23.1% of the variance). The belief that one's interpretation of empowerment is matched by one's organization is the second most important predictor, accounting for 7% of the variance, with Vision and Direction accounting for 4.2%.

TABLE 40: Multiple Regression Analysis - Consider Self To Be Empowered (n = 94)

F = 17.37 df = (3, 91) p = 0.000	R^2	R^2adj	R2 adj (change)	Standardised Beta Coefficient
Commitment of immediate boss	0.239	0.231	0.231	0.377
Matched understanding	0.316	0.301	0.070	0.241
Vision and Direction	0.364	0.343	0.042	0.231

PREDICTING LACK OF INTEREST IN BEING EMPOWERED IN ORGANIZATIONS

The Benefits Agency

Table 41 shows that 4 variables predicted lack of interest in empowerment, and that these variables accounted for 15.7% of the variance. These variables were similar to those for the entire sample, for example three of the predictors: an external locus of control, membership of a trade union and participation in peer group meetings are the same in The Benefits Agency. In the whole sample, holding individualistic attitudes predicted non-interest in empowerment, yet in The Benefits Agency it is the

personality characteristic of the desire for challenge and hard work which is more important, being negatively related to disinterest in empowerment. This may suggest that whilst overall empowerment is related to a team orientation, in The Benefits Agency, it is more associated with issues of individual hard work.

TABLE 41: Multiple Regression Analysis - Not Interested in being Empowered (n =222)

F = 11.31 df = (4, 218) p = 0.000	R^2	R^2adj	R2 adj (change)	Standardised Beta Coefficient
Desire for Challenge and Hard Work	0.068	0.064	0.064	-0.223
Peer Group Meetings	0.115	0.107	0.043	-0.201
Locus of Control	0.148	0.136	0.029	0.182
TU membership	0.172	0.157	0.021	0.154

BT

Table 42, below, shows that four factors predict lack of interest in empowerment within BT and these account for 23.1% of the variance. The strongest predictor is the belief that one's organization fails to provide Vision and Direction, accounting for 10.2% of the variance. The second strongest predictor is n(Achievement) which accounts for 4.2% of the variance, followed by participation in multi-skilling (accounting for 4.3% of the variance) and participation in Quality Improvement Teams (accounting for 4.4% of the variance). Despite the fact that n(Achievement) also emerges as a predictor for the whole sample, the BT model of prediction differs considerably from the other two models for this dependent variable, suggesting that the situation in BT is very different.

TABLE 42: Multiple Regression Analysis - Not Interested in being Empowered (n = 94)

F = 8.044 df = (4, 90) p = 0.000	R^2	R^2adj	R2 adj (change)	Standardised Beta Coefficient
Vision and Direction	0.111	0.102	0.102	-0.306
n (Achievement)	0.162	0.144	0.042	-0.221
Multi-skilling	0.213	0.187	0.043	0.287
Quality Improvement Teams	0.263	0.231	0.044	-0.237

PREDICTING FEELING EMPOWERMENT IS A 'GOOD THING' IN ORGANIZATIONS

The Benefits Agency

Tables 43 and 44 show that the prediction of feelings that empowerment is a 'good thing' produce very different models for the two organizations. In the Benefits Agency the feeling that empowerment is a 'good thing' is predicted by five factors which account for 19.3% of the variance. These predictors are similar to those for the entire sample but many have different priorities and the two most important predictors: belief that one's organization cares about staff and customers (accounting for 9.9% of the variance) and a desire for challenge and hard work (accounting for 3.6% of the variance), are not found in the model for the whole sample. A number of the variables which emerged as predictors in the entire sample, such as the importance of freedom in one's work and organizational vision and direction, did not appear in the model of The Benefits Agency.

TABLE 43 : Multiple Regression Analysis - Thinking Empowerment is a 'Good Thing' (n = 218)

F = 11.452 df = (5,213) p = 0.000	R^2	R^2adj	R2 adj (change)	Standardised Beta Coefficient
Customer and Staff Care	0.103	0.099	0.099	0.284
Desire for Challenge and Hard Work	0.143	0.135	0.036	0.200
Commitment of Managing Director	0.168	0.157	0.022	-0.166
Locus of Control	0.192	0.177	0.020	-0.170
TU Membership	0.212	0.193	0.016	-0.142

BT

Table 44 shows that the predictors in BT for the belief that empowerment is a 'good thing' are very different from both the model for the entire sample and for The Benefits Agency. Four variables predicted the dependent variable in this instance, accounting for 20.3% of the variance. Only one of the predictors of the model: n(Achievement) was present in either of the other two predictor models of this dependent variable, so it would seem, in general, these predictors are peculiar to BT.

The strongest predictor, accounting for 6.1% of the variance is a need for achievement. Second, is participation in multi-skilling which has an inverse relationship with the dependent variable, that is those who do not take part in multi-skilling are more likely to think that empowerment is a 'good thing'(7.5%). Additionally, in BT it appears that those who have previously been exposed to empowerment are more likely to think that empowerment is a 'good thing' and this accounts for 3.7% of the variance. Finally, those who believe that their organization provides Vision and Direction are also more likely to believe that empowerment is a 'good thing'.

TABLE 44 : Multiple Regression Analysis - Thinking Empowerment is a 'Good Thing' (n = 89)

F =6.671 df = (4, 85) p = 0.000	R^2	R^2adj	R2 adj (change)	Standardised Beta Coefficient
n (Achievement)	0.071	0.061	0.061	0.271
Multi-skilling	0.155	0.136	0.075	-0.302
Previous Exposure to empowerment	0.201	0.173	0.037	0.203
Vision and Direction	0.239	0.203	0.030	0.196

CONCLUSION OF PREDICTIONS BY ORGANIZATION

Table 45, below, summarizes the predictors which were found as a result of the regression analyses. It shows the direction of the relationship and, where there were additional predictors for the two organizations, these are highlighted. Given the slightly arbitary way in which variables are entered into a stepwise equation, the findings for the whole sample were compared against the raw correlations between the independent and dependent variables. This revealed that, indeed, those variables which had the strongest correlations with the dependent variables were those which emerged as the strongest predictors. Overall, there are few similarities between the two organizations as regards the models of prediction for the dependent variables. This is particularly the case for the dependent variable 'Good Thing'. What emerges as most striking about these regressions is that whilst biographical characteristics and personality attributes are unlikely to predict the belief that one is actually empowered, they play a large part in affecting attitudes towards empowerment in general. This reflects the conclusions reached in the first part of this section. It seems that whilst in

The Benefits Agency feelings of empowerment rely more heavily on factors closely related to empowerment itself such as opportunities for freedom and autonomy and the commitment of the Managing Director, customer and staff care et cetera there is more emphasis in BT on n(achievement), previous exposure, organizational Vision and Direction within the organization and taking part in participative activities. Perhaps this is related to the fact that, in The Benefits Agency, empowerment will be directly associated with the current initiative whereas, due to the fact that BT avoid using the term itself, empowerment remains more of a floating concept which respondents relate to their current working environment; previous initiatives and cultural change rather than, necessarily, directly to *'...for a better life'*. This, and other implications of these regression analyses, will be discussed in more detail in the conclusion which follows.

TABLE 45: Summary of Predictors of Feelings of Empowerment

I CONSIDER MYSELF TO BE EMPOWERED	I AM NOT REALLY INTERESTED IN BEING EMPOWERED	EMPOWERMENT IS A "GOOD THING"
Matched Understanding (+)	n(Achievement) (-)	External Locus of Control (-)
Commitment of Immediate Boss (+)	External Locus of Control (+)	n(Achievement) (+)
Freedom and Autonomy (+)	Peer Group Meetings (-)	Vision and Direction (+)
Power, Security and Morale (+)	Individualism (+)	Importance of Freedom (-)
Peer Group Meetings (+)	Trade Union Membership (+)	Personal Action Plans (+)
Positive Behaviour of Immediate Boss (BA) (+)	Desire for Challenge and Hard Work (BA) (-)	Trade Union Membership (-)
GCSEs/ O-levels (BA) (+)	Vision and Direction (BT) (-)	Commitment of Managing Director (-)
External Locus Of Control (-)	Multi-skilling (BT) (+)	Customer and Staff Care (BA) (+)
Vision and Direction (BT) (+)	Quality Improvement Teams (BT) (-)	Desire for Challenge and Hard Work (BA) (+)
		Multi-skilling (BT) (-)
		Previous Exposure (BT) (+)

CHAPTER NINE: Discussion of Results

"It could be said of me that in this book, I have only made up a bunch of other men's flowers providing of my own only the string that ties them together"

Montaigne

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study has been the evaluation of empowerment programmes within two large organizations in the United Kingdom. Overall, it aimed to identify how an individual's biographical characteristics, aspects of personality, and perceptions of the organizational culture and climate, impacted on the way in which they feel about empowerment. In doing so it considered the context within which these empowerment programmes were taking place. The following two chapters will present:

Chapter Nine: a description of the major findings - both qualitative and quantitative, based against the research questions set out in Chapter 5. In doing so it will investigate the relationship between findings gained from the triangulation of research methods, commenting briefly on their validity and reliability as compatible methods.
Chapter Ten: The implication of the findings for all modern organizations who are considering the move towards an empowered environment and a discussion of the research's contribution to wider theoretical debates on both Human Resource Management initiatives and their impact on individual employees.

In this discussion of the major findings, the existence of differences between the organizations and the operating units will be discussed within each heading. However, where no reference is made, the assumption should be that the discussion is confined to the entire sample.

What is the Nature of the Empowerment Programmes?

In both organizations, the empowerment programmes were introduced following the arrival of a new Managing Director, which the Industrial Society referred to as the

"new broom" effect (The Industrial Society, 1995). They were also both brought in during periods of 'down-sizing' with, in both cases, the real threat of future job losses. However, both the qualitative and quantitative data suggested that this job insecurity is being felt more profoundly in BT where fears of job relocation and redundancy are influencing peoples attitudes to their empowerment initiative, as will be discussed later in this chapter. In the case of The Benefits Agency, and to some extent in BT, the empowerment programmes were introduced to remove the vestiges of a civil service, "command and control" structure which had clearly characterised both organizations in the past. There was also a rhetorical claim of the two empowerment programmes to change the role of the manager to that of a coach, supporting their employees' ideas instead of controlling their work. In both cases there was evidence that managers were changing to adapt to this role. Yet, whilst in The Benefits Agency the need to change attitudes and behaviour was experiencing difficulties, in BT the managers appeared to be 'displaying' the right behaviour, but commitment was only evident at a surface level. This is likely to be due to the differences in the content of the empowerment programmes themselves. For, whilst the supposed aim of these policies was relatively similar - to get people to take more responsibility for decision making in their immediate work area - the way in which they were trying to achieve this appears to be quite different.

In The Benefits Agency, the move towards empowerment involved the devolvement of work to lower levels, particularly in North Leicestershire where devolvement of budgets was creating a real difference in the responsibilities of the workforce. Meanwhile, in BT the change was more of a cultural one, with few changes in actual structure or work patterns, yet with the publicising of empowering behaviours which employees were expected to display. Hence, in BT the change was not so much to do with the work they did, but in the way in which they did it. To a certain extent this difference in the intentions of the two empowerment programmes is reflected in the different predictors of the dependent variables. In BT issues surrounding the organization's vision and direction were considered central to feelings of empowerment. This factor involved issues such as pride in working for the organization, strength of leadership and whether or not management valued the ideas

of their staff. Some of the critical comments made by BT staff on their questionnaires implies that these issues are, indeed, associated with feelings of empowerment in their organization:

"Listen to what employees have to say" Male, Age 42

"Let the workers be heard before making important decisions - I feel that, after team briefs, comments made by engineers are lost by the time they get to top management" Male, Age 47

"The problem with companies as large as BT the little man cannot make any difference to the way the company is run. As BT is now a Plc good profits appear to be more important than people. We should all have a say in how the company is run" Male, Age 47

"A good idea in theory but the same old story in practice. If senior managers actually listened, rather than paying lip service to these schemes, most of the staff would be a great deal happier" Female, Age 49

There was little evidence that, in either case, the move towards empowerment was voluntary. Whilst both organizations acknowledged that empowerment was something that the employees had to take on for themselves, there seemed to be pressure both in terms of appraisal and fear of redundancy, that meant that essentially choice was not an issue in these organizations. Although employees usually have some choice regarding how much consent or commitment they give to these policies in reality, and the exercising of this choice was evident throughout this research.

As regards the training that accompanied this move towards empowerment, there was evidence that this was most obviously targeted at managers. The training of employees, in both cases, was dependent on either the commitment of their manager to the empowerment initiative, or to the availability of finance to fund such training. Moreover, employees tended to rank this training as low on the impact it could have on their empowerment. In The Benefits Agency the training appeared to be more prescriptive, with generally external trainers leading discussions of how and what responsibilities could be devolved to lower levels. In BT, however, the training was run internally with the emphasis on "fun" and teamwork. This emphasis on teamwork accompanying empowerment was found in both organizations, suggesting that whilst the feeling of empowerment is necessarily an individual one, the initiative is generally

introduced in a team-based atmosphere. There were also some indications from the consideration of the individual that this was the case and this will be discussed later in this chapter.

Respondents were generally most likely to take part in regular team briefings and training and development and just less than half participated in peer group meetings. The fact that 93.9% of respondents took part in regular team briefings appears to confirm that empowerment was almost always, in the two organizations studied, being introduced in to a team-based atmosphere. This was further supported by the fact that 96.8% of respondents worked as part of a team, and by the qualitative data where employees confirmed that they considered empowerment to be directed, particularly within BT, at the improved working of teams.

From the internal staff perception surveys available, it seems that employees in both organizations stated that they were relatively positive about empowerment, with generally over 70% of employees stating that their attitudes towards empowerment were positive. Yet, caution must be taken when considering results of organizations' employee attitude surveys as generally employees will treat them rather lightly and may give an inaccurate picture of reality due to a fear of being recognised by more senior staff. Generally, however, the organizations were aware that there were employees who were adapting to the empowerment culture quicker than others. It is an investigation of this, on the basis of the new research presented here, that will be discussed below.

Does Everyone in the Organization Interpret Empowerment in the Same Way?

There was evidence from both the quantitative and qualitative data that empowerment was interpreted differently across and between levels in the hierarchy, particularly in The Benefits Agency. Overall, only 36.2% of respondents believed that their understanding of empowerment matched that of their organization, where employees tended to define it in terms of responsibility, authority and decision-making. There was evidence from the qualitative data that the differing interpretations arose from the nature of the training programmes. Some employees complained that their training

was like "a game of Chinese Whispers" where interpretations of empowerment were subject to change as they passed down and across hierarchies. The failure of The Benefits Agency to provide a single definition of empowerment was also felt to exacerbate this situation. Whilst the Agency felt that a debate of the issues surrounding the definition of the term was healthy, employees were displaying confusion and resentment towards the policy due to its ambiguity and lack of direction. Additionally, a number of employees in The Benefits Agency felt that managers were just adapting the policy to suit themselves by passing down the work that they simply did not want to do. The lack of a recognised definition made it difficult for employees, who felt this way, to argue that the managers were misinterpreting empowerment.

In BT the situation was rather different, with the definition of empowerment having been adapted in some way to the *'...for a better life'* ideals. This is supported by the fact that, whilst BT did not use the word 'empowerment' to describe their policy, over half of BT respondents stated that they believed *'...for a better life'* was about 'empowerment'. Yet, clearly, this implies that nearly half of the sample believed that it was about something else. The BT respondents defined empowerment in a similar way to those in The Benefits Agency, that is in terms of "authority", "responsibility", and "decision making". However, there were some respondents in BT whose definition concentrated on such issues as enablement and freedom, mirroring the behaviours advocated by the 'better life' policy. The qualitative data did suggest that some managers believed the term 'empowerment' was inappropriate for the BT initiative as they felt *'...for a better life'* was aimed at organizational profitability not increases in employee control. Yet, even without using the term empowerment, there is evidence, that employees experienced unmatched expectations in BT, indeed the use of the phrase 'better life' caused many to be disillusioned and cynical.

Interestingly, respondents from BT were more likely than those in The Benefits Agency to think that their interpretations of empowerment matched that of their organization, and were significantly more likely to think that empowerment is a 'good thing'. It is hypothesised here, a theory that is supported somewhat by the qualitative

data, that these differences are caused by the avoidance of using the term 'empowerment' in BT. By using the term 'empowerment' within The Benefits Agency, the innate ambiguity of the term is exploited with people attaching their views and expectations of the initiative, and of their organization in general, to the term. This seems particularly true in North Leicestershire, where a number of respondents were seen to define the term as "passing the buck" and where focus groups had provided evidence that employees saw empowerment as "downgrading" and a "false consciousness". In contrast, in BT the term 'empowerment' remains somewhat of an abstract concept with many seeing it in positive terms, as the ultimate target of *'...for a better life'*, or even as something totally separate from *'...for a better life'* which has yet to be fulfilled. Instead, criticisms of the BT initiative tend to be attached to the 'better life' label rather than empowerment itself.

How do Biographical and Personality Factors Impact on the Feelings of Empowerment amongst Employees?

The quantitative data suggested that biographical and personality factors do impact on feelings of empowerment but they were mostly seen to affect attitudes towards empowerment rather than the actual feeling that one is empowered. Educational qualifications; previous exposure to empowerment; individualism and locus of control appeared to correlate directly with feelings of empowerment and to affect the correlations between organizational characteristics and empowerment. The fact that educational achievements had an effect on empowerment reflects the cognitive model of Thomas and Velthouse (1990) which suggests that competence and interpretative styles are central to the process of empowerment on an individual level. Moreover, there is also evidence that education affects orientations to work, as discussed in the literature chapters of this thesis. Indeed, more educated employees in skilled jobs are hypothesised to be more concerned with autonomy and empowerment, those who are less educated and in semi-skilled jobs who are considered to have a more instrumental orientation to work. This is borne out, to some extent, by the findings; for instance, those with GCSEs correlated positively with "I consider myself to be empowered" whilst those with degrees correlated negatively with this dependent factor. This may be related to the more non-instrumental orientation to work that those with a degree might have, and the consequent higher importance and

expectations which are placed on the empowerment policies. Related to this, may be that those with higher educational levels feel competent enough to take on more responsibility than they are being given. Indeed, comments made by Benefits Agency respondents on the questionnaire suggest that they are frustrated by the lack of recognition the more educated staff receive. Those with higher degrees were more likely to think that empowerment is a 'good thing', and this, again, is likely to be related to their less instrumental outlook on work and demands for more intrinsically satisfying aspects to their jobs. Additionally, as Miller and Prichard (1992) found, more educated respondents make more positive evaluations and envisioning of empowerment. Indeed, they may take a more philosophical view of empowerment, rather than relating it to their organizational reality.

Although the qualitative data suggests that the Trade Unions were somewhat indifferent to empowerment in the main, the quantitative results show that trade union membership had a direct effect on interest in empowerment and that trade union members were less likely to consider empowerment to be a "good thing". What is interesting here is the fact that contextual data suggests that the Trade Unions represented in these organizations had a somewhat ambivalent policy on empowerment. The fact that they welcomed policies which offered more autonomy but were sceptical about management motives may contribute to the mixed messages about empowerment which employees are receiving. It is worth considering whether employees' membership of a Trade Union affects the attributions which they make about their organization and its empowerment policy in general. Yet, the lack of evidence to suggest that trade union members differ significantly from non-members in regard to perceptions of their organization or empowerment programme suggests that this may not be true. However, the evidence of direct effects implies that attitudes to empowerment do vary according to trade union membership. Indeed, the fact that Trade Union members are more likely to be disinterested in empowerment may reflect their greater concern with pay levels and job security which are determined by negotiation with the unions. Or it may be related to a greater interest in more collective forms of participation, indeed the fact that Trade Union members are less likely to consider empowerment to be a good thing could be because of the

marginalisation of unions and collective action which employees perceive as accompanying such a policy. Trade Union members also showed a negative relationship with the dependent variable "I consider myself to be empowered". Firstly, the "left-wing" connotations which empowerment was seen as possessing in its use across other disciplines may cause trade union members to expect empowerment to bring them more equality in the workplace. The fact that empowerment does not, and arguably is not intended to, radically alter power relations within organizations, may mean that for many members, empowerment is an empty promise. Secondly, this result may be attributed to the fact that these employees treat empowerment with more cynicism than other respondents, perhaps because they regard empowerment as a management attempt to reassert control and reduce the need for more participative forms of employee involvement such as Joint Consultative Committees and Collective Bargaining.

The interviews and focus groups indicated that the effect of redundancies was affecting employees' feelings towards empowerment. Although this is not seen to have a significant impact on the dependent variables, nearly a fifth of respondents (18.1%) believed that they were most likely to leave their organization because of redundancy, with the percentages rising to nearly a third (32.8%) in Payphones. This suggests that employees are perceiving a real threat from the current climate of down-sizing. It might be surmised that the knowledge that their jobs are not safe, impacts on employees' attributional styles. Indeed, there was an indirect effect of this variable on both feelings of empowerment and disinterest in empowerment yet these occured in opposite directions with customer and staff care being positively correlated with both the belief that one was empowered and disinterest in empowerment. The employee focus groups implied that employees' present concern was with pay and job security and many comments implied that staff were reluctant to participate in empowerment for this reason. Indeed, in Payphones the respondents represented a traditional, male engineering workforce with dependents at home and considerable financial responsibility. Organizational explanations of job insecurity, such as was the case in BT and The Benefits Agency, will cause many employees to attribute their insecurity to external forces beyond their control (Klandermans et al, 1991) and hence turn to

their Trade Unions for help. The contextual data suggests that none of the Unions represented in these organizations were able to prevent the redundancies over the last few years and hence respondents are likely to revert to an avoidance strategy, which Van Vuuren et al (1991) define as "employees feel less motivated to go to work, they are less interested in their work and they are less dedicated to their work than are employees who feel less secure" (1991: 83). Hence, it would seem that if these attributions are being made by employees in this study, it will affect feelings towards empowerment in a negative way, as one BT employee stated:

"there's no way anyone can feel that their job is secure because they have a change around now and then they'll have another one and another one. So, who's to say I'll be here next year? They need to settle down and work out exactly what it is they're going to do and how many people they need. Until then, no-one's going to take "..for a better life" or anything else seriously because there's so many people being messed about"

The impact of feelings of job insecurity is further suggested due to the fact that in both organizations, respondents tended to show an "external" locus of control. This was particularly the case in the North Leicestershire District of The Benefits Agency as might be expected due to its state of flux and its status as part of a civil service executive agency.

Of all the aspects of personality which were considered, it was Locus of Control and Individualism which emerged as having the most effect on perceptions of organizational reality and feelings of empowerment for this sample of respondents. That those respondents who displayed an "external" locus of control were more likely to have negative feelings towards empowerment, confirms the studies of Kimmons and Greenhaus (1976) and Mitchell, Smyser and Weed (1975) that internals prefer participative, autonomous working environments. Moreover, it suggests that, as was found in the prediction of empowerment in The Benefits Agency, even if respondents perceive their organization as providing empowering opportunities, unless they feel in control of their fate, this is unlikely to lead to feelings of empowerment, hence confirming that aspect Thomas and Velthouse's (1990) model that suggests that low global impact has an effect on the perceptions of empowerment. This was indicated by some of the employee comments which complained about the fact that

organizations never listened to their ideas anyway and that they felt they would inevitably be blamed for taking the initiative. As one employee was reported as saying in BT, *"I think a lot of people are frightened of that, though, of saying, 'right, I'm going to do this and make all the decisions' and do it 'cause you'll only get slated for it in the long run"*.

Interestingly, contrary to the implications that arose in the qualitative data, those who have previously been exposed to empowerment are more likely to have positive views of their organization and empowerment, whilst previous exposure also has an effect on the relationship between organizational characteristics and the belief that one is empowered. Indeed, previous exposure is a positive predictor in BT of whether respondents consider empowerment to be a 'good thing'. Perhaps, employees feel that previous policies have actually had a positive effect on the culture of their organization and, whilst they may merely perceive empowerment as a passing fad, they are able to see the long term benefits for their organization, particularly as Vision and Direction is also included as a predictor of this model. It may be that negative feelings are more closely linked to past exposure by managers who have to re-energise the commitment of their workforce on a cyclical basis. However, the fact that more people stated that they had been exposed to empowerment previously than one might have suspected, suggests that people have used the term loosely and, therefore, it is difficult to ascertain exactly what these previous experiences have amounted to and why they might have positive effects on empowerment.

Respondents who possess personality characteristics related to the enjoyment of challenge and hard work, need for achievement and who have a strong team orientation appear, on the basis of the quantitative data, to correlate with positive feelings towards empowerment. This was particularly true of need for achievement which was the single most important predictor of thinking empowerment is a 'good thing' for the whole sample and in BT. The qualitative data support this, to some extent, with one employee reported as saying *"A lot of it's just the kind of person you are anyway, I mean if you're going to do something and you've got the go-ahead"*. Additionally, there were many other participants who stated that they simply did want

to take these extra empowering activities on, suggesting that their personality characteristics were determining this reaction. Although, again, this may be attributed to their reaction of avoidance to job insecurity and a more instrumental orientation to work.

Individualistic attitudes and a high need for autonomy were also shown to be correlated with negative feelings of empowerment. That male respondents were more likely to show individualistic tendencies and a higher need for autonomy, suggests that they are in more danger of feeling negatively towards empowerment. Respondents in BT were also more likely than their Benefits Agency counterparts to have a need for autonomy. However, the finding that a need for autonomy has a negative impact on empowerment is in some ways surprising. Empowerment is publicised as increasing the autonomy of individuals over their work, yet the evidence suggests that, whilst as part of a team, respondents appear to desire empowerment, it is not derived from an individual need for self-direction. One might suggest, therefore, that empowerment is seen as more meaningful by those who have a high need for achievement but who prefer to work as a group. Whether this meaningfulness of teamwork is created by the way in which empowerment is introduced or is an indication of a wider phenomenon would need to be investigated by further research. But it might be suggested that many employees attribute empowerment to a more collective form of participation, as suggested by the use of empowerment across other disciplines.

Also surprising was the fact that the importance of freedom, that is those respondents who valued, for instance, the freedom to schedule their own work and a job where they do an entire piece of work from start to finish, were less likely to consider empowerment to be a "good thing". One explanation for this might be that those who value such aspects of their job, do not feel that empowerment is really offering these benefits, and hence are less likely to feel that empowerment is advantageous. Yet despite this affect of personality characteristics, most particularly on interest in empowerment and the belief that it is a 'good thing', the feeling remained amongst

those interviewed that, no matter how motivated they were to take on these extra activities, the actual nature of the organizations often prevented them from doing so.

How do Organizational Factors Impact on the Feelings of Empowerment amongst Employees?

Thomas and Velthouse (1990) suggested that task assessments (the way in which the tasks themselves are perceived by an individual), are central to an individual's cognitive model of empowerment. The qualitative research conducted within BT suggested that those employees who worked in non-customer facing environments, were less optimistic about empowerment because they were not able to see the impact of their behaviour on customers. Indeed, those who did perceive their organizations as caring about customers were more likely to make positive evaluations of empowerment, particularly amongst those who had not experienced empowerment before and who had a degree. The perceived relationship between empowerment and customer care was illustrated by some of the comments made by respondents on the questionnaires:

"Empowerment is good when used for the benefit of the customer. I can do my job to the customers satisfaction if I can overcome any organizational hurdles by the use of 'empowerment'" Female, Age 38, BT.

" When my supervisor is not available - stepping into his role and helping other staff with difficult decisions about work/ authorizing payments etc - dealing with customer queries" Female, Age 24, The Benefits Agency.

Moreover, the fact that these employees worked in large organizations where they are likely to consider themselves "small cogs in a large wheel" may reduce the impact which they feel their work has. Due to confidentiality, it was not possible to test for the effect of working directly with customers using quantitative methods of research, but the evidence from the interviews suggests the perceived "impact" of tasks was seen as having an effect. Meaningfulness (the perceived value of the task goal or purpose) may be seen as being achieved through the clear communication of the values and goals of the initiative. The literature, discussed in Chapter Three, suggested that the clarification of organizational values was a major characteristic of modern empowerment policies and this was confirmed in the respondents' views of

their organizations. Indeed, those who perceived their organization as offering vision and direction were more likely to have positive feelings towards empowerment. However, even if employees believed their organization had a clear strategic direction, this does not imply that respondents agreed or identified with their organizations' values or that they believed these values were actually being met by organizational reality. Indeed, many employees implied in their comments on the questionnaires that their organization's commitment to targets and customer satisfaction, often lead to staff being ignored:

"Senior management pressures junior management to produce pleasing statistics for the accountants. This cascades down to the lower grades. I agree there must be some yardstick - however, the current targets are a nonsense and therefore a time wasting exercise. Some targets contradict themselves eg. serviceability and jobs/man/day. Surely 100% serviceability means no faults (ultimate target) - now try and repair 8 faults a day!" Male, Age 36, BT

"organization strongly disagrees with empowerment hence we have many staff who are in the same job position for 5 to 10 years. The management complains we have small workload but high staff turnover which makes it look as though workload is high!!! When will they face reality and care for their staff - to prevent the mass exodus" Female, Age 29, The Benefits Agency

The effect of the clarity of their organization's vision and direction appeared to be confirmed in the focus groups where employees seemed aware of their organization's goals and the wider situations in which their organizations were presently operating. For example, the fact that The Benefits Agency was having to meet tighter targets and that BT was facing increasing competition in the telecoms market, seemed to be widely acknowledged and understood by those interviewed in the respective organizations. Vision and Direction correlated significantly with the dependent variables, suggesting that those who were aware of the current aims and directions of their organizations were more likely to feel positively about empowerment. Whilst this was, in some senses, found in the qualitative data, there was some indication that the awareness of their organization's position created insecurity in some whilst others argued that they did not understand how empowerment fitted in with these values. These interviewees seemed to believe that the introduction of empowerment into such competitive environments, created "mixed messages":

"it was going to be a total change that you were going to be able to see things through from beginning to end but then, after a while, it went back to 'you can do that but you've got to make sure you keep to your targets' which just wasn't possible really, you can only do one or the other"

A participant in a Benefits Agency Focus Group

The dilemma which employees face as a result of understanding their organization's aims and objectives contributes to the debate over human resource techniques and employee commitment. Whilst understanding the values of one's organization may create an "us and "them" orientation to external competitors (Kelly and Kelly, 1991; Provis, 1996), it is unlikely to be transferred into true attitudinal organizational commitment due to the fact that employees feel side-lined by the greater priority of "customers" and "targets". Other factors that correlated with positive aspects of empowerment, were Freedom and Autonomy, and Power, Security and Morale. Both the qualitative interviews and the quantitative data appeared to converge on the finding that BT offered more freedom and autonomy than The Benefits Agency. BT respondents were significantly more likely than their Benefits Agency counterparts to perceive that their organization allowed them to be creative and make changes to their jobs. Indeed, the focus groups held indicated that employees in The Benefits Agency felt restricted by the constraints and targets that governed the way in which they worked. Those in BT, however, believed that *'...for a better life'* had merely authorised them to work in the way they always had done.

A difference on this factor of freedom and autonomy is particularly interesting in that it contributes to a discussion of socialised personality characteristics. Indeed, those who feel they have a lower need for autonomy (Benefits Agency respondents) are likely to work in an organization that they perceive as not offering it. Hence, one might consider whether such differences in personality characteristics are innate or whether respondents have been socialised by the nature of their role and organization. Moreover, the fact that the Benefits Agency respondents perceived their organization as offering less freedom and autonomy than BT might seem surprising in that it is The Benefits Agency initiative which has incorporated structural changes to the nature of employees' jobs. It is likely that, as previously highlighted by the qualitative data, this difference is related to the public sector climate within which The Benefits Agency

operates and the governing of their work by the Treasury. Whilst, the privatisation of BT, and previous changes in management structure (such as "Project Sovereign"), may have removed many of the controls and constraints that had previously been a problem there. Moreover, the fact that Benefits Agency employees do not see their jobs changing to the extent of job re-design in the 'Tavistock sense' and tend to associate the structural changes as merely adding to their workload rather than increasing their responsibility, may also explain these differences, to some extent.

Yet, despite these differences, respondents in both organizations felt relatively powerless and were similarly likely to perceive low power, security and morale within the organization, correlating with negative feelings towards empowerment. This was supported by the qualitative interviews which suggested that the redundancies and current work climates within which employees were working, made many feel stressed and overworked. The inability to control the amount of work they were being expected to do, particularly in The Benefits Agency, was seen as exacerbating the situation, and for many the idea of empowerment represented just another worry. Indeed, employees seem to feel placed in a dilemma whereby they were expected to meet increasingly tight targets, over which they had no control, and yet were expected to take on more responsibility and take part in empowering activities. As one respondent was reported as saying in The Benefits Agency, *"If you've got discontented staff, you can't expect to bring through new procedures and policies"*; whilst another interviewee in BT stated that, *"At the end of the day we feel demoralised, it's soul destroying and that's what makes you feel "Better Life" huh, what a waste of time"*. Additionally, the fact that one is required to enjoy challenge and hard work in The Benefits Agency in order to be interested in empowerment further suggests that employees do see empowerment as an increase in workload.

Kelly and Kelly (1991) argue that participation techniques generally have little or no influence on "them and us" attitudes because of the lack of choice, trust, institutional support and the unequal status which exists between management and workers. The fact that the Unions are being sidelined by these policies and are unable to protect the workers from redundancies may reinforce these beliefs that they are unable to fight

such policies and hence make little difference to their feelings towards management in general. However, one might consider here whether management is perceived as a single, unified agent as orthodox labour process theory and classical economics suggests. There is evidence, as discussed below, that employees perceive different levels of management in different ways and that they are aware of the pressures placed on middle management to try and make empowerment work. Indeed, the fact that employees could identify differences between the commitment of management at different levels suggests that management is not considered by them as a single agent and that commitment at some levels is more important to their feelings of empowerment than at others. For example in BT it is commitment of immediate managers which is considered most salient to feelings of empowerment whilst in The Benefits Agency it is the commitment of their Managing Director. Interestingly, whilst the commitment of one's managing Director is likely to lead to feelings that one is empowered in The Benefits Agency, it also has a negative effect on the belief that empowerment is a "good thing". Hence, one might suggest that some respondents from this organization, feel empowered in the "senior management" sense of the word, but do not believe that it has any benefits to themselves. Perhaps, they are relating the word "empowerment" in this sense to the devolution of responsibility and increased workloads which accompanied the introduction of the policy laid down by Senior Management.

There was considerable support throughout this research for the literature surrounding the importance of management behaviour. In both organizations, participants in the focus groups indicated that the support of their managers and their commitment to empowerment was central to their own feelings towards empowerment. Moreover, there was evidence that those who worked for a particularly empowering manager (highlighted in Preston District and Marketing) were more positive about the empowerment initiative in general. The importance of management was confirmed by questionnaire data which showed that nearly all respondents ranked "line management attitudes" as one of the three most important factors regarding whether they could be empowered, with over 60% ranking it first or second most important. Additionally, as will be expanded upon later in this discussion, in BT the belief that

their immediate manager was committed to empowerment was the most important predictor of whether respondents considered themselves to be empowered.

Despite the varied criticisms of management in the qualitative data, particularly the inability of managers to "let go" in The Benefits Agency, there was evidence from the questionnaire that the majority of respondents saw their manager as behaving in a relatively positive way. Indeed, over 50% of all respondents agreed that their manager had the respect of staff, felt each member of staff was important, encouraged staff to participate in important decisions and encouraged people to speak up when they disagreed with a decision, with over 50% disagreeing that their manager made most decisions without asking staff for their opinions. Comparisons with wider studies outlined in Chapter Eight, suggests that this view of immediate managers is somewhat negative (compared to 68% in the 1996 ISR survey) and this might relate to the blockages and "dumping" which was attributed to many line managers. The positive behaviour of management was found to positively correlate with the dependent variables "I consider myself to be empowered" and the belief that empowerment is a 'good thing', whilst negatively correlating with the dependent variable "I am not really interested in being empowered". It is worth remembering here that, despite the criticisms of immediate managers in the focus groups, employees seemed aware of the job insecurity which faced this middle management level and empathised, to some extent, with the dilemmas which their immediate managers faced.

As regards managers' orientation to the empowerment initiatives themselves, only around 50% of respondents reported that they believed management was "committed" to empowerment (all significantly correlating in a positive direction with variable "I consider myself to be empowered"), with only 48.9% stating that they believed their Managing Director was committed to empowerment. However, there is some evidence that this result is due to the fact that some employees just did not know how their Managing Director felt, or had never even seen him. This might be said to account for the significant difference between Payphones and Marketing regarding their beliefs that their Managing Director was committed. The centralised nature of the Marketing Directorate means that most members of this Directorate work in the

same office as the Managing Director and, as previously mentioned, he has recently taken over as Director of Marketing as well, suggesting that the heightened contact of Marketing respondents with the Director made them more available to accurately answer this question.

Overall, though, the fact that only about half of respondents believed that management was committed to empowerment, suggests that employees are sceptical about the true attitudes of their managers, a finding that was supported in the qualitative data. Many participants in the focus groups felt that their managers were only supporting empowerment because they had to and that, particularly in BT they were merely "displaying" the right behaviours. This was further illustrated by some of the comments made by BT employees on their questionnaires:

"Managers should have a mind of their own and not just spout the company ideas/values etc. because it will benefit them and not the workforce. Too many take the glory for others work, despite claiming to recognise the contribution of others"

Male, Age 30, BT

"Empowerment is only beneficial when management are sincere towards people empowered and use it as a means of development and leadership training"

Male, Age 34, BT

How do Characteristics of Empowerment Programmes Impact on the Feelings of Empowerment amongst Employees?

Respondents from the two organizations appeared to differ both in terms of the participative techniques which they took part in and the extent to which they found them empowering. Generally, in The Benefits Agency, respondents were most likely to relate feelings of empowerment to activities such as Peer Group Meetings and Team Briefings, whilst it was activities such as multi-skilling and Quality Improvement Teams which were more salient to empowerment in BT. This would appear to reflect the different nature of jobs and human resource background in the two organizations. The Benefits Agency work consists mainly of processing claims and clerical work with Peer Group meetings necessary in order to discuss "customer" claims which are dealt with by different commands. However, the engineering background of BT, particularly in Payphones, and the previous TQM initiative -

"Project Sovereign" which introduced techniques such as Quality Improvement Teams, may explain the increased significance which is placed on such techniques in this organization. Moreover, multi-skilling seems to negatively predict positive feelings of empowerment in BT , more information regarding the nature of multi-skilling in the engineering based organization, may help to explain this relationship.

Although in some cases, there were more people who took part in various activities than found them empowering, there was no suggestion in the literature that these activities were considered more empowering in theory than in practice. This suggests that, in general, the employee involvement-type techniques which were being introduced, or which had been introduced as part of other initiatives in the past, were seen as contributing to feelings of empowerment amongst staff. The one exception to this, particularly in The Benefits Agency, was Performance Related Pay. There was interesting diversity between the organizations regarding this form of remuneration in that, whilst in BT very few received this form of remuneration with 30% considering it empowering, the reverse pattern was shown for The Benefits Agency. This relationship was echoed in the focus groups, where participants in The Benefits Agency were complaining about the tying in of their appraisal scheme to the displaying of empowering behaviours. Many stated that they felt that whilst empowerment was being introduced into a team based atmosphere, the individual payment system caused them to compete with each other. As one Benefits Agency employee, who took part in a focus group, complained of the scheme:

> *"I think it's a crazy system that should be abolished, it doesn't create a team atmosphere, I think it's the one thing that makes people want to work as individuals and not as a team, it needs to be got rid of really, it's unfair, it's degrading and demoralising"*

As regards the correlations of those who took part in these various techniques with the dependent variables, an interesting relationship emerges. Those who took part in the focus groups commented that suggestion schemes were often disempowering, due to the fact that their ideas were never taken seriously. However, participation in such schemes correlates significantly with the dependent variable "I consider myself to be empowered" in a positive direction. This may suggest that, although such schemes are often demoralising, the opportunity to have a say in how things are done, or even the

knowledge that such an opportunity exists, gives people a feeling of empowerment. Perhaps this is related to the concept of 'perceived control' or 'global choice' (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990), that giving people the "choice" over how they do their work, will increase positive feelings towards that work.

Can We Predict What Makes People Feel Positively About Empowerment?

The results of the regression analyses conducted, show that the models that emerged accounted for a considerable amount of the variance. Although, in the natural sciences, an R^2 adjusted score of 0.8 might have been expected, models producing a score of 0.4, such as some of those presented in this research, when looking at the inevitable unpredictability of human nature, are a good indication of validity. Initial correlations showed that the three dependent variables were highly inter-related, in the directions expected, and this suggests that respondents were answering the questions consistently. The models that emerged were, in general, small and simple, indicating that there are specific factors from which one can predict whether an employee will react positively to empowerment. However, some of the models which emerged only accounted for a small amount of the variance and this suggests that there are other factors which may account for the prediction of the dependent variables. Indeed, the fact that personality was only measured in a somewhat rudimentary way and that some scales had to be removed from the regressions due to their low reliabilities expose some of the limitations of this research which may account for the inconclusiveness of these predictions.

Considering Oneself to be Empowered

The largest predictor of this model was the belief of respondents that their understanding of empowerment matched that of their organization. This places interesting light on the area of the contested concept of empowerment. Those who feel that their interpretation of empowerment is aligned to that of their organization, are more likely to feel empowered. This suggests that organizations may successfully be achieving empowerment, as they define it but where other interpretations are taken of empowerment, there is an indication that expectations are not being met. That is, for example, that those employees in The Benefits Agency, who see empowerment as

the devolvement of decision making to the lowest possible level (one of the suggested definitions given by the organization itself) will feel empowered if this is what they perceive as occurring. However, the suggestion is, because only 36.2% of respondents perceived this match of definitions, that several respondents hold differing interpretations of empowerment. And, the fact that their expectations are not being met, is preventing these employees from feeling empowered. The finding that this was also the second most important predictor in both organizations confirms the evidence from the focus groups that the differing interpretations of empowerment are a major barrier to empowerment in these organizations.

The second highest predictor of this model was the commitment of respondents' immediate boss. This reinforces the importance of management behaviour to feelings of empowerment and suggests that true commitment to empowerment is an important aspect of management attitudes. This was seen to differ between the two organizations, suggesting that the context within which the empowerment programme takes place does have an effect on the models of prediction. In The Benefits Agency, the actual behaviour of immediate managers was seen as a more important predictor of empowerment than their perceived commitment. However, in BT, the commitment of respondents' immediate manager was perceived as the most important predictor with the behaviour of their managers not emerging as a significant predictor. This confirms the evidence collated in the focus groups: employees in The Benefits Agency were reported as feeling that, whilst their managers argued that they were committed to empowerment, their behaviour, for example the inability to "let go" of authority and responsibility, often went against the values of empowerment. Meanwhile, in BT, respondents argued that managers were behaving in a relatively empowering way but that they doubted many of their line managers actual commitment to *'...for a better life'*. This was considered salient by employees in BT, as their line managers were generally their main point of contact regarding information about the company and, most particularly, *'...for a better life'*.

The opportunity for freedom and autonomy in one's work was also considered important, particularly in The Benefits Agency where it was the strongest predictor of

the belief that one was empowered. The fact that this was not included in the prediction model for BT seems to reflect the different intentions of the two initiatives. For employees of The Benefits Agency, empowerment was introduced as a change in working practices and, for many of those interviewed, it promised an opportunity to have more freedom over the way in which they worked. Hence, until these expectations are met, it seems unlikely that employees will truly consider themselves to be empowered. In contrast, the cultural change which was associated with *'...for a better life'* concentrated on behaviour and attitude change, particularly of managers, possibly explaining the commitment of one's immediate boss as the most important predictor for BT employees. Hence, it seems that whilst the Benefits Agency were expecting real changes to be experienced as a result of empowerment, for those in BT, it was a more cultural change which was expected, with the commitment of one's immediate manager most salient.

In BT, no personality factors emerged as predictors of the belief that one was empowered, yet in The Benefits Agency an internal locus of control was a positive predictor of this variable. This suggests that those who feel that they can control their environment, are confident enough to take the opportunities, which are gradually, and arguably, being introduced into the Benefits Agency culture, allowing them to feel more fulfilled and empowered:

"I feel very strongly that I cannot 'be empowered' only I can empower myself. What management can do is create a climate where I feel able to do this. I have to say this varies according to site and management personalities. For the last year or so I have been more than happy with my situation but for the two years before that it was a case of feeling total frustration" Male, Age 30

"I am happier now that there is greater freedom to complete the work in the manner which I feel is most appropriate rather than following strict 'rules'!! I always hated that as I often thought my way of doing things was as good, or better, than the way laid down in the codes" Female, Age 33

Not Really Interested In Being Empowered

In the qualitative data collected within both organizations, there was an acknowledgement by employees and managers that empowerment was increasing responsibility at lower levels of the hierarchy. This would explain the finding that the

strongest predictor of this model was a need for achievement. This relationship, that those who do not desire to achieve at work are more likely to be disinterested in empowerment, is supported by the qualitative data. Managers stated that they believed some employees were unwilling to move out of their "comfort zones". This personality characteristic was the second strongest predictor of disinterest in empowerment within BT. The absence of this factor in The Benefits Agency may be related to the fact that empowerment is generally imposed on these employees and therefore, as discussed earlier, is more likely to represent hard work which adds to the workload of employees than a choice made on the basis of ambition.

Interestingly, those who did not attend Peer Group Meetings were more likely to be disinterested in being empowered. It is difficult to ascertain whether this is due to something integral to the Peer Group Meetings. It might be that those who do not attend such meetings possess a personality characteristic that suggests that they are disinterested in being empowered. Although, there is no specific evidence of a correlation, the fact that individualistic attitudes are also a predictor in this model, suggests that this theory may be true. Alternatively, employees who are not interested in empowerment may choose not to be involved in these new managerial techniques either out of principle or indifference.

As previously mentioned, membership of a trade union is seen to have an effect on empowerment. It was found to predict disinterest in empowerment for the whole sample and within The Benefits Agency, but not in BT. The lack of impact of trade union membership on employees in BT appears surprising, considering the fact that there was higher membership amongst these respondents and the Union should hold significance for BT staff in that it still represents its members for pay bargaining at a national level. One possible explanation for this finding is that "empowerment" has some "left-wing" connotations in its usage across other disciplines, it is a word which appears to offer fairness and some amount of power. Indeed, for Boreham and Hall (1994) it represents "political unionism". In this sense, then, the fact that BT avoids using the term, will mean that the CWU is unlikely to have attacked the word in any of its publications to its members, with the criticisms lying with the "better life" label

itself. Even those trade union members who associate the word with Human Resource Management are likely to experience a certain amount of ambivalence due to its alternative usage, and the fact that the rhetoric seems to promise happier staff. Meanwhile, in The Benefits Agency, trade union members' primary focus of empowerment will be their present management initiative and hence, their disinterest lies with this policy itself. Alternatively, one might argue that employees are disinterested in empowerment because they believe that their union adequately represents their interests. Given the fact that the unions have been unable to prevent redundancies in either organization, makes this explanation unlikely, however.

One interesting predictor that emerges from the analyses conducted by organization, is the perception of organizational vision and direction in BT. Within BT the perception that their organization is not providing vision and direction, is a predictor of disinterest in empowerment. This may have implications for those aspects of Thomas and Velthouse (1990)'s model that refer to task significance and meaningfulness. If employees are unable to perceive how empowerment could contribute to their organization's goals they may have less interest in being involved in such a policy. This is further suggested by the qualitative data which reported that some members of BT, most particularly in non-customer-facing environments, were unable to understand the purpose of '*...for a better life*'.

The Belief That Empowerment Is A 'Good Thing'

The question "As you define it, do you consider empowerment to be a good thing?" is ambiguous and embodies a number of variant interpretations. However the fact that respondents did not all answer "yes" means that there must be some factors which define what makes people differ in their perceptions of empowerment and these are set out below. Personality variables also appear to play their part in the feeling that empowerment is a 'good thing'. The model showed that those who have an internal locus of control and a high need for achievement are those who are more likely to be positive about empowerment. Interestingly, in The Benefits Agency, customer and staff care was the second highest predictor of the belief that empowerment is a 'good thing'. This would suggest that those who believe that their organization actually

values its staff and encourages them to train and learn whilst also valuing their customers are more likely to believe that empowerment is being introduced for their benefit and, hence, that it is a 'good thing'. There was evidence of such awareness in the qualitative data, which found that those employees who could more clearly see the impact of empowerment on customers, appeared more positive about the policy.

The commitment of the Managing Director was found to be a negative predictor of this variable for the entire sample and in The Benefits Agency. Hence, employees may not think empowerment is a 'Good Thing' if they see their Managing Director as committed to it, suggesting some scepticism of management motives. This may be due to the fact that, in the present atmosphere of management/worker distrust regarding job insecurity, employees will regard the empowerment policy as a more strategic, business driver rather than a policy directed at their well-being, if their Director is committed to it.

In BT the predictors derived from the model, for this variable, differed from both that of the whole sample and that of The Benefits Agency. Need for achievement, non-participation in multi-skilling, previous exposure to empowerment and organizational vision and direction were the predictors of the feeling that empowerment is a 'good thing'. Again this suggests that empowerment is not being related to their present initiative as the belief that *'...for a better life'* is about empowerment does not rank as a factor in this model. As discussed before, the fact that previous exposure is a positive predictor of this dependent variable, suggests that respondents are more positive about empowerment if they have been exposed to it previously in their career. This finding appears to go against the general consensus, which emerged from the qualitative data, and indicates that employees may be able to see the benefit of previous empowerment programmes on their organization, or that, as previously, stated they are using the term loosely, perhaps relating it to single events rather than specific empowerment programmes as they are defined in the literature of this thesis.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this discussion, an attempt has been made to interpret both the questionnaire and qualitative data, in order to gain a greater understanding of empowerment within the two case-study organizations and the wider applicability of the findings to modern empowering organizations. Yet, the researcher remains aware that there is a need for methodological consciousness when considering the results. Whilst the results are not directly comparable neither do they differ to any great extent. As Morris and Wood (1991) found, different research instruments will give rise to divergent results in some areas, for example they found that in-depth interviews revealed "subterranean activity" not detected by survey data. Interestingly, much the same is true of this research: the interviews and focus groups unearthed more contextual data such as the effects of job insecurity; management blockages; and divisive definitions of "empowerment", providing more in depth, and negative detail of their organization's empowerment programme. Although the questionnaires were able to corroborate much of these effects, the issue of job insecurity should not be ignored purely because it does not arise as a predictor on the regression analyses. The fact that it was mentioned by a large number of employees who were interviewed and that it seemed to have an effect on the relationship between organizational reality and feelings of empowerment, indicates in itself that job insecurity is having a real impact on how employees are adapting to the initiative. Moreover, as discussed above, there were limitations to the statistical findings and some relationships might be better explained by the qualitative research. In essence, then, priority has not been given, in this conclusion, to either one set of results or the other, but on the general findings which emerge as relevant for these organizations.

This discussion of the main findings suggests that the contribution of personality characteristics to feelings of empowerment is not as significant as one might have thought. Although most employees ranked their own personality as the most important factor as to whether they could be empowered, it appears that it is aspects of the organization, most particularly management, that are the most important predictors of empowerment. Although there were some differences regarding

perceptions of organizational characteristics and the importance which individuals place on these characteristics to determine attitudes towards empowerment and although there were some correlations between the dependent variables and various biographical and personality characteristics, these tend to be outweighed by the effects of organizational reality. This theory is supported, to some extent, by the qualitative data that suggested that employees will have a basic disposition to empowerment, but that whether this can be exercised depends on the creation of an empowering environment by the organization concerned.

Hence, these findings do not reject the cognitive model of empowerment (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990) out of hand, as there are aspects of personality and the individual, particularly in BT, which impact directly on interest in being empowered and the perception that empowerment is a 'good thing'. Moreover, true "personality", in its fundamental sense has not been measured in this research. However, it would seem that individual attitudes do have an impact on the ways in which empowerment is perceived by employees but that it can not predict the feeling amongst employees that they are empowered. Yet, as was established in Chapter Nine, feelings towards empowerment in these organizations are relatively positive with the problem remaining that very few people actually feel empowered. The responsibility for this, it seems, lies with the organizations and their provision of a clear definition, as well as the role of their line managers. Additionally, the fact that the prediction models differed between the organizations under study, suggests that the effect of organizational context, explained to some extent by the qualitative data, is a real one in the prediction of empowerment.

A particularly strong influence on these results appears to be the present industrial relations context within which employees are currently working. There are several indications that employees are feeling insecure at work due to the recent rationalisation programmes and the uncertain futures of both organizations. Employees in The Benefits Agency seem afraid of the implications of privatisation, whilst the shrinking share of the telecoms market which BT occupies and the possible consequences of the proposed merger with MCI, make BT employees' future

unpredictable. The marginalisation of the unions regarding HRM techniques and the decreasing power of all three unions to prevent job loss; the increasing use of contract workers; and unreasonably low pay increases, will add to the fear amongst these employees. The introduction of a policy which requires employees to take risks and more responsibility into this atmosphere, appears to be heavily influencing employees' reactions to their empowerment programmes.

Most of the results that are presented here show similar patterns arising from both the quantitative and qualitative sources of data. The benefit of using both research methods has been to investigate aspects of the individual and differences between the organizations over a relatively wide sample but to be able to interpret these results in the light of each organization's contextual reality. Yet, the limitations of these findings should be acknowledged. By analysing their relationship to context, the results can be more easily transferred to represent a true reflection of empowerment in modern organizations. The interpretations of this research as a guideline for other empowering organizations, and as a basis for its contribution to wider theoretical debates, will be considered in the final chapter which follows.

CHAPTER TEN: Conclusion

"To find a form that accommodates the mess, that is the task of the artist now"
Samuel Beckett

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this final chapter is to interpret the results presented in Chapters Seven and Eight, and the conclusions reached in Chapter Nine, into general lessons for empowering organizations and in relation to wider theoretical debates. Whilst the findings are based on two case-study organizations, the appreciation of their relation to context throughout this thesis allows us to consider the broader lessons for those in organizations who wish to increase feelings of empowerment amongst their employees. There is evidence that, in the organizations studied, just less than half the sample of employees presently consider themselves to be empowered and, whilst there was some evidence of positive attitudes, the views expressed by employees in the focus groups ranged from indifference to outright opposition to the reality of empowerment. The indications from this research are that, although attitudes towards empowerment are influenced by the individual in terms of personality and orientations to work, the feeling that one is empowered is largely related to the way in which empowerment is introduced and the support of management to the process. That is, although "uncontrollable" factors such as job loss and employees' personal characteristics play their part, there are substantial steps that the organizations can take to increase feelings of empowerment.

Empowerment and HRM: "Winning Hearts and Minds"

It would seem from the results of this research, that empowerment in modern organizations is implemented for a variety of reasons. Whilst essentially it has the values of Human Resource Management at its core - the treatment of employees as a resource to be maximised - it consists of varying levels of structural and cultural change. In The Benefits Agency, one might conclude that empowerment represents a "harder" side of Human Resource Management, in that it is clearly tied to the devolution of work to lower levels and is linked to Performance Related Pay. In BT

the initiative is more cultural, aimed at gaining the commitment of the workforce to particular behaviours and values devised by senior management. Yet, the "hard" side of empowerment is also emphasised by the fact that empowerment is being introduced into a context of high job insecurity, suggesting that empowerment is being used to mask the contradictions between down-sizing and the development of employees. Overall, it aims to gain the commitment (or compliance) of employees to the new-look organizations within which they work and to undertake the increased workloads which exist after the loss of substantial numbers of the workforce over the last decade.

Neither of these organizations appears to have a clear empowerment policy: the use of participative techniques such as team briefings and suggestion schemes was discussed and more than half of the entire sample found these activities empowering, but these tended to exist before the empowerment initiative was introduced. This appears to confirm, to some extent, the "waves metaphor" of Watson (1986) who suggests that employee involvement initiatives overlap and collide. Indeed, the fact that these activities were considered to add to feelings of empowerment suggests that such waves of techniques may be ultimately beneficial to the organizations themselves. That is, by bringing in new managerial initiatives and basing them around pre-existing procedures could, supposedly, re-energise the workforce without any additional investment or action by senior management. Whilst both organizations trained their staff on the topic of empowerment and passed down communications on the new initiative, the detail of what empowerment 'is' remains ambiguous. If one applies empowerment to the employee involvement escalator (Marchington et al, 1992), the two case-studies discussed here suggest that modern empowerment policies sit firmly on the bottom steps. Empowerment does appear to involve an emphasis on information and communication, but even "consultation" is unlikely. Whilst the organizations under study would suggest that they do consult their staff, the employees who were questioned, noted the superficiality with which their suggestions were treated:

"Let the workers be heard before making important decisions - I feel that, after team briefs, comments made by engineers are lost by the time they get to top management"
Male, Age 47, BT

"In this organization I believe management have already 'made' decisions and then ask staff for their views as an afterthought so when staff complain about a decision we are told 'well you were all asked for your views' - this is wrong!!!"
Female, Age 22, The Benefits Agency

In essence, empowerment might be seen as merely a symbolic representation (Storey, 1992) of a way of working which employees and managers are expected to adopt for the long term benefit of themselves and the company, with an absence of any substantive changes to jobs that may increase employee well-being.

Literature surrounding issues of corporate culture suggest that the use of symbolism to manipulate the social aspects of work is being increasingly adopted in modern organizations (Hopfl et al, 1992). The intention, it would seem, is to attract the support of employees through the use of policies which verge on the evangelistic. Ackers and Preston (1995), in their discussion of the similarity between management development programmes and religion, found many similar reactions to those discussed in Chapter Seven. The traumatic experience felt by some managers during their training and the fact that many employees felt "fired up at the time" but found that this enthusiasm faded once they were presented with the mundane reality of organizational life, mirrors the reactions of many of the managers in Ackers and Preston's research. This, the authors related to the temporary "ecstatic" effect of evangelists, "just as after every Billy Graham rally, thousands return to their old ways" (1995: 29). Indeed, there is evidence from the management literature that such symbolism does not successfully mask the fact that often, as is largely the case in BT, nothing has really changed, "in consciously seeking to manage a change of culture, senior managers had manipulated some symbols to signify a new order, but these were insufficient to counterbalance the range of signs which persuaded the sceptical that things were pretty much the same" (Storey, 1992: 201). Indeed, there was evidence from some of the comments made on the questionnaires, that employees are seeing straight through this symbolism to the darker side of empowerment:

"Empowerment in BT is a political term that will allow some senior managers to claim great success and probably a huge financial bonus for changing nothing at great expense. File under other failed schemes - TQM; Top Telco 90; Involving Everyone" Male, Age 32, BT

"empowerment is for the most just a trendy management buzzword"

Male, Age 37, BT

Even if changes are occurring, psychological theories of attribution require individuals to believe that they chose to take part in these changes before their values or attitudes are altered (Salancik, 1982; Frey and Wicklund, 1978). Yet, in both organizations, the top-down, non-negotiable way in which the policies were introduced, and the failure of the unions to be consulted in any depth, has caused some employees to be cynical about the initiatives' motives. Again this was reflected in comments made by employees in their questionnaires:

"Empowerment is a word bandied about by the management to make us feel like we have some control over decisions, the above activities are all 'PR' stunts they are not geared really towards empowerment, they are just the niceties to make us think that our opinion counts" Female, Age 26, The Benefits Agency

"I believe our company thinks they are committed to empowerment but do not really know what it is. I also think the word 'empowerment' is just a buzz word for the nineties to make lower staff feel better about their own position while managers just push more and more work down the hill" Male, Age 25, The Benefits Agency

Indeed, although the management rhetoric suggests that participation in empowerment is voluntary, the threat of further job losses and the fact that in The Benefits Agency, empowerment is tied in to the performance appraisal system, makes the voluntariness of participation highly debatable.

As has been found in previous studies of HRM policies (Guest, 1989; Storey, 1992; Legge, 1995), there was considerable evidence that the unions had been marginalised by the organizations' involvement initiatives. Whilst the public sector unions - CPSA and PTC took a position of "sceptical engagement" on such policies, there was little evidence that the unions were having much effect in stopping the intensification of work which many Benefits Agency employees complained of. Employees tended not to know how the unions felt about the initiatives and managers stated that no objections had been made. Yet, despite this relative silence on issues of HRM and empowerment, the unions in both organizations continued to have a larger say on traditional industrial relations issues such as pay and job losses, although even here

their power was restricted to essentially making the best of circumstances imposed by management. For instance the public sector unions despite opposing Performance Related Pay, have only succeeded in negotiating a fairer system of appraisal and even then employees still insist that the system is unfair and divisive. Moreover, the CWU (then the NCU and the UCW) could not prevent the major rationalisation programmes instigated by BT in the early 1990s but did succeed in negotiating that none of these redundancies were compulsory. Hence, whilst industrial relations still continues at the national level, there is evidence that the unions are being side-lined more locally. This refutes suggestions by Fairbrother (1996) that unions in The Benefits Agency were becoming more active at this level. This dualistic structure (Storey, 1992) of industrial relations reflects the expectations which employees have of different levels of participation. Hepse and Wall (1976) found that distant participation (i.e. top management) was least desired by employees in their sample of 1000 employees from a variety of organizations and sectors. Overall the consensus was that at the top management decision-making level "the preferred mode of influence was through representation - typically through representatives elected by the members of the organization, though where matters concerning pay and work conditions are involved trade union affiliated representation appears to be the most acceptable" (1976:420). Hence, empowerment, as has been the case with other HRM techniques, promotes a twin-track approach to unionism with the new initiative being directed at lower levels of employee involvement, targeting the individual whilst higher level involvement remains collective. Yet, in both cases, there are suggestions this involvement is increasingly superficial.

Legge argues in her book "HRM: Rhetorics and Realities" that espoused policy usually does not reflect the organizational reality, due to a number of factors which will be discussed later. However, before one can evaluate this distinction between rhetoric and reality, it should be considered whether the espoused policy is ever intended by senior management to become reality. Indeed, the rhetoric of employee well-being and development is certainly hard for the employees in this research to reconcile with parallel policies of cost cutting and down-sizing. The real intentions of management, it would seem, are to promote a more unitarist structure, gaining the

commitment of employees, in order to remain competitive and reflect internal tensions outwards to competitors in the industry. Indeed, Storey (1992) and others' talk of 'smokescreens', 'masks' and 'symbols', suggest that the management rhetoric remains ambiguous and aspirational, promising beneficial outcomes for employees, purely to gain commitment and conversion (Noon, 1992) rather than because it represents revolutionary change. Yet, there is strong evidence presented here that the use of ambiguous terms and the evangelical connotations which the policies contain, are actually a blockage to the success of empowerment on the shop floor. The fact that empowerment has emerged through this, and other, research as a contested concept, presents organizations with the opportunity to use such a term to create instant ambiguity. The four, divergent definitions of the term given by the Oxford English Dictionary and the use of the term across different disciplines, suggests that it is essentially a word from which opposing definitions can be generated. Yet, whilst organizations appear to be using such ambiguity to generate commitment, there is evidence that it is having an opposite effect in BT and The Benefits Agency. Overall, the strongest predictor of whether employees considered themselves to be empowered, was whether they felt that their understanding of empowerment matched that of their organization, and yet only 36.2% of respondents felt that this was the case. Moreover, the fact that The Benefits Agency has chosen not to give a single definition of 'empowerment' suggests that the ambiguity of the term has allowed conflicting definitions and expectations to survive. Whilst The Benefits Agency argues that a 'healthy debate' is promoted through this lack of definition, the research shows that, instead, employees and managers are wary and unsure what is expected of them. However, even then it is suggested that empowerment will create false expectations due to the differing interpretations which employees bring to work. Indeed, the review of empowerment across non-management disciplines suggested that, in other circumstances, empowerment represents an overcoming of oppression and a removal of issues of power and status.

Future research might consider in more depth the experiences and exposure which employees draw on to derive their interpretations of empowerment, investigating to what extent these have an effect on individual's satisfaction with the initiative. But, it

is suggested here, on the basis of the research, that managers are misguided in their expropriation of left-wing terminology and utopian language. By using such terms to "symbolise" their change of culture, organizations like The Benefits Agency are in danger of creating expectations of the policy which they simply can not meet. As Willmott writes, "in the absence of a major shift in power relations, it is probable that 'empowerment' will be experienced and assessed as a patronising act of false charity bestowed upon employees" (1995: 93). Indeed, there appeared to be some feeling that the differences in definitions were causing tension between managers and employees, because of their divergent expectations of the initiative and the belief that these were not being met on either side. The results presented in this thesis suggest that respondents from The Benefits Agency were expecting changes in the freedom and autonomy with which they could complete their work, with this variable being the single most important predictor of feelings of empowerment. The fact that many felt that this was not occurring, with the devolution of work and increased job pressures being more identifiable by employees, suggests that unmatched expectations were preventing feelings of empowerment being experienced amongst non-managerial staff. Additionally, the relationship between organizational vision and direction and empowerment in BT, highlighted the more cultural change which was expected there. The fact that true commitment to this cultural change amongst immediate management remained rare in the eyes of employees suggests that here too expectations were not being met.

The decision not to use the term 'empowerment' in BT in association with the *'...for a better life'* initiative, appears to have arisen from similar problems, to those presently found in The Benefits Agency, in the past. The wisdom of this decision was highlighted in the reactions of one BT respondent to the word 'empowerment':

> *"I don't understand what empowerment is in BT. It is not a term I have used in work or heard used by others. As it sounds American, would tend to avoid it".*

Yet, despite the fact that BT avoid the term "empowerment", it is interesting in that the glitzy way in which the policy has been introduced appears to mirror the evangelical, utopian messages associated with the less "packaged" Benefits Agency

initiative. Hence, although BT avoid some of the naked ambiguity of the term "empowerment" by choosing the label *'...for a better life'* , the 'pop-management' techniques adopted by the organization still create an evangelical feel to the programme, resembling the post-modernist "hyper-real" (Baudrillard, 1981, 1983) and it still begs the question "A better life for whom?". Indeed, the fact that the publicised behaviours were directed at the customer has led to some employees, who do not work in customer facing environments, failing to perceive the impact of the policy. Hence it would seem that, whilst promoting an ambiguous policy, creates confusion, the adoption of targeted behaviours can mean that some people feel excluded. Moreover, there is a need to maintain a consistency of messages if the "symbolism" which organizations choose to use is to have the desired effect. In BT, the lack of momentum and consistency was evident in Marketing, where an apathetic Director and the presence of a consultant, who was perceived as working against the values of *'...for a better life'*, had diluted the messages received.

Having painted a somewhat dark picture of empowerment in these two organizations, there is considerable merit in acknowledging that there were some employees and managers interviewed who were hopeful about the future of the policy. Indeed, the fact that over a third of respondents believed their understanding of empowerment matched that of their organization could in itself be interpreted as encouraging. BT and The Benefits Agency may well take heart from the fact that the message of empowerment has got through to their employees at all when one considers the confusion surrounding the term in general and their historical command and control structures. Thus, it should be noted that whilst the balance of employee attitudes remain negative to empowerment, there is evidence that some headway is being made.

Yet, overall it does appear that the ambiguity which characterises empowerment allows management to take an "off the shelf" concept and apply it to their own organisational needs. Therefore, empowerment is a floating concept which means different things in different organisations and, further, means different things to different people within those organisations. Both management and employees

interpret empowerment from their own viewpoints to suit their own needs and build up expectations of what the programme will bring. For management, empowerment promises a more committed and involved workforce who are willing to take responsibility at lower levels, whilst for employees empowerment pledges autonomy and the ability to move to a more equitable position within their organisation. The failure of these expectations to rarely share either similar intentions or goals means that the psychological contract between manager and worker could fail, provoking feelings of distrust on both sides (Fox, 1974). This acknowledgement that actors within the organizations take their own definitions of empowerment from an essentially ambiguous concept, highlights the variation of attitudes and values which individuals bring to the workplace. Yet, Provis (1996) suggests that new management techniques such as empowerment are based on unitarist assumptions, "that every work organisation is an integrated and harmonious whole existing for a common purpose" (Farnham & Pimlott, 1990:4). Hence, these policies are being introduced with the assumption that everyone holds similar interests and values within the organization. Not only does this not account for differences between management and employees, which were clearly visible throughout the organizations being studied, but also differences amongst employees and managers. Indeed, rather than the assumption of orthodox labour process theory and classical economics that management is a single, unified agent, united behind policies such as empowerment; or the assumption of pure cognitive or behavioural psychology that all employees will react in similar ways to the same stimuli such as empowering practices, this research suggests that the impact of social factors on all the actors within organizations brings differing reactions and hence this challenges the unitary assumption on which the initiative was designed.

Management as a unified agent?

The research showed that the role of management in empowerment is central to feelings of empowerment and particularly to whether people actually feel empowered. This suggests that, even if organizations are able to address problems relating to interest and the merits of empowerment, the role of management may still prevent empowerment from being felt on the 'shop floor'. However, there was evidence that

employees are able to distinguish differences between the commitment of different strata of management, and that it is the role of the immediate manager which respondents perceive as particularly important. Despite this, employees seemed aware that the behaviour of different managers was inter-dependant:

"I currently work in an office where the senior manager would not let the staff fart without permission if she could prevent it. As my immediate manager is a total jellyfish I cannot see this changing." Female, Age 30, BT

In The Benefits Agency, it seems that managers, rather than being categorised by strata, are distinguished depending on their adherence to 'old-school' beliefs. Many Benefits Agency employees commented on this in their questionnaires:

"it depends upon who your line manager is, some are very good at it, but others who have been there for years are still set in their ways and often only pass the rubbish down" Female, Age 32, The Benefits Agency

"old-style management ideas by the bosses need to be replaced with a new outlook" Female, Age 24, The Benefits Agency

This feeling, that managers are actively blocking empowerment in this organization, is reflected in the finding that it is the behaviour of immediate managers, rather than their commitment to empowerment, which emerges as a stronger predictor of employees feeling empowered in The Benefits Agency. One recommendation, suggested by Sykes (1996) is that those managers who "after due support and development, still fail to demonstrate empowering leadership" (1996: 37), should be removed. Whilst this appears to be a drastic step, there are indications that the organizations concerned have already considered such a move. One manager in BT was reported as saying in Chapter Seven, that those managers who did not adopt empowering behaviours were likely to feel increasingly isolated, whilst another talked of 'old school' managers who had since 'left' the company. In the Benefits Agency, one manager stated that managers will be forced to toe the empowerment line or risk losing their jobs:

"I don't think some of them are going to be given any choice because if they don't do it, it's going to have a detrimental effect on the whole District, if you're not part of the solution, you're not playing"

However, it is likely that this option will merely lead to middle managers resisting empowerment in more covert ways and increase the feelings of insecurity that have accompanied empowerment policies. Moreover, rather than blaming middle managers for the problems of empowerment, the organizations might consider, as Mark Fenton O'Creevy (1996) has suggested, that their resistance is merely a reaction to constraints at higher levels, which prevent them from displaying 'empowering' behaviour. Hence, the resistance of management may merely be a symptom of the failure of many organizations to actually change their structures in order to facilitate empowerment fully. The research presented here suggests that employees felt some empathy for their immediate managers even though there was a certain amount of resentment towards their protective behaviour. In BT, employees seemed to be particularly aware that their line managers were in a position where they had to present a united management front, despite their varying opinions of the policy. Yet many employees questioned the sincerity of the schemes at the more senior levels.

There was also a suggestion in the research that because managers were left to pass the messages of empowerment and *'...for a better life'* down to their team, a resistant manager may mean that these messages are not getting through. Indeed, as Pickard (1993) found at Ciba, the empowerment message differed between both operating units and individual teams. Overall, it seems that what is required in the workplace, is a consistency of both management attitudes and behaviours, particularly at the level of the immediate manager, whom it seems is a central focal point of employee empowerment. It is suggested that rather than this being achieved through the removal of resistant managers or the 'scapegoating' of middle management, it is the role of the organization to reassure and direct managers into performing in an empowering way and to allow them to air their reservations, so that they can be addressed openly. If open and honest communications are not implemented, it appears that managers will continue to "act" out their compliance to empowerment whilst actively resisting any part of the initiative which threatens their jobs or, as Legge writes, "the policy may be diluted unintentionally through acts of omission rather than commission" (1995:60). If managers continue to present a committed face to top management, the stress of

whether the continuous acting of managers could lead to even deeper cynicism about the initiative and the policy as a whole: "does the process of acting out a part at odds with perceptions of reality, merely enhance cynicism and, paradoxically, a deeper rejection of the newly proselytised values?" (1995:202). Additionally, as has been shown in this research, employees will see through the facade, possibly lessening their commitment also. As Provis writes, "one can pretend to choose certain values, but that is different, and unlikely to be effective,: mixed messages are likely if managers advocate different values from the ones they really embrace, since communication 'leakage' is likely about their real values" (1996: 481).

In conclusion, much of the HRM literature has focused on the gap between rhetoric and reality in relation to employee commitment (Legge, 1995) often with the unconscious assumption that management is united behind the new initiatives. Alternatively popular management literature has tended to conceptualise middle managers as the 'frozen layer', blocking management appeals to the shopfloor. This research suggests that, while there may be some truth in the latter view, the perceived threats to their future livelihood mean that, for middle managers, the 'logic of the situation' makes it hard for them to embrace empowerment at any more than a surface level. This area appears to be fertile ground for future research in that the different strata of management appear to react to empowerment and affect others' feelings of empowerment in contrasting ways. Further investigation could consider this in more detail through detailed analysis of management views and their impact on staff. Investigating more conclusively why it is that senior management support has negative effects on feelings of employee empowerment whilst immediate management has the opposite impact.

An "Empowered" Personality?

The research presented here suggests that, whilst empowerment does not appear to be as reliant on an individual's personality characteristics as rankings of respondents and those interviewed predicted, there is still some effect. The fact that orientations to work were seen as having an effect on the relationship between organizational characteristics and feelings of empowerment, most particularly interest in

empowerment, suggests that the nature of the individual is a crucial aspect of the empowerment process. Lack of interest in empowerment also appears to be directly influenced by aspects of personality such as locus of control and individualism. Moreover, in BT a high need for achievement is most likely to predict this feeling that empowerment is a 'Good Thing'. Hence, it seems that personality characteristics do help to predict feelings of empowerment, particularly in BT where it has been surmised that respondents were responding to the dependent variables in relation to a more abstract concept.

However, whether the discovery of such relationships can actually help organizations change or develop their empowerment programmes is, to a large extent, dependent on one's view of personality. If one sees personality as an innate and unalterable characteristic of a person then organizations can do little but accept that all people are different and adjust their policies accordingly. For example, individualistic personalities prefer to work alone and to be judged on their merits independently from that of their team and may resist empowerment because of its association with teamwork. Perhaps such individuals could be set specific tasks that involve them achieving something in their own right rather than being set tasks where they rely on other group or team members. Those who gained low scores on the factor "Desire for Challenge and Hard Work" will be individuals who do not have a desire to improve on their past performances and who do not wish to take personal ownership of tasks. For these people, empowerment is not perceived as a 'Good Thing' because it involves increased workloads and an individual responsibility to take on challenging tasks. Managers might most effectively assess these individuals' capabilities to complete a task and, rather than failing to devolve any tasks to such people, the level and complexity of the task should be suited to that person. As one BT employee stated:

"Most employees would welcome well defined lines to be drawn telling them where their "empowerment" (responsibility) starts and finishes. Most people would have experiences of making a decision and then being reprimanded for their trouble. Decisions should be made by people who are paid to do it (management)"

Male, Age 47, BT

It is the role of the manager to encourage such individuals to participate and to reassure them of the importance of their participation by rewarding and recognising their contribution. Finally, respondents with a low need for achievement will be concerned with security and status rather than personal achievement. They will need reassurance that empowerment will not affect their position in the organization and yet could be encouraged, to take tasks on for the good of their future security rather than their personal development.

If, however, one accepts that personality can be affected by contextual factors, the role of the manager must be to identify the external, contextual factors that are affecting individuals' perceptions and aim to adapt their personalities to the new empowering environment. For example, those who avoid responsibility may do so because of a fear that they will be reprimanded for their mistakes. Indeed, the suggestion that this fear is a real one amongst employees was highlighted both in the qualitative research and by the additional comments made by employees on the questionnaires:

"Can be encouraged to take a risk but, when you do, you are asked to explain your actions and it sometimes undermines the authority you have. Especially if you have to make a decision there and then." Female, Age 32, BT

"There is no point having empowerment if any actions taken/ decisions made, are held against you by your superiors. If the lower grades are to be empowered then the higher grades must listen and not bear grudges if decisions/ ideas do not agree with them" Female, Age 27, The Benefits Agency

Another example might be, that the displaying of empowering behaviour should be more tied in to rewards and recognition, so that those who have an external locus of control can more easily see the salience of their behaviour to instrumental changes. There was an indication in the qualitative data that current appraisal schemes within the two companies under study are not succeeding in presenting a clear relationship between empowerment and recognition. There seems to be a feeling amongst employees that the appraisal system in The Benefits Agency, where PRP was far more common than in BT, is unfair and works against the ethos of empowerment. One

employee suggested in a Benefits Agency focus group that you have to fight for the recognition that you are taking on extra tasks:

> *"we were arguing some points and she* (the line manager) *said 'I see what you're saying and I fully agree with you but I don't really know what justifies a ranking higher than this one, so I think I'll leave it as it is'"*

Whilst others argued that managers choose a few 'favourites' to take part in activities, leaving the others to do the work who then have no opportunity to empower themselves:

"Empowerment has led to a lot of people being overworked in my office while others swan around showing off, taking part in fancy meetings which achieve nothing of any importance" Male, Age 32, The Benefits Agency

Hence, it seems that, as well as managers needing to thank and recognise staff participation, the wider appraisal systems must be adapted so that there is both a clearer relationship between empowerment and reward, and a fairer system that allows all employees an equal opportunity to take part. Overall, then, the research indicates that individual attitudes and personality attributes will affect people's attitudes to empowerment and, hence, organizations can not ignore the personal attributes of employees by assuming that there are those, who as Sheridan suggested, will always do less than is expected of them. Even if personality characteristics are considered innate and unalterable, it remains the role of the organization, and individual managers, to adapt empowerment to suit them. Moreover, if one sees contextual factors as able to socialize aspects of personality then there are several issues, particularly of recognition and a blame-free culture, that should be recommended as actions to be undertaken.

As well as differing on individual personality characteristics, this research also suggested that employees had developed different orientations to work, and that these were affecting the attributions which people were making to the empowerment process. Interestingly, however, despite the fact that respondents from the two organizations differed in terms of biographical characteristics such as gender composition and earning status, and undertook diverse tasks in the course of their

jobs, their reactions to empowerment were remarkably similar. This suggests that factors outside of the individual were more likely to influence feelings of empowerment. The qualitative data showed quite conclusively that many employees were reacting to the job insecurity which they were feeling by taking a more instrumental attitude to work and by expressing more interest in pay and job security than empowerment. This may account for the seemingly high percentage, of just less than a fifth of respondents, who were not interested in being empowered. Greenhalgh and Sutton (1991) suggested that in situations of job insecurity, trust between colleagues diminishes, and this was illustrated by the comments of one participant in a BT Focus Group:

"it's getting to the stage where instead of having a nice team where everybody looks after each other, it's a case of dog eat dog now, you know, it's getting to the stage that when you see a job advertised and your mate's looking for a job as well, you'll hide the Job News from him, you know"

The number of people who stated that they would continue to take a paid job in response to the "lottery" question, were surprisingly low in comparison to previous studies and this further suggests that employees were showing less commitment to work than previous samples. Whether this finding is characteristic of modern organizations due to the disillusionment caused by the recession of the early 1990s or is more indicative of the two organizations under study, may be considered by further research. However, the qualitative data does suggest that employees are feeling stressed and over-worked, and that this is affecting the enthusiasm with which they are greeting empowerment policies.

Union membership did emerge as a factor which affected interest in empowerment. This result is interesting in that it can be considered whether these negative feelings of empowerment are as a result of union influences, or whether the dissatisfaction with management (Guest and Dewe, 1988) and working conditions (Maxey and Mohrman, 1980) which caused union membership in the first place affects orientations to the new management initiatives. It is suggested here, that both of these factors may affect employee perceptions. Indeed, the fact that the unions concerned, took a position of sceptical engagement as regards empowerment suggests that this

approach may have had an affect on attributions. The question of whether one can be both committed to one's union and one's organization simultaneously emerges here. Coopey and Hartley (1991) suggest that trade union membership does not always damage organizational performance or commitment in that active unionists are often staunchly loyal to their organization. However, the tension which has been created in these organizations by the side-lining and devolution of the unions in two traditionally highly unionised organizations, may explain the absence of dual commitment which is suggested by these results.

Overall, then, there were differences between individuals as regards their interest in and attitudes towards empowerment, and these were governed both by aspects of personality and orientations to work, yet these characteristics appeared not to have much affect on the belief that one is empowered. This finding may be related to the rather rudimentary way in which "personality" was measured with the absence of many traits such as extraversion and it is suggested that other aspects of personality are considered in future research. However, despite this, it does appear that there is a distinction between wanting to be empowered and actually feeling that one is empowered and that, whilst the former is related to aspects of the individual, the latter remains reliant on organizational context, empowerment itself and the effectiveness of its implementation by management.

CONCLUSION: A Crisis of Expectations?

This thesis began by considering whether there might be some individuals who were more likely to react positively to empowerment than others, based on the possible effects of personality and socially determined orientations to work on attitudes to organizational characteristics and the relationship between perceived organizational reality and attitudes to empowerment. Whilst this emerged as the case in both the qualitative and quantitative research conducted, the results showed that, overall, feelings of empowerment were determined less by individual attitudes and more by issues surrounding the process of empowerment itself and the organizational context within which it was introduced. The fact that the effect of the individual is seen to be outweighed by contingent factors, suggests that empowerment is not a purely

cognitive process which exists in isolation from the wider world. There was much evidence to suggest that one's reaction to empowerment may be more socially determined. For example, union membership was seen to have an effect on the attributions which employees make about empowerment. Additionally job insecurity was found to affect strongly the way in which employees talked about their organization's empowerment initiative. Moreover, the fact that recent redundancies and the uncertain future of both organizations were influencing people's attitudes to work by increasing the importance they placed on pay and job security, meant that for many taking on extra work for no extra pay was the antithesis of the culture which they desired.

More centrally, there seemed to be a general problem regarding the actual substance of these empowerment programmes, as has been more widely found in research into other employee involvement techniques (Marchington et al, 1992).Neither company in this research appeared to have re-designed jobs in the sense that the Quality of Working Life school endorsed, that is in any way which transformed the working experience for employees. Instead, empowerment was associated with increased workloads and devolved responsibility, with blame rather than authority being passed down to the non-managerial level. In this sense, then empowerment may be seen as little more than a form of post-modernist discourse which masks the "harder" side of human resourcing techniques with a utopian term which provides empty promises of liberation and equality. The introduction of empowerment, into a society of organizations which are characterised by fewer staff, increasing competitive pressures, and a more individualistic style of management, appears to be a contradiction in itself, characterised as it is in these organizations, by more work and increased pressure to meet targets. In this sense, it seems the question must be - can empowerment ever be more than management rhetoric in the present organizational climate of insecurity and competitiveness? Indeed, can organizations ever gain the commitment of employees in such situations, where employees are fearful and often "too busy" to even consider taking on new tasks. However, despite these fundamental problems surrounding empowerment, there still appear to be several things which organizations can do to improve feelings of empowerment amongst their employees.

The role of management emerges as crucial to the success of empowerment on the 'shop floor'. Managers must not only be committed to empowerment, but must also behave in an empowering way. Whilst it is easy to blame middle managers for resisting empowerment, it is suggested here that organizations should also consider the effect of more senior management, and organizational procedures, and whether the roots of management resistance might be found there. Whilst the organizational context of red tape and targets is difficult to overcome, organizations must strive to improve their efficiency through the removal of any unnecessary forms and procedures which prevent employees having control over their job, and hence feeling empowered. Moreover, at the level of the individual, organizations must recognize that all employees will react to empowerment in different ways. Rather than removing those employees who seem to resist empowerment, there must be a recognition that employees can be motivated through a deeper understanding of their individual attitudes and their orientations to work, adapting empowerment procedures accordingly.

In conclusion, there is a need for organizations to recognize that empowerment is an entirely new approach which requires consistency and support at all levels. To succeed, empowerment must not merely exist as management rhetoric but must have true substance, involving changes in organizational structure; culture and climate; procedure; and management roles and attitudes. It seems that currently organizations are attempting to change the attitudes of staff without seriously tackling wider issues such as pay, security, promotion prospects, management behaviour, and aspects of the individual which, it has been clearly found here, ultimately affect their ability to "feel good" about their work. Moreover, this appears to result in employees who feel relatively positive about the empowerment process in theory but who are disappointed and disillusioned by the organizational reality with the consequence that less than half of those questioned feel empowered. Hence, this research challenges the assertion that the vagueness of Human Resource policies are their strength (Keenoy and Anthony, 1992) and concludes that, if senior management continue to introduce policies based around ambiguity, in the belief that such symbolism can harness

commitment, they will remain hampered by confused, disillusioned and distrustful staff let down by unfulfilled promises and unmatched expectations.

However, it would be a betrayal of the many different, sometimes contradictory, findings in this research to end on such a depressing tone. Despite the fact that, on balance, expressed attitudes to empowerment were largely negative there are certainly windows of encouragement which suggest that empowerment is having some positive impact. Indeed, considering the wider industrial context within which these organizations operate and the historically bureaucratic nature of their management style, any feelings of empowerment must be seen optimistically. Most particularly perhaps, the fact that nearly half of the respondents considered themselves to be empowered suggests that those factors which were seen to predict this feeling, such as management style and organizational culture and climate, are having some real effects on the shop floor. Hence, it is mith a mixture of caution and optimism that we can look to the future for although, as suggested above, there is much still left to do if empowerment is to be widely considered as any more than management rhetoric, there is evidence that for some empowerment is already becoming a reality.

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The Business School **APPENDIX A: INITIAL LETTER TO ORGANIZATIONS**

Loughborough University Loughborough Leicestershire LE11 3TU UK
Switchboard: +44 (0)1509 263171

Loughborough University

The Benefits Agency
ADDRESS (not included for confidentiality purposes)

9th March 1995

Dear .....(not included for confidentiality purposes)

I am currently a research student at Loughborough University Business School. As part of my research I am seeking participation from major organisations in three sectors: private services; manufacturing and the public sector. Having read of your interest in empowerment and considering the position of The Benefits Agency within a constantly changing, customer-focused, public sector environment, I believe The Agency would be of particular interest to the research I am currently conducting.

My research concerns the new employment practice of empowerment and its implications for the employees on the receiving end of such policies. I feel that this is an area of empowerment which has been overlooked but which will provide important and useful results for organisations which use, or seek to use, such human resource policies.

Obviously, the study would require some time from your employees and from the management team, however, I believe the findings would be of direct benefit to you. I have previously researched within another organisation for whom I have provided written reports with a wealth of statistical data, providing findings which have consequently been followed up by the organisation due to their importance and interest to those involved.

I do hope that The Benefits Agency will consider participating in this research and I will telephone you in two weeks time to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Denham

The Business School
Loughborough University Loughborough Leicestershire LE11 3TU UK
Switchboard: +44 (0)1509 263171

Loughborough University

APPENDIX B: RESEARCH PROPOSAL

PROPOSAL FOR RESEARCH

MAIN OBJECTIVE: To discover the reaction of non-managerial employees within the Personal Communications division to *"For A Better Life"* in terms of attitudes and reported behaviours.

SAMPLE: Two Directorates within the Personal Communications division. These will be chosen on the basis of the results of the current CARE survey.

RESEARCH AGENDA:
Managerial Interviews: Within each Directorate, I would like to speak with managers to hear their opinions and attitudes towards "For A Better Life" and to understand how the programme was implemented within the Directorate. If possible, I would like to speak with the following:

- The Director
- 2 "Direct Reports"
- 2 Line Managers
- 2 "Better Life" coaches (preferably 1 *managerial* and 1 *non-managerial*)

These interviews would last no longer than one hour each and would be preceded by a letter explaining the purpose of the research.

Focus Groups: Due to the size of the Directorates within the Personal Communications division, it is suggested that more than one focus group (perhaps 2 or 3) be conducted. This will allow a broader view of the Directorate to be ascertained as it will more effectively acknowledge the differentiation which exists amongst employees, e.g. across job roles and geographical areas.

Questionnaires: These will be distributed to all non-managerial employees in each Directorate. The questionnaires will measure attitudes to work and empowerment and seek to relate these to independent variables such as tenure, job role, gender et cetera.

OUTCOMES: The research will form the basis of my PhD thesis. Feedback will be provided to British Telecom in the form of a Management Report and a presentation of the main findings which will be given in Late 1996/ Early 1997.

Nicola Denham BA(Hons) MSc Grad IPD

APPENDIX C: TYPICAL MANAGEMENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

. Introduce myself

. Personal Employment history
. Department history and structure

. How has your empowerment initiative been tailored for your department?
. Was it introduced over a period/ overnight?

. What are the nature of the changes which empowerment has made in terms of organizational policy and structure?

. What aims did you have/ changes did you expect to see in your workforce as a result of the initiative?
. Were you right?

. Do you think everyone's on board (incl. Managers) ? If not, what are the reasons for resistance?

. What level of training and support accompanied the introduction of empowerment?

. How would you describe your personal style of management?

. Do you think unionization has affected the acceptance of the initiative in any way?

. Have other changes been introduced to the workforce alongside empowerment?

. How do you expect the initiative to affect you personally?

. What impact do you think the initiative will have on the level of control which employees have?

. What do you understand by the word "empowerment "? Do you use the term when talking to employees?

. Essentially, as you understand it, do you think empowerment is a good thing?

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Switchboard: +44 (0)1509 263171

APPENDIX D: TYPICAL LETTER TO POTENTIAL MANAGEMENT INTERVIEWEES

Loughborough University

FAO:

29th August 1995

Dear

I am a research student at Loughborough University Business School looking at the nature and effectiveness of empowerment programmes. BT have kindly offered to participate in this research and I am in the process of evaluating the success of '...for a better life' on the changing perceptions and actions of employees..

As part of this research I would like to talk to members of management regarding their views and attitudes towards empowerment. The interviews would last for about an hour and cover general aspects of empowerment and the implementation of "For A Better Life" within your Directorate. Anonymity will be maintained in all cases.

I do hope you will agree to meet with me and share your experiences of "For A Better Life" and I look forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Denham

APPENDIX E: TYPICAL FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

. Introduce myself (confidentiality, forget tape recorder, looking for general feelings about empowerment initiative and how it affects you).

. Introduce themselves (how long working for organization?)

. Tell me what you know about the empowerment initiative - how did you learn about it?

. Why do you think the initiative was introduced?

. Do you think your manager supports the empowerment initiative?

. Do you think senior managers support the empowerment initiative?

. Has it changed the way you work?

. Has it changed the way you feel?

. What do you understand by the word empowerment?

. Would you like to be empowered?

. Do you think "FABL" is about empowerment?

. Does unionisation have an effect?

. Any other comments

The Business School
Loughborough University Loughborough Leicestershire LE11 3TU UK
Switchboard: +44 (0)1509 263171

APPENDIX F: TYPICAL LETTER TO POTENTIAL FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Loughborough University

24th January 1996

FAO: All AA and LO2 staff
North Leicestershire District

To all AA and L02 staff

My name is Nicola Denham and I am a research student at Loughborough University Business School. As part of my current research I am seeking the attitudes and opinions of employees towards quality initiatives. The Benefits Agency have kindly offered to help in this research and I am working with the cooperation of the Unions and the Management of North Leicestershire District.

I am writing to ask for volunteers to take part in a discussion group on this topic which would last a maximum of 2-3 hours. For practical reasons there is a need to tape record the proceedings but, as is the norm in independent research projects, the tape will be handled by myself and will not be made available to anyone within the organisation.

I do hope this assurance of confidentiality will encourage you to volunteer for this discussion group and to speak openly about your views as it is important to this research that a true reflection of employee attitudes is gained.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Denham

The Business School
Loughborough University Loughborough Leicestershire LE11 3TU UK
Switchboard: +44 (0)1509 263171

Loughborough University

APPENDIX G: COVER LETTERS FOR QUESTIONNAIRES

4th November 1996

To: All AA and LO2 Staff
North Leicestershire

My name is Nicola Denham and I am a researcher at Loughborough University Business School looking at the effects of empowerment policies. The Benefits Agency have kindly offered to help in this research and I am working with the full cooperation of the Unions and Management at North Leicestershire District and I have already interviewed a number of managers and union representatives about their perceptions of empowerment.

To get a full picture of empowerment within your District it is important that as many people as possible give their views and, although the enclosed questionnaire may look rather long, it only takes 15 minutes to complete. I would be most grateful if you could spare the time needed to complete this questionnaire and return it by 22nd November 1996. All questionnaires are anonymous and will be treated in the strictest confidence, no-one in the organization will have access to the individual questionnaires and, to assure you of this, I have enclosed a pre-paid envelope addressed to me at the University.

The results of this research will be published in a management report early next year which will be held at both the Yeoman Street and Loughborough offices. I do hope you'll spend the time necessary to fill out this questionnaire as your views matter. If you remain in doubt about any aspect of this Questionnaire, please contact Meera Bhalla at Yeoman Street.

Thank you very much and I look forward to your reply.

Nicola Denham

Enc.

The Business School
Loughborough University Loughborough Leicestershire LE11 3TU UK
Switchboard: +44 (0)1509 263171

Loughborough University

4th November 1996

To: All AA and LO2 Staff
Preston District

My name is Nicola Denham and I am a researcher at Loughborough University Business School looking at the effects of empowerment policies. The Benefits Agency have kindly offered to help in this research and I am working with the cooperation of Management at Preston District, having already interviewed a number of managers and staff about their perceptions of empowerment.

To get a full picture of empowerment within your District it is important that as many people as possible give their views and, although the enclosed questionnaire may look rather long, it only takes 15 minutes to complete. I would be most grateful if you could spare the time needed to complete this questionnaire and return it by 22nd November 1996. All questionnaires are anonymous and will be treated in the strictest confidence, no-one in the organization will have access to the individual questionnaires and, to assure you of this, I have enclosed a pre-paid envelope addressed to me at the University.

The results of this research will be published in a management report early next year which will be held at Barry House. I do hope you'll spend the time necessary to fill out this questionnaire as your views matter. If you remain in doubt about any aspect of this Questionnaire, please contact Sandra Casey or Philip Aindow.

Thank you very much and I look forward to your reply.

Nicola Denham

Enc.

The Business School
Loughborough University Loughborough Leicestershire LE11 3TU UK
Switchboard: +44 (0)1509 263171

Loughborough University

Hello, my name is Nicola Denham and I am a researcher at Loughborough University Business School looking at the impact of culture change. PC have kindly offered to help in this research and I have already interviewed a number of senior managers about their perceptions of '*...for a better life*' .

To get a full picture of '*...for a better life*' it is important that as many people as possible give their views and, although I know that the enclosed questionnaire may look long, it only takes 15 minutes to complete. To encourage you to reply, I have enclosed two raffle tickets, just tear off one of the tickets and return it with the questionnaire in the envelope provided by 22ND NOVEMBER 1996 in order to enter the draw for a FREE BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE! But don't forget - keep the other raffle ticket as you will be notified of the winning numbers, by letter, in December.

All questionnaires are anonymous and will be treated in the strictest confidence. No-one in the organization will have access to the individual questionnaires and, to assure you of this, I have enclosed a pre-paid envelope addressed to me at the University. The findings of the research will be summarised in a management report early next year. The report will be held at the "Better Life" office and will be available to you if you wish to see it.

I do hope you'll spend the time necessary to fill out this questionnaire - remember your views matter and, if you don't return the questionnaire, you don't have a chance to win the champagne!!

Thank you very much and I look forward to your reply

ND Denham

Nicola Denham

Enc.

APPENDIX H (BT)

QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire should take you about 15 minutes to complete and seeks to evaluate your perceptions of *'...for a better life'*. The success and relevance of the study depends on the answers that you give so please respond as honestly and fairly as you can. There are no right or wrong answers and often the first answer that comes to mind is the best. Please complete the questionnaire yourself and thank you for taking the time to take part in the survey.

It should be stressed that each questionnaire is treated with absolute confidentiality. Individual questionnaires will not be seen by anybody in your organization and results will be fed back if requested.

SECTION ONE: YOU AND YOUR JOB

For the following set of questions please circle that number which corresponds to that answer which best describes your situation. Where a blank space is left please fill in the answer according to the question set:

1. Are you

	Male	1
or	Female	2

2. How old are you? (for the following question please enter two digits, one in each of the boxes)

☐☐ **years**

3. Do you have any dependents at home?

	Yes	1
or	No	2

4. In your household are you (please circle one response only):

The sole earner	1
The main earner	2
A joint earner	3
Live with parents	4

5. What of the following educational qualifications do you possess? (please place a cross in one or more appropriate boxes)

GCSE's / O-levels	☐
NVQ	☐
BT Apprenticeship	☐
A-levels or B-Tec	☐
HND or degree	☐
Higher degree	☐
Professional qualification	☐

6. If your job is graded, what grade are you?

	TSL	1
	CA	2
	CO	3
	Commo	4
Other (please specify)		5 .....

7. Do you work

	Part-Time	1
or	Full-Time	2

8. Do you work as part of a team?

	Yes	1
or	No	2

9. Are you responsible for any staff ?

	Yes	1
or	No	2

10. If you answered "yes" to Q9, how many staff are you responsible for? (for this question and the next three please enter a two digit number, e.g. If you have six people working for you please enter this as shown:

[0][6] staff)

[ ][ ] staff

11.How long have you worked for your organization in any capacity?

[ ][ ] years and [ ][ ] months

12. How long have you worked for your organization in your present role?

[ ][ ] years and [ ][ ] months

13. How long have you worked for your organization in your present grade?

[ ][ ] years and [ ][ ] months

14. When you leave your organization do you expect it to be due to (please circle the most likely reason):

Career Move/ Your own decision	1
Career Move/ Relocation	2
Retirement	3
Redundancy (voluntary or involuntary)	4
Termination	5
Couldn't say	6

15. If without having to work, you had what you would regard as a reasonable living income, do you think you would still prefer to have a paid job, or wouldn't you bother?

Would still prefer paid job	1
Wouldn't bother	2
Do voluntary work	3
Other (please specify)	4
Don't know	5

16. In your career, have you ever before been exposed to empowerment programmes?

	Yes	1
or	No	2

17. Are you a member of a trade union?

	Yes	1
or	No	2

18. If you answered "yes" to Q17, which trade union are you a member of?

NCU	1	
Other (please specify)	2	.....

19. Are you currently involved/ have you ever been involved in any of the following in your present organization?

	YES	NO
Regular Team Briefings	1	2
Quality Improvement groups	1	2
Developing a Personal Action Plan	1	2
Peer group meetings	1	2
Training and development	1	2
Suggestion schemes	1	2
Multi-skilling	1	2
Performance Related Pay	1	2

SECTION TWO

This section asks you to think about how you would like to work, independent of your current job or organisation. The section consists of a number of statements and will ask you to show the extent to which you agree or disagree with them. For example, if you strongly disagree with the first statement then please circle (1).

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

If you wish to change an answer, please put a line through the old answer.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1) I take moderate risks and stick my neck out to get ahead.	1	2	3	4	5
(2) I would be reluctant to air my views to the management of an organisation which I worked for in case it damaged my career.	1	2	3	4	5
(3) If I make a mistake I'm always prepared to admit it.	1	2	3	4	5
(4) I try to avoid added responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5
(5) I am the sort of person that likes to follow rules to give me a sense of order	1	2	3	4	5
(6) I often shy away from making major decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
(7) I disregard rules and regulations that hamper my personal freedom	1	2	3	4	5
(8) I like to take ownership for my actions	1	2	3	4	5
(9) I do my best when my assignments are fairly difficult	1	2	3	4	5
(10) I like to work alone	1	2	3	4	5
(11) I consider myself a "team player"	1	2	3	4	5
(12) In life, I try to be my own boss	1	2	3	4	5
(13) I go my own way regardless of the opinions of others	1	2	3	4	5
(14) If people trust me to do things well I normally perform better	1	2	3	4	5
(15) I try very hard to improve on my past performance	1	2	3	4	5
(16) If I meet a problem I've never encountered before, I feel confident I could make a decision about it without consulting others.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION THREE

The following questions ask you how you feel about yourself and your work. They contain two choices (1) and (2) please circle the choice which best describes your likes or feelings. If neither choice or both choices apply to you please choose that which you like most or dislike least.

I more strongly believe that:

1) In the long run people get the respect they deserve in this world 1

Unfortunately, an individual's worth often passes unrecognised no matter how hard he/she tries 2

2) Without the right breaks one cannot be an effective leader 1

Capable people who fail to become leaders have not taken advantage of their opportunities 2

3) One should always be willing to admit his/her mistakes 1

It is usually best to cover up one's mistakes 2

4) I have often found that what is going to happen will happen 1

Trusting to fate has never turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite course of action 2

5) Becoming a success is a matter of hard work, luck has little or nothing to do with it 1

Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time 2

6) The average citizen can have an influence in government decisions 1

This world is run by a few people in power and there is not much the average person can do about it 2

7) When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work 1

It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune anyhow 2

8) Who gets to be the boss often depends on who was lucky enough to be in the right place first 1

Getting people to do the right thing depends upon ability; luck has little or nothing to to do with it 2

9) A good leader expects people to decide for themselves what they should do 1

A good leader makes it clear to everybody what their jobs are 2

10) What happens to me is my own doing 1

Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking 2

In your worklife, how important are each of the following things to you personally? (please circle one response):

	Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Unsure	Important	Very Important
1) The freedom to schedule your own work	1	2	3	4	5
2) The freedom to perform your work in the manner you see fit	1	2	3	4	5
3) The feedback you receive from your supervisor about your performance	1	2	3	4	5
4) A job where you do a variety of tasks	1	2	3	4	5
5) A job where you do an entire piece of work from start to finish	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION FOUR: YOU AND YOUR TEAM

The following questions consider your thoughts on working with others. It does not matter if you do not work as a team as the questions relate to your general attitudes rather than actual experiences.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1) If a group is slowing me down it is better to leave it and work alone	1	2	3	4	5
(2) It is important to me that the values of my colleagues are similar to my own	1	2	3	4	5
(3) I like to be in a position where I have a strong affinity with my colleagues	1	2	3	4	5
(4) I perceive myself as an active group member	1	2	3	4	5
(5) It is important to me how I am regarded by my co-workers	1	2	3	4	5
(6) I like to be judged by my own merits not on the performance of a team	1	2	3	4	5
(7) I try to perform better than my co-workers	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION FIVE: YOU AND YOUR ORGANIZATION

This section asks about your views of the organization that you work for.

Please circle the number which indicates best the extent to which you agree with the statements below:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1) My organization cares about its customers	1	2	3	4	5
(2) I have a lot of control over how I do my job	1	2	3	4	5
(3) My organization believes in teamworking	1	2	3	4	5
(4) A feeling of "us" (the employees) and "them" (the management) exists within my organization	1	2	3	4	5
(5) I can make changes to my job whenever I want	1	2	3	4	5
(6) My organization values the ideas put forward by its employees.	1	2	3	4	5
(7) I do not have to go through a lot of red tape to change things	1	2	3	4	5
(8) My organization believes in having lots of layers of management	1	2	3	4	5
(9) I do not need to get the supervisor's approval before I handle problems	1	2	3	4	5
(10) My organization has a clear vision of what needs to be done and how to achieve it.	1	2	3	4	5
(11) I have the authority to correct problems when they occur	1	2	3	4	5
(12) I am allowed to be creative when I deal with problems at work	1	2	3	4	5
(13) The values which my organization holds are clearly communicated to me	1	2	3	4	5
(14) The organizational culture encourages its employees to continue to train and learn.	1	2	3	4	5
(15) I have enough power in this organization to control events that might affect my job	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
(16) Top management provides strong and clear leadership.	1	2	3	4	5
(17) I am allowed to do almost anything to do a high-quality job.	1	2	3	4	5
(18) Morale is high in my organization	1	2	3	4	5
(19) I am encouraged to handle job-related problems by myself	1	2	3	4	5
(20) In this organization, I can prevent negative things from affecting my work situation	1	2	3	4	5
(21) I understand this organization well enough to be able to control things that affect me	1	2	3	4	5
(22) I am proud to tell people which organization I work for	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION SIX: YOU AND YOUR MANAGER

These questions relate to your opinions of your immediate supervisor. Firstly:

(1) Is your immediate manager male 1 or female 2 ?

For the rest of this section please circle the number which best corresponds to the degree to which you agree or disagree with the folowing statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
(2) My manager has the respect of staff	1	2	3	4	5
(3) My manager feels each member of staff is important as an individual	1	2	3	4	5
(4) My manager encourages staff to participate in important decisions	1	2	3	4	5
(5) My manager encourages people to speak up when they disagree with a decision	1	2	3	4	5
(6) My manager makes most decisions without asking staff for their opinions	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION SEVEN: YOU AND EMPOWERMENT

Finally, this last set of questions ask you about empowerment in your organization and your opinions of its success.

Firstly, could you please give three words in the space below that describe your understanding of the term "empowerment".

.....

.....

(1) As you define it, above, do you think that empowerment is a "good thing"?

Yes, certainly	Yes, on balance	About equally good and bad	No, on balance	No, certainly not
1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
(2) I believe that *'...for a better life'* is about empowerment	1	2	3	4	5
(3) My immediate boss (manager) is committed to empowerment	1	2	3	4	5
(4) My boss's boss is committed to empowerment	1	2	3	4	5
(5) The Managing Director of my organization is committed to empowerment	1	2	3	4	5
(6) I believe that my understanding of empowerment matches that of my organization	1	2	3	4	5
(7) I consider myself to be empowered	1	2	3	4	5
(8) I am really not interested in being empowered	1	2	3	4	5

N.B. For questions 9 - 16, even if you do not participate in one or many of the activities mentioned please answer in terms of whether you think they would contribute to your empowerment if you did take part in them.

To what extent do you agree that the follwing activities contribute to your empowerment:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
(9) Regular team briefings	1	2	3	4	5
(10) Quality improvement teams	1	2	3	4	5
(11) Suggestion schemes	1	2	3	4	5
(12) Personal action plan	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
(13) Peer group meetings	1	2	3	4	5
(14) *Training and development*	1	2	3	4	5
(15) Multi-skilling	1	2	3	4	5
(16) Performance Related Pay	1	2	3	4	5

(17) *Are there any other activities which you undertake at work which you believe* to be empowering and, if so, what are they?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

(18) Please rank in order from 1- most important to 6-least important, how important you believe the following factors are to whether or not you can be empowered?

Senior Management Attitudes ☐

Line Managers Attitudes ☐

Your own personality ☐

The work that you do ☐

'...for a better life' ☐

Other factors (please specify) ☐ .....

(19) Finally, if you have any comments regarding empowerment within your organization i.e. what is good/bad about it, how it could be improved etc. please indicate these in the space below. Use additional sheets if necessary

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME !

APPENDIX H (The Benefits Agency)

QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire should take you about 15 minutes to complete and seeks to evaluate your perceptions of your organization's empowerment programme. The success and relevance of the study depends on the answers that you give so please respond as honestly and fairly as you can. There are no right or wrong answers and often the first answer that comes to mind is the best. Please complete the questionnaire yourself and thank you for taking the time to take part in the survey.

It should be stressed that each questionnaire is treated with absolute confidentiality. Individual questionnaires will not be seen by anybody in your organization and results will be fed back if requested.

SECTION ONE: YOU AND YOUR JOB

For the follwing set of questions please circle that number which corresponds to that answer which best describes your situation. Where a blank space is left please fill in the answer according to the question set:

1. Are you

	Male	1
or	Female	2

2. How old are you? (for the following question please enter two digits, one in each of the boxes)

☐☐ **years**

3. Do you have any dependents at home?

	Yes	1
or	No	2

4. In your household are you (please circle one response only):

The sole earner	1
The main earner	2
A joint earner	3
Live with parents	4

5. What of the following educational qualifications do you possess? (please place a cross in one or more appropriate boxes)

GCSE's / O-levels	☐
NVQ	☐
A-levels or B-Tec	☐
HND or degree	☐
Higher degree	☐
Professional qualification	☐

6. If your job is graded, what grade are you?

	A1	1
	A4	2
Other (please specify)		3 .....

7. Do you work

	Part-Time	1
or	Full-Time	2

8. Do you work as part of a team?

	Yes	1
or	No	2

9. Are you responsible for any staff ?

	Yes	1
or	No	2

10. If you answered "yes" to Q9, how many staff are you responsible for? (for this question and the next three please enter a two digit number, e.g. If you have six people working for you please enter this as shown:

[0][6] staff)

[ ][ ] staff

11.How long have you worked for your organization in any capacity?

[ ][ ] years and [ ][ ] months

12. How long have you worked for your organization in your present role?

[ ][ ] years and [ ][ ] months

13. How long have you worked for your organization in your present grade?

[ ][ ] years and [ ][ ] months

14. When you leave your organization do you expect it to be due to (please circle the most likely reason):

Career Move/ Your own decision	1
Career Move/ Relocation	2
Retirement	3
Redundancy (voluntary or involuntary)	4
Termination	5
Couldn't say	6

15. If without having to work, you had what you would regard as a reasonable living income, do you think you would still prefer to have a paid job, or wouldn't you bother?

Would still prefer paid job	1
Wouldn't bother	2
Do voluntary work	3
Other (please specify)	4
Don't know	5

16. In your career, have you ever before been exposed to empowerment programmes?

	Yes	1
or	No	2

17. Are you a member of a trade union?

	Yes	1
or	No	2

18. If you answered "yes" to Q17, which trade union are you a member of?

CPSA	1	
PTC	2	
Other (please specify)	3	.....

19. Are you currently involved/ have you ever been involved in any of the following in your present organization?

	YES	NO
Regular Team Briefings	1	2
Quality Improvement groups	1	2
Developing a Personal Action Plan	1	2
Peer group meetings	1	2
Training and development	1	2
Suggestion schemes	1	2
Multi-skilling	1	2
Performance Related Pay	1	2

SECTION TWO

This section asks you to think about how you would like to work, independent of your current job or organisation. The section consists of a number of statements and will ask you to show the extent to which you agree or disagree with them. For example, if you strongly disagree with the first statement then please circle (1).

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

If you wish to change an answer, please put a line through the old answer.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1) I take moderate risks and stick my neck out to get ahead.	1	2	3	4	5
(2) I would be reluctant to air my views to the management of an organisation which I worked for in case it damaged my career.	1	2	3	4	5
(3) If I make a mistake I'm always prepared to admit it.	1	2	3	4	5
(4) I try to avoid added responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5
(5) I am the sort of person that likes to follow rules to give me a sense of order	1	2	3	4	5
(6) I often shy away from making major decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
(7) I disregard rules and regulations that hamper my personal freedom	1	2	3	4	5
(8) I like to take ownership for my actions	1	2	3	4	5
(9) I do my best when my assignments are fairly difficult	1	2	3	4	5
(10) I like to work alone	1	2	3	4	5
(11) I consider myself a "team player"	1	2	3	4	5
(12) In life, I try to be my own boss	1	2	3	4	5
(13) I go my own way regardless of the opinions of others.	1	2	3	4	5
(14) If people trust me to do things well I normally perform better.	1	2	3	4	5
(15) I try very hard to improve on my past performance	1	2	3	4	5
(16) If I meet a problem I've never encountered before, I feel confident I could make a decision about it consulting others.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION THREE

The following questions ask you how you feel about yourself and your work. They contain two choices (1) and (2) please circle the choice which best describes your likes or feelings. If neither choice or both choices apply to you please choose that which you like most or dislike least.

I more strongly believe that:

1) In the long run people get the respect they deserve in this world **1**

Unfortunately, an individual's worth often passes unrecognised no matter how hard he/she tries **2**

2) Without the right breaks one cannot be an effective leader **1**

Capable people who fail to become leaders have not taken advantage of their opportunities **2**

3) One should always be willing to admit his/her mistakes **1**

It is usually best to cover up one's mistakes **2**

4) I have often found that what is going to happen will happen **1**

Trusting to fate has never turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite course of action **2**

5) Becoming a success is a matter of hard work, luck has little or nothing to do with it **1**

Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time **2**

6) The average citizen can have an influence in government decisions **1**

This world is run by a few people in power and there is not much the average person can do about it **2**

7) When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work **1**

It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune anyhow **2**

8) Who gets to be the boss often depends on who was lucky enough to be in the right place first **1**

Getting people to do the right thing depends upon ability; luck has little or nothing to to do with it **2**

9) A good leader expects people to decide for themselves what they should do **1**

A good leader makes it clear to everybody what their jobs are **2**

10) What happens to me is my own doing **1**

Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking **2**

In your worklife, how important are each of the following things to you personally? (please circle one response):

	Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Unsure	Important	Very Important
1) The freedom to schedule your own work	1	2	3	4	5
2) The freedom to perform your work in the manner you see fit	1	2	3	4	5
3) The feedback you receive from your supervisor about your performance	1	2	3	4	5
4) A job where you do a variety of tasks	1	2	3	4	5
5) A job where you do an entire piece of work from start to finish	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION FOUR: YOU AND YOUR TEAM

The following questions consider your thoughts on working with others. It does not matter if you do not work as a team as the questions relate to your general attitudes rather than actual experiences.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1) If a group is slowing me down it is better to leave it and work alone	1	2	3	4	5
(2) It is important to me that the values of my colleagues are similar to my own	1	2	3	4	5
(3) I like to be in a position where I have a strong affinity with my colleagues	1	2	3	4	5
(4) I perceive myself as an active group member	1	2	3	4	5
(5) It is important to me how I am regarded by my co-workers	1	2	3	4	5
(6) I like to be judged by my own merits not on the performance of a team	1	2	3	4	5
(7) I try to perform better than my co-workers	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION FIVE: YOU AND YOUR ORGANIZATION

This section asks about your views of the organization that you work for.

Please circle the number which indicates best the extent to which you agree with the statements below:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
(1) My organization cares about its customers	1	2	3	4	5
(2) I have a lot of control over how I do my job	1	2	3	4	5
(3) My organization believes in teamworking	1	2	3	4	5
(4) A feeling of "us" (A1/A4) and "them" (B3 supervisor and above) exists within my organization	1	2	3	4	5
(5) I can make changes to my job whenever I want	1	2	3	4	5
(6) My organization values the ideas put forward by its employees.	1	2	3	4	5
(7) I do not have to go through a lot of red tape to change things	1	2	3	4	5
(8) My organization believes in having lots of layers of management	1	2	3	4	5
(9) I do not need to get the management's approval before I handle problems	1	2	3	4	5
(10) My organization has a clear vision of what needs to be done and how to achieve it.	1	2	3	4	5
(11) I have the authority to correct problems when they occur	1	2	3	4	5
(12) I am allowed to be creative when I deal with problems at work	1	2	3	4	5
(13) The values which my organization holds are clearly communicated to me	1	2	3	4	5
(14) The organizational culture encourages its employees to continue to train and learn.	1	2	3	4	5
(15) I have enough power in this organization to control events that might affect my job	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
(16) Top management provides strong and clear leadership	1	2	3	4	5
(17) I am allowed to do almost anything to do a high-quality job.	1	2	3	4	5
(18) Morale is high in my organization	1	2	3	4	5
(19) I am encouraged to handle job-related problems by myself	1	2	3	4	5
(20) In this organization, I can prevent negative things from affecting my work situation	1	2	3	4	5
(21) I understand this organization well enough to be able to control things that affect me	1	2	3	4	5
(22) I am proud to tell people which organization I work for.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION SIX: YOU AND YOUR SUPERVISOR

These questions relate to your opinions of your immediate supervisor. Firstly:

(1) Is your immediate supervisor male 1 or female 2 ?

For the rest of this section please circle the number which best corresponds to the degree to which you agree or disagree with the folowing statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
(2) My supervisor has the respect of staff	1	2	3	4	5
(3) My supervisor feels each member of staff is important as an individual	1	2	3	4	5
(4) My supervisor encourages staff to participate in important decisions	1	2	3	4	5
(5) My supervisor encourages people to speak up when they disagree with a decision	1	2	3	4	5
(6) My supervisor makes most decisions without asking staff for their opinions	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION SEVEN: YOU AND EMPOWERMENT

Finally, this last set of questions ask you about empowerment in your organization and your opinions of its success.

Firstly, could you please give three words in the space below that describe your understanding of the term "empowerment".

.....

.....

(1) As you define it, above, do you think that empowerment is a "good thing"?

Yes, certainly not	Yes, on balance	About equally good and bad	No, on balance	No, certainly
1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
(2) My immediate boss (supervisor) is committed to empowerment	1	2	3	4	5
(3) My boss's boss is committed to empowerment	1	2	3	4	5
(4) The Chief Executive of my organization is committed to empowerment	1	2	3	4	5
(5) I believe that my understanding of empowerment matches that of my organization	1	2	3	4	5
(6) I consider myself to be empowered	1	2	3	4	5
(7) I am really not interested in being empowered	1	2	3	4	5

N.B. For questions 8 - 15, even if you do not participate in one or many of the activities mentioned please answer in terms of whether you think they would contribute to your empowerment if you did take part in them.

To what extent do you agree that the follwing activities contribute to your empowerment:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
(8) Regular team briefings	1	2	3	4	5
(9) Quality improvement teams	1	2	3	4	5
(10) Suggestion schemes	1	2	3	4	5
(11) Personal action plan	1	2	3	4	5
(12) Peer group meetings	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
(13) Training and development	1	2	3	4	5
(14) Multi-skilling	1	2	3	4	5
(15) Performance Related Pay	1	2	3	4	5

(16) Are there any other activities which you undertake at work which you believe to be empowering and, if so, what are they?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

(17) Please rank in order from 1- most important to 6-least important, how important you believe the following factors are to whether or not you can be empowered?

Senior management attitudes ☐

Line Managers attitudes ☐

Your own personality ☐

The work that you do ☐

The Strand 2/ Personal Development training ☐

Other factors (please specify) ☐ .....

(18) Finally, if you have any comments regarding empowerment within your organization i.e. what is good/bad about it, how it could be improved etc. please indicate these in the space below. Use additional sheets if necessary

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME !

APPENDIX I: SUMMARY OF STRAND 2 TRAINING MANUAL

NOTES FROM STRAND 2 TRAINING MANUAL: MANAGING THE FUTURE

This Office Based Learning (OBL) material is intended for use by staff in all management grades (EO/LO1 to SEO). The books are intended to contribute to the manager's development of the Agency's core competencies. The material is divided into seven books, each within its own ring binder.

The following section contains a summary of important quotes from the material to give an idea of the training given in this 'Strand 2', or "Culture Change", training module. The books all contain references to other BA publications and training courses. There are questions at the end of each part to recap the main issues. The summary will be split according to the seven books noted above.

SI 1400A & 1400B - MAKING PLANS

Book 1 contains detail on visions, aims and objectives. It includes discussion of such issues all the way from the parent organisation - The Department of Social Security - down to the role of each individual in collecting information and using and monitoring a plan.

Part 1 - Overview

00A:5 The emphasis is on the people that carry out the day to day business. It is they who are in the best position to assert themselves and influence the Agency's strategy.

00A:8 Everyone in an organisation should contribute to producing the right decisions and actions which affect both themselves and their customers.

We all have something to offer in the way of:

* searching for new opportunities
* suggesting alternative solutions, and
* thinking about the future implications of today's decisions.

00A:9 With the use of notes, the Reader should, at the end of this book, be able to:

* define the concept of planning, and appreciate what the process involves for the Unit, BA and DSS
* actively contribute to the information gathering process, appreciating how to analyse and use the data collected
* appreciate the need to appraise all options, and describe how plans are used, monitored and reviewed
* understand management spending (optional).

Part 2 - Strategy and Planning

00A:14 All plans will therefore affect other people, so it is vital that planning never takes place in isolation.

00A:15 Strategic planning...is an orderly process by which senior management determines:

* organisation objectives
* strategies needed to achieve these objectives, and
* short-range, top-level actions necessary to implement the strategy properly.

All managers have a stake in this process and so successful strategic planning requires input from formal planners at all levels of management in the organisation if it is to be carried out successfully.

00A:16 Strategic planning is the opportunity for everyone to be involved in shaping the future of their organisation. Not only does this encourage commitment on the part of all contributors, but it also reduces resistance to proposed change. Most people will accept decisions if they have participated in their making and understand the:

* limiting factors, and
* possible alternatives.

Part 3 - The Department of Social Security

00A:28 Each Agency has a clear responsibility to carry out its business in a manner which contributes towards the DSS aims and objectives.

Part 4 - The Benefits Agency

00A:33 The BA has a vision of the kind of organisation it aims to become in the longer term, and the quality of service it will provide. It wants to provide:

* prompt and accurate advice and payment delivered by
* expert and committed staff in a manner
* suited to customers' needs in a
* friendly and accessible environment.

00A:34 Core competencies are the things you should be doing to help you do your job effectively. In other words, applying the skills, abilities and knowledge you have in particular ways in order to get your job done.

Part 6 - Unit Planning

00A:47 Strategic and Business Plans are important business tools, and must be referred to continually throughout the year.

Part 7 - Research

00A:57 One of the secrets of successful planning is that you should be well informed.

Regular information gathering, or research, exercises are vital in any decision making process.

00A:66 Good communication plays a vital part when you're collecting relevant and useful information from all your sources. Make sure that everyone knows what you are doing - and why.

Establish clear and open channels between staff, customers, planners and other organisations. This helps to:

* encourage staff involvement which in turn helps to build commitment to final outcomes.
* accurately identify needs and wants
* demonstrate to customers that we are genuinely interested in providing the best service to meet local needs.

Listen to the views of staff who actually deal with the customers. They have a remarkably accurate view of the main priorities to be addressed.

Don't forget though, that you must be able to live within the resources likely to become available.

00A:68 We must keep clear in our minds that:

* our plans should contribute towards the BA:
  . aims
  . objectives
  . vision
  . priorities
  . core values.
* all plans must eventually be implementable
* we all have finite resources
* things change
* we sometimes have conflicting demands

Part 8 - Using Information

00A:73 Having grouped your information, you may be able to see a clearer picture of your Unit and how it is performing - based on fact rather than assumption.

00A:74 When interpreting the results of your analysis you are taking an objective look at:

* your whole business
* your service provision, and
* the environment in which your Unit functions.

The thinking process is a most valuable part of planning. It is vital to work out where you are as an organisation in these terms.

Part 9 - Considering Options

00B:95 So, we have successfully translated the raw data from our research into a specific costed project to include in our plan. We can justify the decision taken and have confidence in it.

00B:97 Plans have to be realistic and achievable. Keep your AD or Branch Head informed, as they may need to prioritise projects.

00B:99 The need to learn from past experience in order to improve future decision making is an essential part of good management.

It is important that the project execution plan and any business case make it clear that a review will take place, and when. This will reduce tensions if a project does encounter problems and everyone will understand that a review is not about apportioning blame.

Part 10 - Putting a Plan Together

00B:101 The Unit manager is responsible for the final content of the plan, but it should be the product of wide consultation - both internal and external. Planning is not done in isolation. Staff throughout the Unit will have been involved in the stages leading up to the production of the document.

00B:103 The Strategic Steer helps further by telling the manager how much money is likely to be available for the strategic period, so that they can see which projects the Unit can afford each year.

This is known as the **resource assumption.**

The cost of any proposed actions must be contained within this resource assumption. Knowing how much is likely to be available enables managers to consider precisely what *actions it is possible to implement.*

00B:106 You **must** be able to incorporate changes into the plans if necessary. One of the benefits of using option appraisal for your decisions is that you already have alternatives to fall back on.

Part 11 - Using a Plan

00B:110 In order to achieve the objectives within the Business Plan, managers must translate the Business Plan into work, management and personal development objectives for their management teams. They in turn set related objectives for their staff.

This means that everyone is working towards a common goal. In turn this means that all our individual performance appraisal reports reflect our performance in achieving successful plans.

It is essential then for staff throughout the Unit to be involved in the planning process. It gives them a chance to be heard, and to contribute to and influence their own futures.

Individual participation

Participation is vital if managers and staff are to feel a sense of ownership for the plan and to be committed to its successful implementation.

Strategic planning, with its clear vision of the future and a route to get there, rewards staff in terms of empowerment and motivation.

Part 12 - Monitoring a Plan

00B:120 You should also aim to keep up to date about what is happening in your environment.

Being aware of what is happening in your environment will help identify potential issues at early stages.

It may not be likely that all changes would have an impact, but the sooner you know about them the easier it is to review and possibly revise plans to take account of them.

SI 1401 - HITTING THE TARGET

Book 2 refers to targets within the Benefits Agency. It explains how an empowered environment, good teamwork, effective leadership and open communication can help a manager and his team achieve these targets. It is a practical guide to developing, meeting and monitoring targets and it also includes checklists against which managers can appraise both themselves and their teams.

Part 1 - Overview

01:6 In an empowered environment, it is the people who carry out the day to day running of the Agency's business who are in the best position to set levels of performance and put these into practice to achieve targets.

01:7 At the end of this book, the Reader will, with the aid of notes be able to:

* understand what a target is, why targets are set, the target setting process and the different roles played in that process
* describe the different methods and techniques which may be used to organise and plan for target achievement and the role staff members can play in this
* implement systems whereby they are able to control, monitor and if necessary, review the processes of target achievement.

Part 2 - Introduction

01:12 The customer is central to the achievement of targets because the basic criterion by which the performance of any person or group is judged is the ultimate impact on the customer.

Knowing who your customer is, is important. You must bear in mind that the range of customers is wide and includes:

* internal customers - these include other sections, BAMT, Ministers and Benefit Support Branches. It also includes the people who work with you

* external customers - these include other government departments and the people who are paid benefits by the Agency.

Part 3 - The Target Setting Process

01:19 The target setting process is a **bottom-up** and **empowered** process. It is recognised that the best way to set realistic but stretching targets is to allow the people who actually need to achieve the targets to be involved in the setting of them.

Part 4 - Empowerment and Ownership

01:25 Empowerment is about responsibility and ownership. Empowerment is a two way process. It involves you, as a Team Leader delegating responsibility and gaining the trust of your team members. However, it is vital that once delegated to, team members are willing to own the responsibility which they have been given and take the opportunity of contributing to achieving targets. Empowerment requires:

* encouragement of ideas and suggestions
* teambuilding
* effective leadership
* excellent communication
* motivation and commitment.

01:26 Ownership of the responsibility for targets is essential if they are to be achieved. Ownership of target achievement fosters pride, job satisfaction and valuable contributions to the achievement process.

Targets must be owned by the people who have the task of achieving them. Target owners must feel that targets serve their own interests as well as the Agency's. Otherwise, they are not being truly empowered and will only pay lip-service to their achievement. Targets are a way in which it is possible to achieve a greater input to the day's business. As they provide a framework in which to operate they enable us to manage our working lives better.

01.29 Obtaining agreement to targets is best achieved by getting staff members to own the responsibility for achieving them. This can be done by concentrating on three important aspects:

. alignment
. capability, and
. trust.

* **Alignment** - requires that staff members share the vision of the Agency for achieving business success. This is most likely in an empowered environment where the ideas of each individual are positively recognised and welcomed.

* **Capability** - staff members must have the ability, skills and knowledge to achieve their targets.

* **Trust** - mutual trust is the final important aspect of gaining agreement to achieving targets.

Part 5 - Organising for Target Achievement

01:33 Achieving targets is central to the business success of the Agency by providing the best possible customer service. Teamwork is the way you and your staff members work together to succeed in that aim. In an empowered environment, you may not be responsible for building a team. Your staff members may empower themselves to do this, either consciously or unconsciously. However, where this does not happen, you, as the leader of your staff members, are responsible for ensuring that a good team is built.

Effective teamwork can breed motivation and commitment which is essential for target achievement.

An effective team is one that achieves its targets and is then ready to face more challenging tasks in the future.

There are ten steps to building a successful team to achieve targets. these are the building blocks with which to construct a team, they are:

* Clear targets
* Balanced roles
* Openness and honesty
* Support and trust
* Co-operation
* Appropriate leadership
* Regular review
* Individual development
* Sound inter-group relations
* Good communications

01:43 In an empowered environment, leadership involves focusing the efforts of your staff members towards achieving targets and enabling them to work together as a team.

01:48 Without communication of ideas and initiatives, staff members are not empowered to act as they possess insufficient information.

01:49 Communication is a two-way process. This means that you must regularly pass information on to your team but also listen to what your team is telling you. Remember that no individual is perfect but a team can be. This means that your team could have a better way of achieving targets than you.

01:51 There should be no restrictions on who you communicate with on your team. Everyone has an equal right to information.

01:52 Communicate as much as you are able. Withholding information disempowers team members and decreases their ownership of the responsibility of achieving targets. It also demotivates team members and lessens their commitments to target achievement.

Written communication can be disempowering as it doesn't always allow an opportunity for input from team members.

01:54 Targets can have a demotivating effect if they are regarded as a figure to be hit. However, if staff members recognise them as valuable indicators of performance, they are more likely to want to achieve them in order to improve their performance.

Creating a sense of purpose amongst your teams can be accomplished in a number of ways:

* help their understanding of why targets are important to the organisation as a whole
* place the achievement of targets in the context of their own personal development
* demonstrate your own conviction to achieving targets

Commitment is accepting the ownership of responsibility for achieving targets. Gaining commitment is essential if targets are to be achieved in an empowered environment.

Empowerment is listed as one of the factors to take into account when trying to motivate your team:

01:58 This is about the encouragement of ideas and suggestions. Motivation is crucial in an empowered organisation. Only when responsibility is accepted can the Agency achieve business success. Encouraging views and opinions unleashes the massive potential of your team and motivates them to succeed further.

Part 6 - Planning for Target Achievement

01:72 Your team members are the ones who carry out the plan to achieve targets. So, they are in the best position to tell you about their strengths and weaknesses in relation to achieving targets. Canvass their views and you will know where you are best concentrating your efforts in order to achieve targets.

01:77 Each member of the team brings a different perspective, experience, imagination and judgement to bear upon the problem solving and decision making process. Generating options is part of the team building process of target achievement. It is essential to get the whole team involved in planning for targets in order to gain the team's commitment to their achievement. Team members who participate in the planning process are more motivated to carry out the final decision.

01:78 It is necessary to look at how you can encourage creative thought.

* **Don't limit thinking to the 'tramlines' of your present experience** - this means accepting that the way you have always done things isn't the only way of doing them. This is the essence of empowerment, opening your mind to new ideas and suggestions.

* **Don't be frightened of looking foolish** - limiting your contributions to things which are safe and conventional is a direct barrier to creative thinking. If your team see that you are willing to suggest things which might appear foolish, they will follow your lead. This opens up a wealth of ideas and opinions.

* **Don't evaluate instantaneously** - give ideas a chance before you throw them in the waste bin just because they appear impractical, impossible or simply crazy.

* **Accept that there is no single right answer** - there may be a less obvious, creative solution that could be missed if you take an analytical approach.

01:80 To practice brainstorming effectively to maximise team participation you need to follow certain rules:

* **there should be no criticism of ideas thrown up during the meeting**
* **encourage freewheeling**
* **generate as many ideas as possible**
* **incubate ideas before evaluating them**

Part 7 - Control and Monitoring for Target Achievement

01:92 Ideally, your team should develop its own commitment as they work towards achieving their targets. They should be working in a honest, open and empowered environment which encourages trust and ownership of responsibilities.

You can help maintain commitment by stressing how important every team member's contribution is, and ensuring that their ideas and views are input if you need to make amendments to your plan.

01:98 Visual methods of monitoring can gain the commitment of your team as you can encourage them to complete the charts or graphs themselves. This means that they own the responsibility of monitoring themselves.

01:105 Deriving solutions to problems is an ideal opportunity for you to reinforce the commitment of your team to achieving targets. Your team are the people who have identified that the plan isn't working to achieve targets. Involving them in the problem solving process is likely to generate better solutions. It also creates ownership and responsibility of implementing the solution so that you can achieve your targets.

01:107 Your team members are the people in the best position to tell you why the plan hasn't worked. By discussing with them what they think the causes are, you will be able to replan and avoid the same pitfalls.

Part 8 - Looking Forward

01:114 Providing feedback to your team members is an essential part of looking forward when you have achieved your targets. Through feedback, team members learn about their performance, the effect their contribution has on the team and the achievement process and their individual development.

01:116 Change is a constant feature of an empowered organisation. It is easy to fall into the trap of believing that because you have achieved your targets once using a certain method, this method will always help you to achieve your targets.

SI 1402 - IMPROVING EFFICIENCY AND PERFORMANCE

Book 3 looks at efficiency and performance improvement and how empowerment and an awareness of customer needs, can help in this aim. It goes into some detail as regards work analysis, process mapping and performance improvement models which have not been summarised here due to lack of space. However, the implications which the book interpreted these processes as having, are included below.

Part 1 - Overview

02:9 It is the people who actually carry out the day to day business of the Agency who are in the best position to identify where these efficiencies and improvements can be made and to suggest ways of putting them into practice.

'Improving Efficiency and Performance' is designed to contribute to the development of knowledge and skills needed by managers and staff at all levels in an empowered organisation, to play a constructive and pro-active part in helping their team, District or Unit achieve success.

Part 2 - Efficiency

02:14 For our purposes in the Benefits Agency, efficiency is defined in these two ways:

* increased output from a fixed level of resources, or
* reducing resources needed to achieve the same output.

Another reason why it's important to try to improve efficiency is that the Agency, like all other Government Departments, is required by Treasury and the Secretary of State to find efficiency savings of 2% per year. Half of these savings must be found by central initiatives. The other 1% is expected to be found locally.

Improvements and efficiencies should always be identified and implemented where possible.

02:17 It is important to let others know if you or a member of your team has an idea which potentially improves efficiency on your section.

Part 3 - Performance Improvement

02:26 Just as small improvements at a personal level have a "knock on" effect throughout the Agency, so too do improvements at a team level.

It is at this level where all staff should play a part in looking for innovative and more effective ways of working. It is also the level that the rest of this book concentrates on.

Part 4 - Empowerment

02:31 An organisation needs to be in place which fosters a culture where you and your staff feel able to make contributions and suggestions about how ways of working can be changed for the better and in many cases actually put these ideas into practice.

It is in this area where the idea of **empowerment** becomes important.

02:33 You will have come across the idea of empowerment before. The concept is central to the Agency's change programme. The idea behind empowerment is that an organisation is structured in a different way to the traditional hierarchy which has the head of the organisation at the apex of a pyramid and several layers of command beneath.

An empowered organisation reverses these traditional ideas. Although there is still a need for a management structure, the form it takes is less hierarchical and its function is less about telling the staff what to do and how to do it than **enabling** the work force to carry out its duties in the most effective way possible.

Before an organisation can be said to be empowered there are three criteria which **must** be met. These are:

* alignment
* capability
* trust.

02:35 Empowerment is important in another respect. This is that improving performance and efficiency is best brought about if **everyone** is involved in the process.

Empowerment should be about **all** staff being given the support and encouragement to change the way their work is carried out.

You have now finished this short part on empowerment. However, the concept is one which you should keep in mind as you read the remaining parts of the book. It is a theme which runs throughout this and all the other modules in the series and it is central to the way in which the Benefits Agency is now carrying out its business.

Part 5 - The Importance of the Customer

02:38 The customer's **needs** are the reason for doing your job. By looking closely at these needs in relation to your work processes, improvements can be made.

Customers are important to the performance improvement process because by focusing on their needs it is possible to not only design more efficient work processes but also to improve the quality of what is being produced.

This is done by actually **involving** the customer in the work process and finding out precisely what the customer wants, expects, and needs from you.

02:40 For our purposes a customer can be defined as the person who uses the work which you produce. They may use this either as an end in itself (benefit recipients) or as a supply or input for their own work.

Part 6 - Reducing Waste

02:45 You and your team can probably think of many ways to improve efficiency and should not be afraid to do so. You may also want to suggest that any ideas you have be adopted generally. Remember that you are now part of an empowered workforce and that all improvements, however small, are important.

02:46 When looking to try to reduce waste, you should be asking yourself the question, "does the work I am carrying out at the moment benefit the customer?"

If the answer to this question is "no", then you should consider whether you should be doing the work at all.

Part 8 - The Six Step Model

02:70 Remember that improvement can only take place in an empowered organisation and in such an organisation suggestions from staff must be given consideration and in most cases implemented.

02:77 The various theories, models and concepts which you have read about will, if applied to real work situations in a systematic way, enable you to make a real difference to the performance and efficiency of your team. No matter how small or insignificant some of these improvements may seem, they are all important and will all contribute to the overall efficiency and performance of the Agency.

SI 1403 - GETTING VALUE FOR MONEY

Book 4 is a specific module which covers the issue of Investment Appraisal and Business Cases. It provides readers with the knowledge and skills to be able to carry out a basic investment appraisal (a calculation of which solution to a problem offers the best value for money) and produce a business case (the product of the investment appraisal process). Due to its complexity and the detailed nature of the material, only general information is quoted in the summary below.

Part 1 - Overview

03:6 This module aims to:

* teach Readers how investment appraisal fits into the planning system
* provide Readers with the knowledge and skills to be able to carry out a basic investment appraisal and produce a business case.

Part 2 - Planning

03:9 DSS, as a public organisation, is accountable to the Government for making the best use of public funds.

The DSS has to show how it intends to achieve its aims and objectives. The stronger the case for showing it can actually do this, the better the chance of receiving the necessary funds.

The BA also has aims and objectives to meet, and therefore has to produce plans to show how it intends to do this.

Part 3 - Investment Appraisal and Business Cases

03:13 In the past, there may have been just one person in your workplace who was responsible for looking after budgets or drawing up plans for your Unit. Increasingly, managers at all levels are becoming responsible and therefore accountable for their own resources.

These responsibilities are being delegated and more and more people are finding themselves involved in the world of financial management.

03:14 The process of investment appraisal is designed to assist in the selection of the solution which offers the **best value for money**. It involves much more than merely looking at the figures to see which is the cheapest option - it is the drawing together of all the financial and non-financial considerations to ensure that sound decisions are reached.

03:15 Small expenditures, such as office equipment and other running costs, generally justify less detailed appraisal than larger expenditures, although the same principles apply.

It is these smaller expenditure decisions that this module concentrates on.

03:16 In order to be effective, appraisal must:

* be the norm
* be carried out early enough
* be carried out in sufficient detail
* be based on correct, up-to-date technical criteria
* be given due weight in decision making

03:17 The most important condition is your attitude of mind. Success is difficult unless and until seeking value for money is seen as a major part of your job.

03:20 Better financial management can be attained through delegated authority. Hand in hand with delegation is accountability. Investment appraisal protects the budget holder when making decisions.

However, when authority is delegated, thorough procedures are needed to ensure that any appraisal completed is carried out effectively. You need to know that authority is delegated to you and that procedures are clear and valid.

Specific responsibilities at all levels should be clearly defined.

Part 4 - The Investment Appraisal Process

03:25 Once the problem or project is identified, you than have to turn this into an objective.

03:26 An object can be defined as:

* a statement describing a specific target to be reached, usually including a "by" date

03:29 You need to keep an open mind when drawing up your options. You are trying to think of every possible way of meeting your objectives - even though many may be rejected at an early stage due to cost or technical constraints.

03:33 Once you have drawn up a full list of options, the next stage is to evaluate them - in other words, measure them against your objectives to see if they are met.

SI 1404 - MANAGING INFORMATION

Book 5 refers to the management of information and its use in the decision making process. It compares useful and unnecessary information stating that the latter should be reduced in an attempt to become more efficient. Also explained is the need for everyone to be aware of and to understand, the information passing within the organisation through effective communication.

Part 1 - Overview

04:4 This book is about how the Agency can become a more efficient organisation by the staff themselves identifying areas for improvement and in many cases actually making the changes themselves.

The book will stress that it is the people who actually carry out the day to day business of the Agency who are in the best position to identify and make improvements and that the key to this working well in practice is an **empowered** workforce.

04:5 The overall aim of this module is to provide the Reader with a means to understand the significance of information as a resource for managers, and to empower you to identify your staffs' and your own information requirements systematically, in order to achieve your aims and objectives more efficiently in your workplace.

Part 2 - Information and Data

04:7 In an empowered situation it is up to **you** as an individual to manage all this information to your own requirements, this book will give you some theories and hopefully stimulate some ideas, but only you can decide how to take these ideas forward into your workplace.

04:11 Understandability is what transforms data into information. If the information is not understood it cannot be used and thus cannot add value.

04:13 **Information**, then, is "**an increment of knowledge**", it contributes to the general framework of concepts and facts that we know. Information relies on the context (your question) and the general knowledge of the *recipient for its significance.*

04:21 Whatever the information is, to be good, it must be PART i.e.

Pertinent
Accurate
Relevant
Timely

Part 4 - Communicating Information

04:23 Teams cannot function without free and open communications between their members. Without communication there can be no team, only individuals doing their own thing.

By presenting the facts in an obvious format the ideas will sell themselves. Then, appropriate action is easy to see and nobody needs telling what to do. Most people will obey the "law of the situation" and just get on and do it.

Part 10 - Information Audit

04:53 Managing information is an ongoing process and if you are to succeed in these skills you have to continuously speak to both your customers and the suppliers of your information.

SI 1405 - DELEGATING IN AN EMPOWERED ENVIRONMENT

Book 6 looks at the delegation process and its relationship to empowerment. It concentrates on the role of the delegator, rather than the delegatee, due to the design of the material for the management grades. The central ethos of this particular book seems to be the definition of empowerment as "offering help without taking responsibility". In essence, delegating with the right balance of control. It also includes a Learning Styles questionnaire, so they can be made aware of their own, and other people's style of learning.

Part 1 - Overview

05:3 At the heart of empowerment is "offering help without taking responsibility".

Poor delegation is disempowering. However, true delegation involves a skilled approach to help, encourage and develop staff.

Delegation has been driven to the forefront of business by the Strand 2 initiative. It involves questioning the grade system and re-examining the tasks carried out by various grades.

As a result many tasks can be delegated to different grades. It allows the flexibility for staff to develop beyond rigid job descriptions and become more empowered.

The Benefits Agency (BA) has as one of its management competencies, "Contributing towards BA aims and values". It comprises:

* team building and leadership
* developing staff
* delegation
* encouraging new ideas.

This training will help you to achieve an increased understanding of delegation in relation to the new empowered environment.

Part 2 - Time Management and Delegation

05:9 Before you can decide whether you can delegate a task, first you need to decide whether the task is really yours.

05:19 Delegation is very much a two way process. It involves:

* a delegator who is aware of their actions and the need to provide support **and**
* a delegatee who feels able to achieve the task and feels trusted.

05:24 There is only one way of increasing skills development and that is through practice. Although you can learn a lot by listening to other people and by watching them, it is only when you "have a go" yourself, that you start to develop your own abilities.

05:26 The Benefits Agency is striving to create an empowered workforce, and delegation if carried out correctly, is one way to help achieve this.

Empowerment is a very subjective concept, and as such, it is interesting to exchange your views on the issues with other members of staff.

For the time being we need to consider two of the most important aspects of empowerment which apply to delegation, the trust and support you show.

05:27 *Trust*:

Delegation must be built on the foundation of trust. Trust can make a delegatee feel empowered and motivated. But it is not always an easy process.

However, showing trust does not mean you relinquish all controls. The types of control which you set up can show a delegatee that you are supporting them, rather than "dumping" work and running.

Making no important delegation decision at all is out of the question in an empowering environment.

05:32 *Support*:

Another important element in empowerment is the support given.

This is where our skills come in. The non-verbal and verbal skills you display when delegating can have a direct effect on how the delegated task is perceived.

With delegation you need to invest time to reap rewards.

Part 3 - The Delegation Process

05:40 As a result of empowerment the whole issue of authority and accountability is under review. **Empowerment, where delegation is concerned, means enabling staff to take personal initiatives beyond the scope of their normal work but within a set of established values.**

With empowerment, responsibilities are increasingly being devolved to those staff closest to the customers. To avoid a total lack of control we need to examine how delegation fits into the new empowered structure, where customer satisfaction is of paramount importance.

05:41 To see delegation as a process, a delegator needs to approach it in the correct way. It should not be seen as a way of clearing items from your desk which are mundane or boring and retaining the more interesting work for yourself.

05:42 If Agency staff are to become empowered they need to be developed.

Staff will become more empowered as their confidence of undertaking new tasks, making decisions and taking on new and different areas of work increases.

05:45 There are four main areas in which delegation is not appropriate. These are:

* tasks beyond the skills and experience of the member of staff
* confidential, security and policy matters restricted to their own level of security
* matters essential to your own control
* disciplinary issues.

05:46 Although it would be self-defeating and disempowering to delegate work to a member of staff who is unskilled and inexperienced in an area of work, if that individual has undeveloped ability in this area, training and coaching whilst completing the task may provide an answer.

05:51 There are many things to consider when deciding who is best placed to carry out a task ... but it is sometimes a good idea to select a member of staff who is not an expert in the area.

This helps to ensure that isolated pockets of expertise do not appear, but that knowledge and experience are spread throughout a number of staff.

It is important to stretch staff, not just the one or two members of staff who you have already identified as competent and capable.

05:53 You need to decide which of your staff thrive on challenge and are eager to develop new skills to complete a job. Impressions can often be misleading, and rather than presuming their level of interest, ask them about their ambitions and plans for the future.

05:57 It is essential at this point to take time to explain the choice and the reasons why you feel it will benefit them. This helps to build confidence and allows time to discuss all issues. It shows that although the work is being delegated it is for the right reasons; to broaden experience and develop and enhance skills.

05:58 There are many reasons why a member of staff may be reluctant to take on additional work. Whatever the reason, their concerns need to be discussed and not dismissed. The following are some examples of issues which may be raised:

* Lack of time
* Is there another more obvious staff member?
* Personal reasons

05:60 It is important that you establish the level of authority you are investing in the member of staff and make this clear to the delegatee.

05:61 Try to fully empower staff by granting complete authority (wherever appropriate). This gives staff a greater sense of satisfaction as they are able to use their own initiative and learn from their own experience.

05:62 Too much control can leave the delegatee feeling totally disempowered, they may feel dictated to and constantly watched. Too little control and they may feel "dumped on", that the delegator does not have the time or the interest in what they are trying to achieve.

It is difficult to balance these two issues but essential if delegation is to be an empowering process.

05:67 Remember to suppress the desire to over control a project, especially where someone has adopted a totally different approach to you. Staff need to learn through their own experience and not be restricted by a negative response from the delegator.

05:68 Here is a nine step guide to the delegation process which you can use after selecting your delegatee.

1. Explain what has to be done and why the task is important.
2. Delegate in terms of results.
3. Try to give them the entire task rather than a series of unrelated steps.
4. Encourage the delegatee to show personal initiative.
5. Delegate authority with the task.
6. Agree on a timescale or deadline.
7. Check understanding before the delegatee starts the task.
8. Build in feedback and controls.
9. Get off the field of play.

Part 4 - Performance Coaching and Feedback

05:75 If you delegate to develop an individual, you are using

delegation as a coaching tool. A delegator has to make time to sit down with the delegatee and discuss what has happened and what they have learned from the task.

05:76 Coaching is a subject which other companies have also identified as important. Already, a number of leading companies under the umbrella of empowerment have changed the role of their middle management from a command and control role, to that of coach and counsellor.

With the delegation of work, middle management now have an altered role which allows time for the development and encouragement of staff.

05:78 The best types of coaching involve the delegates taking full responsibility for the task. Therefore a delegator needs to accept the possibility of mistakes and recognise that they are part of the learning process. If the task cannot allow a degree of risk, it is not suitable for delegating or coaching.

05:91 Now that you have read all the information about delegation, you should feel ready to champion delegation as an empowering process and carry it out in this way.

SI 1406 - ATTENDING AND CONTRIBUTING TO MEETINGS

Book 7 intends to give readers the knowledge and skill required to improve performance when attending meetings. It allows managers to determine whether they really need to attend meetings and positive behaviours to adopt if they do go. It is a very practical guide and has little real relevance to the main issues of 'empowerment' and organisational culture, hence the summary given is brief.

Part 2 - Meetings - Who Needs Them?

06:15 Meetings are an essential part of the day to day running of our organisation. However this does not mean that we should have meetings for meetings sake.

Part 10 - Follow-up action

06:74 All meetings should have some sort of outcome and normally that outcome needs to be communicated to others. It makes sense to think about who the information should be communicated to and choose the best way of doing it.

Part 11 - Feedback

06:79 Each meeting should be treated as a learning experience. Future meetings should be improved by asking for feedback and deciding what action should be taken.

APPENDIX J: TASK ANALYSIS IN THE BENEFITS AGENCY

List of tasks which could be devolved to lower grades

Annex 2: Task analysis

Introduction

1 A task analysis of management activities was conducted from 2 sources:

- The Management Review database of HEO activities
- The Integrated Complement System's database of LOI activities

2 No such detailed lists of SEO activities have ever been constructed. A list of broader functions carried out at this and G7 level was prepared by the project team and is reproduced at the end of this section. More detailed breakdown beyond this was not thought possible in view of the variations between Districts and individual styles.

3 Some background to the Management Review follows, and an explanation is given of the approach taken to analysing the HEO and LOI activity lists.

Management review: background

4 Following concerns about the suitability of the management formula for complementing offices at HEO level and above, a new approach was developed based on extensive fieldwork carried out by PA Consultants and field staff over the period September 1989 to January 1991.

5 The review team sought to support Managers by providing them with a Management Review (MR) methodology and database of timed HEO activities. Thus managers could both estimate resource needs for management and make decisions about how best to distribute the management resources made available to them.

6 The review took place under the old local office structure and the team highlighted that around a third of HEO time was being spent on technical work, much of it non-management in nature. When the team applied the methodology to the incoming District organisation they calculated that anticipated economies of scale would lead to a reduction in management requirements.

7 The review team's report was submitted to BAMT on 22 January 1991 who directed that the methodology and database should be trialled in the AD6 Districts in Scotland. The purpose of this was to test the system as a method of resourcing and distributing management posts.

8 The trial demonstrated the usefulness of the database to District Managers in planning changes to their command structures but before national implementation could be considered there was a need to update and refine the methodology to take account of the new Districts and certain other features. It was clear that computerisation, the District structure, and the Agency ethos were changing the role of management in offices, and that this should set the context of further work on the MR. The introduction of the 'Freedom to Manage' booklet had also had a major impact on the detail of the database. These changes re-enforced the view that MR should not be used as a resourcing tool tied to a rigid set of tasks. Rather it provided a methodology for analysing the tasks which management should be doing, for tracking changes in this and the resource implications.

9 BAMT commissioned a study group led by East of Scotland AD to take forward the work of updating the database in the context of management role changes in the District structure. This was later incorporated into the Agency's Change Programme. Following acceptance of the study groups emerging findings responsibility for the upkeep of the database was passed to the Staff Resource Unit while all other work concerning the new role of management was given to the Strand 2 project team.

Analysis of activity lists

10 The MR HEO and ICS LOI activity lists were analysed, taking account of current instructions, changes brought about by such factors as operational strategy, 'Freedom to Manage' and the District structure, and evidence gathered in workshops on changing roles and the scope for re-alignment of tasks.

11 The team first of all considered whether each task or activity still required to be done and whether it supported the core values. Taking account of the factors mentioned above, and using criteria of security, complexity and sensitivity, a view was then taken on the level at which tasks should properly be carried out within the current grade structure. Finally, at LOI level the tasks were separated into those appropriate for line managers and those which could be feasibly done by off-line specialists.

12 The results are set out as follows:

- Current SEO/G7 management functions
- Existing HEO tasks

- HEO tasks which could be delegated to LOI level
- LOI tasks generally appropriate to line managers
- LOI tasks not generally appropriate to line managers
- LOI tasks which could be delegated to LOII level

13 The lists which follow could be localised and used by DMs in considering management roles and the scope for delegation. Although they have been prepared by current practitioners and vetted by project team members some further assurance by BACS against current policies and instructions would be advisable.

Current SEO/G7 management functions

Staff management

- Line Manager for Staff
- PAR Activities
- Staff Welfare
- Staff Discipline
- Promotion/Recruitment/Induction
- Staff Development/Training/Team Building
- Briefing debriefing/hold and attend meetings
- Liaison with Senior Management
- Command walkabout
- Discussion with HEOs
- Industrial Relations
- Clearing House/Communication/Co-ordinator/Adjudicator

Operation management

- Monitor/Review Office organisation
- Actioning Management Mail
- Consider impact of new procedures (change Management)
- Monitor Enquiries/Complaints and meet public
- Action PCA cases
- Analysis of Office Performance
- Promoting Core Values/ Customer Service initiatives
- SF Budget Manager
- Strategic Planning
- Monitor Plans

Operation management (cont'd)

- Initiate District Approach/Style
- Priority Planning
- Direct and assist in the implementation of District policies and the Management of Change

Development of District

- Reading and analysing all communications directed at/or from within Districts which affect Strategic planning, Operational matters, Personnel matters, Resources or Customer Services
- Approach/Style

Security management

- Consider Security of staff and buildings
- Monitor potential irregularities (F112)
- Monitor overall level of checking

Public relations management

- Deal with visits to DO
- Meet outside Agencies
- Deal with Local Press

Existing HEO tasks

Activity number	General management duties
1	Attend Senior Management Team Meetings
2	Attend Whitley Meetings
3	Input to Service Plan
4	Input to Business Plan
5	Input to Strategic Plan
6	Promote Customer Service Initiatives
7	Input to approach, style, priority setting and policy for District
8	Input to District Staffing Plan
9	Monitor Enquiries/Complaints
10	Interview/Phone Customers as required
11	Action PCA Cases
12	Co-ordinate response to MP's enquiries
13	Co-ordinate response to complaint letters
14	Action all other appropriate Management mail
15	Promote Core Values
16	Prepare, read, analyse and distribute both internal and external communications
17	Consider security of staff and buildings
18	Monitor existing security arrangements, introduce changes and action potential irregularities as required (F1112)
19	Independent Visits (OA 2120)
20	Discussions with Visitors (eg AD, Audit)
21	Liaise with MPs
22	Liaise with Customer Organisations
23	Liaise with Local Authorities
24	Liaise with other Agencies/ Departments
25	Liaise with Local Press
26	Input to District Suggestions Schemes
27	Input to District Initiatives
28	Special Bonus Scheme - Nominations
29	Liaise with AD Support and attend Meetings organised by them

Activity number	Operations management
30	Examine/analyse Weekly Command Stats and take action to achieve targets
31	Examine/analyse Management Information Stats and take action to achieve targets
32	Monitor results of Local Quality Assurance Checks and take action to achieve targets
33	Monitor Nationally Prescribed Checks Results
34	Monitor/Review Organisation
35	Read/Analyse New Instructions/ Code Amendments
36	Consider impact of New Procedures
37	Plan, implement and review organisational changes
38	Discussions with other Middle Managers
39	Discussions with Senior Managers
40	Deal with Trade Union issues
41	Show and discuss videos
42	Annual leave planning
43	Process leave requests
44	Staff presence check/allocation
45	Password changes/computer activity
46	Authorise STS forms
47	Requests to LOSA for sensitive access
48	Prepare bids for budgets

Activity number	Operations management
49	Plan and authorise expenditure/ staffing from budgets
50	Monitor Budget Status
51	Development of BABA applications
52	Provide Senior Management with essential information
53	Consider/authorise replacement wallets/GBUs/CPs as required
54	Actively manage all aspects of change
55	Manage specific site operations
56	Audit Local HASSRA Accounts

Activity number	Staff management
57	Recruitment - Board Member
58	Recruitment - Casuals
59	Induction of New Staff
60	Chair Team Meetings
61	Command Walkabout
62	Discussions with Junior Staff
63	Discussions with first line managers
64	Training - Line Management responsibility
65	Probation Report - 1st Signatory
66	Probation Report - 2nd Signatory
67	Accompanied interviews/visits/ presentations
68	Monitor standards of correspondence (OA 8022)
69	Conduct Interim Appraisal Interviews
70	Prepare PARs - 1st Signatory
71	Conduct Annual Appraisal Interviews
72	Complete PARs - 2nd Signatory
73	Formal Grievance Interviews - PARs
74	Plan Staff Development including staff moves
75	Initiate, monitor and review individual training programmes
76	Complete Promotion Report - 1st Signatory
77	Complete Promotion Report - 2nd Signatory

Activity number	Staff management
78	Development of Team 'Bias for Action' Initiatives
79	Development of Team Communications
80	Tuition for Promotion Candidates
81	Promote Caring for Staff Initiatives
82	Welfare Interviews
83	Sick Absence Interviews
84	Informal Discipline Interviews
85	Formal Discipline Interviews (SR 47/48/136)
86	Formal Discipline Monitoring
87	Other Staff Interviews
88	Authorise Expenses/Overtime Claim Forms
89	Own Appraisal Interviews

NOTE - To fulfil some tasks the assistance of technical experts may be required.

Activity number	Technical Issues
90	Complete personnel references
91	Data protection annual return
92	Authorise overpayment closure (waiver/abandon)
93	LTAHAW (examination, registration, allocation, guidance)
94	LTAHAW adjudication.
95	Consider SF review applications (SF 8151) *
96	Control action on SFI recommendation (SF 8214)
97	Review SF priorities
98	Action PVP referrals (OA 7064)
99	PVP - Transfers (OA 7074)
100	Recruitment exercises (planning and administration
101	Maintenance of staff report files (Circ SC 491)
102	Consideration of Performance Pay entitlement (Circs DC 12/90 and 13/90)
103	Input sensitive record status
104	Control access to sensitive records (STS MGMT Guide para 2308)
105	Action serious security breach (STS LOSA and CSO Guide para 3100)
106	Further education liaison - interviewing
107	Further education liaison - authorise claims
108	Check facility time diaries
109	Vet OP Civil Proceedings
110	Consider SF Civil Proceedings (Circ SFJ 1/88 P 48)
111	Check of staff report file register (Circ SC/491)
112	Exit interview
113	Keeping in touch and career breaks (PM 668)
114	Accommodation inspection report

* Grading of this task is subject to separate scrutiny by SF Processing Review Team (BSB)

NOTE - To fulfil some tasks the assistance of technical experts may be required.

HEO tasks which could be delegated to LOI level

Activity number	General duties
1	DCI Check (New Record Allocation)
2	DCI Check (DCI 4)
3	Check of Payform 217 (TP/Sub) (Circ SC/503)
4	Eyesight Screening (STB LOSA/ CSO Guide 2301)
5	DP Schedule Check (MUM Pt 3 23.1-23.3 OA (OS)/1 131(4))
6	Bulk Payments to 3rd Parties (OA 3202)
7	Address Safety of VOs (OA 7056)
8	Giro Security Check (AO 3101) Non PSCS
9	Compensation Recovery Scheme
10	Expired LOI Checks (P(OS)M 50400)
11	HEO Management Check Report (LTB) (P(OS)M 50357)
12	Enquiry Dialogue Check (P(OS)M 50359)
13	Payments Authorised and Made by Same Officer (OA 3034)
14	Key Records (F 1240)
15	Giro Security Check (OA 3101) (STB)
16	Order Book - Security Check (OA 3103) (STB)
17	Bulk Payments Check (OA 3102) (STB)
18	New DCI Datalink Selection and Check
19	Selection of Giros-Security Check (OA 3101, 3122)
20	Selection of Order Book Cases-Security Check (OA 3103)
21	Perform SF Quality Assurance Check (SF Circ 1/91)
22	Select trans log and Quality cases (SF Circ 1/91)
23	Security Check-Giro Payments (Alpha) (OA 3201, 3231)
24	Security Check-Order Books (Alpha) (OA 3203)
25	Security Check-B2/C2/D2 (Alpha) (OA 3204)
26	Security Check-EF483/484 (OA 3203) (OR Cases)
27	OOHS Post Payment Security Check (OA 3034)
28	Security Check (System Selected Cases) (OA(OS) 1 Para 170)
29	Selection of Cases for Check-Giros (OA 3201)
30	Selection of Cases for Check-Order Books (OA 3202)
31	Selection of Cases for Check-B2/ C2/D2 (OA 3204)
32	Check of Designated PVP Cases (OA 7072)
33	Fire Bomb & Counter Terrorist Alert Drill (BCH Para 5.3)

Activity number	General duties
34	Fire & Bomb Alert Precaution (CTM & FP)
35	Health & Safety Inspection (HSOM(1) 209)
36	Ground Inspection (GWM Chap 29)
37	Check of First Aid Register (SC 4107)
38	Check of Asset Register (STS, LOSA & CSO Guide Para 3007)
39	RP 704 Dialogue Check (P(OS)M 50360)
40	Check of Flexitime Records
41	Code Check (OA 1843)
42	Complete Manpower Return

Activity number	LOMP/CM
43	Oversee Breakdown Procedure
44	Check back-up logs (MAM 3164)
45	Test Restore Facility (MAM 3165/6)
46	Check Fault Reports
47	Maintain Disk Register and Receive New Disks (MAM 3018-3046)
48	Maintenance of MAM and Checking MUM

Activity number	Direct Payments
49	D P Transaction Log Check (MUM Pt 3 Para 5241)
50	FF 125 Check (MUM Pt 3 5242, ISM 2.1388)
51	Interim Payments - Direct Payments (MUM Pt 3 Para 5231)
52	Authorise Giros over £5,000
53	Monitor Appeals Lapsed/ withdrawn/super-seded Appeals (CB) (OA 22/89 P 42-47)
54	Check Appeals Record (CB)

Activity number	Retirement Pension/ Widows Benefit
55	Test checks RP Claims (PIP Volume 1 Part 2 70-72)
56	Test check WB Claims (WIP Part II 81-88)
57	Record of Dis Ben Decisions
58	Scrutiny of Files
59	Test checks - asbestos cases (Circ IP 2) and maintain note book record
60	Test checks - IIDB non-life awards (OA 3105)
61	Test checks - WB order books (OA 3104)
62	Selection of RP claims (PIP Vol 1 Part 2 70-72)
63	Selection of WB claims (WIP Part 2 81-83)
64	Authorisation of Giros over £5000 (GB5953)
65	Check of DS 9L (AA Circ 66)
66	Check of ICA records (AA 30)
67	Order Book Control Record (GB 5026)
68	Selection of Adjudication Cases (Circ OA/22)
69	Check of Adjudication Cases (Circ OA/22)
70	Reperform LOI checks (P[OS]M 50472)
71	Distribute all printed output

Activity number	Overpayments
72	Examine REG 113 Control Record
73	Check of BF lists (ORG/10 Para 51)
74	Check of recoverable overpayments (ORG/10 Para 53)
75	Check of recoverable overpayments (ORG 10024, ORG/10 Para 55)
76	Check of non-recoverable over-payments (ORG 10054, ORG/10 Para 56)
77	Vet QB 18A for correct completion

Activity number	Finance
78	Post payment scrutiny of over £5000 giros (F7507)
79	Check of returned cashed giros (F7408)
80	IS OB evidence of identity (F9325)
81	Cash balance (F2493)
82	Monthly account (F6213) monthly check
83	Monthly account (F5727/6214) annual check
84	Giro stock check (F7122)
85	O/B Stock check (F8138/9140) - non strategy
86	Check of PID control (F(OS)1/62)
87	Circ J(OS) 3/89 Para 13, A98 record check

Activity number	Visits
88	Control of Caller Offices
89	4 Monthly check of VO Diaries (OA 2113)
90	Control of Visiting (OA 2086)
91	Security Visits (OA 3041)
92	Clerical Grade VO Diaries (OA 2113)

Activity number	Short Term Benefits
93	Check of Industrial Accident decisions (SMR 158)
94	Check cases from LO Records (MR 105) (SB 13651)
95	Scrutiny of files
96	Investigate lost GBUs (GB 106 and 1451)
97	Check payments over £5000 (GB 5935)
98	Selection of Adjudication Cases (Circ OA/22)
99	Check of Adjudication Cases (Circ OA/22)
100	Validation of accuracy checks - giros and OBs (OA 3082)
101	Selection of SDA Cases (MR 105) (SB 13651)
102	Check of SDA Cases (Circ SB/48)
103	Check returned Order Book Record (GB 5026)

Activity number	Social Fund
104	Perform SF transaction LOG Check (MUM Pt 5 12003, SFIM 4220)
105	Investigate lost SF wallet
106	Final demand letters (SFG 1/88 Para 12)
107	Check of manually processed applications (SFM 4449)
108	Funeral payment write off check (SFJ 1/87 p7)
109	Repayment check (SFJ 1/89 Para 10)

Activity number	Income Support
110	Vet errors identified on accuracy check (OA 3131)
111	Lost casepaper investigation (ISM 4.701)
112	Selection of cases for check - Adjudication
113	Check of Adjudication Standards (OA/22)
114	Housing Benefit Notice Check (ISM 3.1744)
115	Check of delegated accuracy check (OA 3082)
116	CP Quality examination
117	Check of missing OB Record (ISM J/312)
118	Check of NOS/NOSA/NOSB Records (ISM J/147/211)
119	Check of returned fraud order books (ISM J/25)
120	Check of clerical records of claimants (OA 3008)
121	Examine exceptional activity report (Sects 1 and 5) (IS(OS) M 4865-4869 and On-Line Bulletin 28/91)
122	Action on overdue cases (IS(OS) Para 4860 On Line Bulletin 28/91)
123	Check of Stats Enquiry (SMR Sect 4)
124	Validation of 'other' LO I payment checks (OA(OS) 1 Para 230 and STS MGMT Guide Para 4300)
125	Validation of LO I Accuracy Checks

Activity number	Income Support
126	Monitoring and Distribution of printed output (OA(OS) 1 Para 300 et seq)
127	Monitoring/Amending overall level of checking (STS MGMT Guide Para 4307)
128	System precluded HB cases (on line bulletin 50/90 Para 2)

Activity number	Common Services
129	Annual Checks of Official Vehicles (OA 11173, OA 11093 et seq)
130	Car Hire accounts for official vehicles (OA 11061, Tech Notes 1-5)
131	Investigation of accidents (SC 2004)
132	Increased Annual Leave Entitlement (SC 1564)
133	Facility time return
134	Attend Post Opening (POM 22(1))
135	Business Reply/Surcharge Document (POM 252)
136	Incoming Post/2nd Class (POM 253)
137	% of outgoing courier mail (POM 1262)
138	Outgoing courier mail (POM 1010)
139	Review of Post Rota (POM 22)
140	Security of Post Box (POM 100)
141	Surcharge post items (POM 254)
142	Review whole postal system (POM 1504)
143	Monitoring - manpower expenditure (Local and CAs Records)
144	Monitoring - non manpower expenditure (Local and CAs Records)
145	Profiling Annual - Manpower Expenditure
146	Profiling Annual - Non-manpower expenditure

Activity number	Common services
147	Re-Profile Manpower Expenditure
148	Re-Profile Non-Manpower Expenditure
149	Telephone accounts (itemised bills)
150	Out turn reports (June, September and monthly thereafter)
151	Budget for supplies (OA 4464)
152	Check of DO accommodation list
153	Fire & Bomb alert/staff awareness (CTM & FP)
154	Office Security (OA 4040)
155	Change of comb lock codes (OA 4053)
156	State of vigilance (OA 7471)
157	Check of terrorist plan (OA 7471 et seq)
158	Inventory of office furniture (OA 4446)
159	Inventory of office machines (OA 5051)
160	Check of substances hazardous to health (OSM 57/89)
161	Review of local cleaning contract (OA 4540)
162	Review of window cleaning contract
163	Check of PRS Budget (AO 4330)
164	Check of PRS Activities (OA 4330)
165	Check of First Aid Officers (SC 4141)

Activity number	Common Services
166	Private motor insurance certificates (SS 20)
167	Car park allocation (OA 4152)
168	Validation of ID cards (OA 2272)
169	Check S10 warrants (OA 2241)
170	Control of Stationery (OA 5012)
171	Control of Sub stock (OA 5023)
172	Control of local forms (OA 8616 et seq)
173	Licensing of background music (OA 5234)
174	Plan, discuss, estimate
175	Obtain and consider tenders
176	Control of work
177	Approval of work/authority for payment
178	Completion of DO Development Plan

Activity number	LOSA
179	Checking violation reports (STS, LOSA and CSO Guide para 8100 et seq)
180	Check of user records on system (STS, LOSA and CSO Guide para 1050)
181	Check/resolve fault report (STS, LOSA and CSO Guide (para 4040)
182	Maintain District Office checking profiles (STS, LOSA and CSO Guide para 1200 et seq)

Activity number	Training
183	Training members of outside agencies (those unsuitable for DOTO)

NOTES

1 The list reflects the Freedom To Manage package already issued.

2 Most of the activities in this list could be carried out by off-line specialists.

LOI tasks generally appropriate to line managers

Activity number	General duties
1	Attend Senior Management Team Meetings as requested
2	Attend Middle Manager's Meetings
3	Attend Whitley Meetings as requested
4	Input to District Staffing Plan
5	Customer enquiries and complaints requiring LO I involvement (interview/phone/ correspondence)
6	Draft Responses to MP's Letters
7	Prepare, read, analyse and distribute both internal and external communications
8	Discussion with Visitors (eg AD, Audit)
9	Liaise with Customer Organisations
10	Liaise with Local Authorities
11	Liaise with other Agencies/ Departments
12	Input to District Suggestions Schemes
13	Input to District Initiatives
14	Special Bonus Scheme - Nominations
15	Examine Weekly Section Stats
16	Local Quality Assurance Checks
17	Nationally Prescribed Checks
18	Monitor/Review Organisation
19	Read/analyse new instructions/ code amendments
20	Consider impact of new procedures
21	Plan, implement and review organisational and staffing changes
22	Discussions with Middle Managers
23	Discussions with Senior Management
24	Deal with Trade Union issues
25	Annual Leave Planning
26	Process Leave Requests
27	Staff Presence Check/Allocation
28	Development of BABA Applications
29	Provide Management with essential information
30	Investigate missing wallets/ GBUs/CPs as required
31	Recruitment - Board Member
32	Recruitment - Casuals
33	Induction of New Staff
34	Chair Section Team Meetings
35	Discussions with Junior Staff
36	Discussions with other First Line Managers and Specialists
37	Training - Line Management Responsibilities
38	Probation Report - 1st Signatory

Activity number	General duties
39	Accompanying and Observing Junior Staff
40	Conduct Interim Appraisal Interviews
41	Prepare PAR(s) (1st signatory)
42	Conduct Annual Appraisal Interviews
43	Plan staff development including staff moves
44	Initiate, monitor and review individual training programmes
45	Complete Promotion Reports (1st signatory)
46	Development of Team 'Bias for Action' initiatives
47	Development of Team Communications
48	Promote caring for staff initiatives
49	Welfare Interviews
50	Sick Absence Interviews
51	Informal Discipline Interviews
52	Formal Discipline - Monitoring
53	Other Staff Interviews
54	Authorise Expenses/Overtime Claim Forms
55	Own appraisal interview
56	Preparation for attendance at, and feedback from seminars/ workshops/training courses/etc

NOTES

1 In fulfilling some of these tasks, line managers may need support from specialists.

2 Some of the tasks will also be appropriate to specialists.

3 The list does not necessarily reflect current practice as revealed by the research.

4 The list of tasks above was provided by SRU and is used to produce WUTs.

LOI tasks not generally appropriate to line managers

Activity number	Income Support
	Claims
1	Check request for specialist trace action
2	Checking action defective claim (form not returned)
3	Claim deregistered (no reply to enquiries)
4	Check of manual assessment
5	Check new registrations
	Assessment review (system)
6	Read TEO report
7	Check and authorise exceptional clerical input
8	Carry out 'office set' check
9	Log on/off
	Assessment review
10	Read TEO report 'off-line' (Clerical case)
11	Perform LO I cursory check
12	Check standard of interviews
	Visits
13	Preview casepaper enter on diary
14	Travel to visit
15	Conduct effective interview
16	Conduct ineffective interview

Activity number	Income Support
	Visits (cont'd)
17	Make Telephone Call
18	Write report on ineffective visit pass for further visit
19	Write report on effective visit clear diary and expenses
	Direct Payment investigation
20	Authorise LOII visit and clear visit
21	Check of accepted cases
22	Ex gratia cases
23	Pay Manual Schedule
24	Refund incorrect payment on manual cases
25	Pay micro schedule
26	Refund incorrect payments
27	DP micro activity
	Overpayment recovery
28	LOI check on initial status report
29	LOI check of transaction log
30	LOI decision on spending recovery
31	Read result of Appeal
32	LOI Civil Proceedings Action

Activity number	Income Support
	Overpayment recovery (cont'd)
33	LOI Abandonment Action
34	Regs 113 Action
35	LOI check of status report - Closure of case
36	LOI check of case - closure of case
	Appeals
37	Read Appeals Letter
38	Arrange home visit and action on return of CP
39	Written enquiry and read reply
40	Take withdrawal action on withdrawn Appeal
41	Check appeal and case details to see if decision correct
42	Read AO reply
43	Complete AT 2
44	Take withdrawal action on appeal
45	Preview Appeal
46	Travel to Hearing
47	Present Appeal
48	Read Result of Appeal
49	Written enquiry and read reply - Adjourned Appeal
50	Prepared further submission - adjourned Appeal

Activity number	Social Fund
	Budgeting Loan
51	Decide further budgeting loan information required
52	Read SF BL application and instructions
53	Review SF BL application for visit
54	Conduct SF BL visit
55	Write report of SF BL visit
56	Complete visiting diary and form FF47
57	Make SF BL decision
58	Decide extension of time limit - SF BL
59	Authorise SF payment and check BL notification
60	Decide if SF BL repayment interview appropriate
61	Decide if SF budgeting loan repayment visit appropriate
62	Preview of budgeting loan documents for visit
63	Conduct SF budgeting loan effective repayment visit
64	Conduct of budgeting loan ineffective repayment visit
65	Write report of SF budgeting loan effective visit
66	Write report of SF budgeting loan ineffective visits
67	Take SF civil procedures budgeting loan procedure
68	Decide to abandon SF BL recovery
69	Offer BL money advice

Activity number	Social Fund
	Community Care Grant
70	Preview CCG application for visit
71	Conduct CCG application visit
72	Write report of visit
73	Complete diary and FF47
74	Make CCG decision on claim
75	Authorise CCG payment and check notification staged payments
76	Authorise CCG payment and check notification non staged payment
77	Offer money advice
	Crisis Loan
78	Preview case for CL visit
79	Conduct CL visit
80	Write report on CL visit
81	Complete visiting diary and FF47
82	Make CL decision
83	Authorise CL payment and check notification
84	Decide if CL repayment interview appropriate
85	Decide if CL repayment visit appropriate
86	Take CL civil proceedings action
87	Decide to abandon CL recovery

Activity number	Social Fund
	Crisis Loan (cont'd)
88	Authorise MP payment and check notification
89	Authorise FP payment and check notification

Activity number	Short Term Benefits
90	Late claim
91	AO Decision on Claim
92	Action on appeals
93	Action on report of lost giro mandatory check
94	Secretary of State decision
95	Test Checks
96	Completion of FF 91 and DL/S 137 GBU'S to HEO
97	Start and end of day action
98	Agents and appointees
99	Visits
100	Supervisor receives all books
101	Disposal of mutilated books
102	Post out order book
103	Weekly check of order book control
104	Quarterly action
105	Check of lost order book record
106	Research to establish next course of action
107	AO decision on loan cases
108	AO action on appeals
109	Miscellaneous action by supervisor
	Maternity Allowance
110	Lost giros
111	Lost order books

Activity number	Long Term Benefits
	RP load/claim
112	LT 54 decision
113	BF 10 decision
114	Authorise visit/DCI 1
115	DCI test check
116	Read/write/other
	RP (Miscellaneous)
117	Initial date GBU
118	Switch on (Computer)
119	Log on
120	Log off
121	Change Password
122	Switch off
123	Screen response times
124	Screen action - 10 screens
125	Decide if further action on case
126	Clear check on screen incl in S-9
127	Sign and date MCR
128	Decide if further action tomorrow
129	File MCR and week
130	Assimilate
131	Screens
132	Locate relevant page in EF 271
133	Read and decide if entry made
134	Decide if page cleared
135	Pick page cleared
136	Go to rater/check OB
137	Note check completed

Activity number	Long Term Benefits
	Widows Benefit claim/post/ miscellaneous
138	LT 54 decision
139	BF 10 decision
140	BR3B decision
141	Authorise visit/DCI 1
142	DCI test check
143	Read case referred by HEO check
144	Other

Activity number	Disablement Benefit
	Industrial accident
145	Make and record decision (Allow or Disallow)
	REA decisions
146	Make and record REA Decision (Allow or Disallow)
	Other decisions
147	Make and record decision 1-13% (excluding aggregation, or u/agg, appeals and Secretary of State appeals)
148	Make and record decision 14% or more (excluding aggregation, u/agg, appeals and Secretary of State appeals)
149	Make and record prescription decisions (any type of PD)
150	Make and record decision on review, u/agg, MAT, Secretary of State appeals
151	Make and record decision on no loss of faculty, gratuity, aggregation
152	Make and record late claim decision (Dis pension only excludes REA decision)
153	Make and record any other type of decision
154	Check and authorise BI 15
155	Check and authorise BI 15A
156	Write/present appeals to SSAT
157	Prepare for post opening
158	Obtain order books CP and 035
159	Check and prepare order books

Activity number	Disablement Benefit
	Other decisions (cont'd)
160	Check forms 035
161	Check spoiled order books

Activity number	Other duties
	Income support giro - written by machine
162	Check of admin payments and giros over £250
163	Weekly check of prepared giros
164	Check of missing IS giros
	Income Support giro - handwritten
165	Check of admin payments and giros over £250
166	Weekly check of prepared giros
167	Check of missing IS giros
	CB order book
168	Obtain order books and GBUs
169	Check order books
170	Check of spoiled order books and FF 152
171	Hand back order books and FF 152
	Nominated Officer
172	FEO check of nominated officer work
	Cashier
173	Check of monthly account
174	Weekly check of valuables book
175	Weekly PID check

NOTE - The list of tasks above was provided by SRU and is used to produce WUTs

LOI tasks which could be delegated to LOII level

Activity number	Income Support
	Claims
1	16/17 year old interviews/self employed interviews, etc
2	Check PA action (CP annotations)
3	Adjudication IS 090 and 93
4	Check exceptional clerical payment
5	2% payment accuracy check
6	Others - payment check
	Assessment review
7	Refer case for visit
8	Adjudication case on system
9	2% accuracy check
10	Check PA action - CP annotation
11	Refer case for visit 'off-line'
12	Perform full case check
13	Check housing benefit documents
14	Authorise CP and make entry on MR 204
	Miscellaneous
15	Check of transfer in/out
16	Sort post

Activity number	Income Support
	Postal case check
17	Record forms issued
18	Abandon A 2 action - clear stats
19	AO decides if IS payable or not
	Visits
20	Read referral and decide on grade of visiting officer
21	Priority of visit established
22	Notify case for visit
23	Issue draft letter
24	Issue non-draft letter
	Direct Payment
25	Initial investigation
26	Read Reports
27	Follow up action on requested cases
28	Pay individual case
29	Terminate manual schedule case
30	Terminate individual case
31	Review manual deduction case
32	Suspend manual account
33	Change manual address
34	Change manual personal details

Activity number	Income Support
	Direct Payment (cont'd)
35	Perform manual case check
36	Review micro deductions
37	Suspend micro account
38	Arrears clearing action on a micro case
39	Change micro address
40	Change micro personal details
41	Perform micro checks
42	Terminate fuel case
43	Terminate other micro case
	IS Overpayment recovery
44	Check of overpayment
45	Decide whether instalment repayment offer acceptable
46	Check of BF list
47	Check of EF 413 Register
48	Check of C 78 Register
49	Check of status report
	Overpayment recovery
50	Refer Appeal to Appeal Officer
51	Prepare stats return
52	Transfers Check

Activity number	Income Support
	Appeals
53	Take action re appeal outside time limit
54	Take action re appeal by unauthorised person
55	Take action on unsigned appeal
56	Enter appeal on LT 245 and send to SSAT
57	Prepare draft letter
58	Appeal outside tribunals jurisdiction sent to SSAT
59	Make telephone call
60	Arrange office interview
61	Refer to AO re withdrawal - AO agrees to withdrawal
62	Refer to AO re withdrawal - AO does not agree with withdrawal
63	Pass to AO to revise decision
64	Lapse appeal
65	Complete AT 2A
66	Complete AT 43 and send to SSAT
67	Read notification of date of hearing, notify witness
68	Arrange and conduct office interview - adjourned Appeal
69	Send for home visit action on return of CP - adjourned Appeal
70	Pass to AO to consider review - adjourned Appeal
71	Read reply from AO - adjourned appeal
72	Contact appellant regarding lapsed Appeal - adjourned Appeal

Activity number	Income Support
	Appeals (cont'd)
73	Lapse Appeal - adjourned Appeal
74	File AT 3, clear stats and pass to AO

Activity number	Social Fund
	Budgeting Loan
75	Decide application form required SF 300
76	Write instructions for further BL information
77	Check sign and issue BL loan notification
78	Check and issue BL loan notification
79	Extend time limit of SF BL
80	Annotate no reply SF BL
81	Annotate reply - SF BL rejected
82	Check and issue SF micro BL printouts
83	Check of BL micro letter
84	Preview SF BL interview
85	Conduct of SF BL effective repayment interview
86	Conduct of SF BL ineffective repayment interview
87	Write report of SF budgeting loan effective interview
88	Decide and check on cash repayment terms SF BL
89	Decide and check new benefit repayment terms SF BL
90	Check issue of SF statements BL
91	Check loan repayment complete SF BL
92	Action request for loan rescheduling BL
93	Transfer out recovery SF BL application
94	Transfer out no recovery SF BL application

Activity number	Social Fund
	Budgeting Loan (cont'd)
95	Transfer out not on micro SF BL application
96	Transfer in recovery, check transferred in SF BL application
	Community Care Grant
97	Decide form required for postal application
98	Decide if further information required for CCG application
99	Write instructions for further information
100	Make CCG telephone call
101	Write report of telephone call
102	Conduct CCG postal enquiry
103	Make CCG postal enquiry
104	Check sign and issue CCG notification of decision
105	Check micro letter
	Crisis Loan
106	Check, sign and issue CL decision
107	Check CL micro letter
108	Preview CL payment interview
109	Conduct CL effective repayment interview
110	Write report on CL effective repayment interview
111	Conduct CL ineffective repayment interview

Activity number	Social Fund
	Crisis Loan (cont'd)
112	Write report of CL ineffective repayment interview
113	Preview CL documents for visit
114	Conduct CL repayment effective visit
115	Write report of CL repayment effective visit
116	Conduct CL ineffective repayment visit
117	Write report of CL ineffective repayment visit
118	Decide and check CL cash repayment terms
119	Decide and check new benefit repayment terms
120	Check issue of CL statements
121	Check CL loan repayment
	Funeral and Maternity
122	Read MP application form
123	Check and decide on MP application
124	Check, sign and issue MP decision
125	Read FP application form
126	Check and decide FP application
127	Check sign and issue FP decision
128	Action FP recovery

Activity number	Short Term Benefit
129	RD 45
130	Authorise SDA - passport benefit case
131	Check SDA 14 before ref to AMA
132	Award SDA - more than 80%
133	Check PA 1BF book
134	SB 222 decision
135	Recovery of IS
136	Transfer of GBU
137	Minor claimants
138	Front BF
139	Check over £250 and counter payments
140	Authorisation of order books
141	IVB stop date action
142	Review stop date with dependants
143	Review stop date no dependants
144	Change of circumstances
145	Check of renewal order books
146	Check of first order books
147	Amendment of FF 152 schedule
148	10% mandatory check
149	Weekly check of PA cases
150	Claim for wife only
151	Claim for wife and child
152	Claim for child only
153	Claim for housekeeper
154	Small overpayment

Activity number	Short Term Benefit
155	Action on O/E overpayment
156	Action on 'M' overpayment
157	Mandatory check of QB 3
158	Mandatory check of QB 10
159	Check DL/S 133/134
160	Check DL/S 9/10
161	Check of BS 32
162	Fraud submissions
163	Stats 71 - PA cases
164	Stats 71 - live load
165	Read/incorporate amendments/ circs
166	Accept fraud order book
167	Periodic check of returned books
168	10% check of order books
169	Check authorisation and notation in control book of RM 1
170	Check of draft letters/BF 79
171	Claimant fails to attend
172	Mandatory check of RMO control
173	Additional procedure on RMO reference
174	Check and issue DL/S 35
175	Check and issue DL/S 559
176	10% check of back BF
177	Authorisation and check of order book
178	Periodic check of returned order books
179	Amendment of FF 152A

Activity number	Short Term Benefit
	MA claim
180	RD 45 action
181	Check disallowed claims
182	Return GBU to LOII
183	Authorise FF 152
184	Pass GBU to finance
185	10% check
186	Return GBU to LOII
187	Complete check
188	Recovery of IS
189	Returned order books
190	Overpayments
191	Payment by giro
192	Front BF
193	Minor claimants

Activity number	Long Term Benefit
	RP load/claim
194	On-line award of RP (new)
195	Off-line award
196	Review award (on-line)
197	Check of BF 428
198	Delete or amend on-line account
199	Enter management note
200	Check letter/draft letter
201	Overpayment action
202	Authorise interim payments
203	Authorise arrears/giro
204	Authorise BF 56/POA
205	Check file for CPB/AA/COCA
206	QB 10 notation only
207	Get notebook decide box
208	Select cases
209	Get A 98, check unactioned post
210	Locate and assimilate
211	Check load notation
212	Decide if action correct
213	Read letter
214	Replace docs in GBU
215	Note check completed
216	Error found - complete MF 40
217	Return GBUs to drawer
218	Note system - check done 2 screens
219	Assimilation
220	Screen response time

Activity number	Long Term Benefit
	RP load/claim (cont'd)
221	Select cases for check
222	Get GBU/wallet
223	System action - 3 screens
224	Read and cf docs
225	Store docs and initial GBU
226	Store docs - wallet
227	Complete MF 40A (errors)
228	Return to rater
229	Note System - check done
230	Return for filing
231	Assimilation
232	Extract docs and ass
233	Ass GBU cases
234	Screen response times
235	Get print out and pass to AA
236	Get 'micro' GBUs
237	Get print-outs, sort, pass to AA
238	OB received by LOII - RP
239	OB received by LOII - misc
240	Trans to NOS/Fraud (all)
241	T/out - EF 413 (all)
242	Cancelled - RP
243	Cancelled - misc
244	Issued via sup - RP + WB + misc (included in 7)
245	Daily transport to stockholder
246	Issue of recall notice
247	OB destroyed
248	OB control check
249	Transfer of OB between raters

Activity number	Long Term Benefit
	RP
250	OB received by LOII - WB
251	Cancelled - WB
	Widows Benefit
252	On-line award of WPT
253	On-line award of WB (new)
254	Review award (on-line)
255	Check of BF 428
256	Delete or amend on-line account
257	Enter management note
258	Check letter/draft letter
259	Check overpayment action
260	Authorise interim payments
261	Authorise arrears
262	Authorise BF 56/POA
263	Check file for (PB) AA/COCA
264	QB 10 notation only
	Child Benefit
265	Order book received by LOII
266	Orders Adjusted
267	Orders Executed
268	Transferred to NOS Fraud
269	Order book transferred out - EF 413
270	Order book cancelled
271	Order book issued
272	Daily Transport to Stockholder

Activity number	Long Term Benefit
	Child Benefit (cont'd)
273	Transfer of order books between raters
274	Issue of recall notice for order book
275	Completion of CH 10/CH 55
276	Check and sign DL/CHP 24
277	Check and sign DL/CHP 25
	Disablement Benefit
278	Check and send BI 8 to Med Boarding Section
279	Giro Payment for Dis Ben
280	Check annual stats
281	Uprating
282	Check/sign letters on miscellaneous correspondence
283	Sign for and dispose/check returned order books
284	Deal with Dis Ben overpayments

Activity number	Long Term Benefit
	Callers
285	Dealing with callers
	Post receipt
286	Sort and distribute post

NOTES

1 In the absences of delegation, all of the tasks on this list could be carried out by LO Is who are not line managers.

2 The list of tasks above was provided by SRU and is used to produce WUTs.

APPENDIX K: BI-MONTHLY UPDATE OF QUALITY FRAMEWORK CRITERIA: PRESTON

QUALITY FRAMEWORK UPDATE

This is the third publication to update all staff on the Quality Framework. We have made significant progress in most areas. Please take the time to read this update, to ensure particularly that you know what is happening in other areas of the office.

If there is anything you would like to know more about please ask your team leader or a BAQF Focus Group member/Co-ordinator (an ever expanding group - names on page 8).

BA Incentive Scheme

As you are all aware, we are looking at the possibility of using the new Incentive scheme to help us to achieve the Quality Award. This will require us all to sign up to progressing the District on the Quality Framework. For most people this will mean carrying on doing what you're doing; liaising with internal customers, looking for ways to work more efficiently, helping to improve communications, taking part in decision-making within your team etc etc....

If you are still not sure how you, personally, may contribute please discuss it with your team leader or BAQF representative(s).

Where Are We Now?

The Management Team and the BAQF Focus group have recently re-baselined (scored us on the Framework) and the results are shown on page 7. The revised scores (using an average where there were differing scores) add up to 61 and there are only two areas where our average score is below 5.

The following update on each of the 12 criteria includes references to the latest Staff Perception Survey and other evidence. If there is anything mentioned which you do not know about please ask your BAQF representatives.

The revised score is shown in brackets beside each heading.

Finally, the Staff Perception Survey measured our success in this area:

* 88% of staff know how to find out what training is available
* 72% know how to find out what external training is available
* 77% feel the training offered by the District meets most needs
* 71% feel that most of their development needs are met
* 87% find the half hour closure sessions useful for discussion and training

As more staff work with their line managers to set up PDPs we hope to increase performance in some of these areas.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES (6)

A working group has been formed to look at the possibility of homeworking in the District, following the publication of the BA Guide To Homeworking.

The maternity package, "Great Expectations" has been updated by Personnel Section and is still issued to expectant mums. It provides the answers to the commonly asked questions about maternity leave, pay, ante-natal care etc.

The Staff Perception Survey again helps us to measure our success in this area:

* 99% of staff know that the BA is committed to Equal Opportunities
* 83% think the District is free from discrimination
* 72% think there is equality in career opportunities for part time staff
* 85.5% think there is equality in career opportunities for staff with disabilities
* 92% think there is equality in career opportunities for members of ethnic minorities

These responses (with the exception of the first which was not measured) are all significantly improved compared with last year. The Equality Group are to look at how we might improve further.

STAFF SERVICES (7)

About 100 staff have attended Personal Safety Awareness sessions and feedback so far is very good.

taken to Jo Bark, Security Assurance Team, first floor as Jo is maintaining a portfolio of evidence.

PLACE IN THE COMMUNITY (6)

Our database of outside organisations now contains details of 88 customer representative groups. We wrote to or telephoned all new contacts to let them know how to contact us and what sort of services we offer.

The feedback from DINO/ Interpreter/ Benefit Bus events remains positive. Customer Services staff are still on offer for half hour closure sessions if you would like to know more about what they do in the community.

We continue to maintain a high profile in the community through our work with Compact and in local schools.

We were recently awarded a certificate in a competition called "AIM HIGH" which looks at business involvement in education.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT (5)

All staff had the opportunity in October to attend BA Training's "development day" in the conference room.

All members of the Management Team now have Personal Development Plans; most LO1s were invited to set up PDPs at their interim review and those who weren't will have the opportunity now to do so; all LO2s and AAs will have the opportunity before or at their appraisal interview.

Sandra Casey is currently putting together a Personal Development Planner with examples of a PDP, record of training and record of qualifications gained. This will be available in January.

BA Training are revising the one day PDP course to meet our needs (the original event was thought to be too general to meet the needs of our staff) and will put on some dates specifically for us.

If you would like to set up a PDP please let your line manager know and she/he will work with you to do so.

Between 1st April this year and the end of December we will have availed ourselves of 321 days of skills training within the BA training contract. Additionally, 16 people have undertaken distance learning for I.T.

Sal Yusuf has been nominated for the next Princes Trust event, following on from Jane Bagwell's successful involvement.

Cath Webb is set to take over from Zoey Cartwright on a 12 month, 2 days a week secondment with Compact.

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The revised score is shown in brackets beside each heading.

CUSTOMER RESEARCH (6)

The survey of outside organisations was the last to be completed and results are now being analysed. The response rate was 75% (and with 100% from caller survey, 77% from telephone survey and 72% from customers who had written to us, all responses are above average).

Customer research includes not only the annual survey but feedback from Benefit Bus events, DINO events, Interpreter surgeries, liaison meetings (ESA, HB, Welfare Rights) etc. From December Customer Services staff are to carry out ongoing customer research (selecting a proportion of customers who call, write or phone) and will regularly publish the results.

MPs have been contacted to obtain their comments on our service; results look good so far!

SERVICE DELIVERY (5)

The full Customer Survey results will be published shortly but a preview shows that 45% of our customers think that the service we give has improved and 41% think it has remained the same as last year.

A copy of Our District's Charter Standard Statement was issued to all staff recently, detailing the standards of service which our customers can expect. Currently we are meeting all but three of our targets.

Thank you letters are now shared by publishing them in the Barry Crier - it is nice to know we're appreciated sometimes! We even featured in the Sunday People letters page recently >>>>>

★WE hear all the time of complaints about long waiting lists and bad treatment from the DSS and tax departments. But I feel credit should be given where it's due.

Over the past few weeks, I've been treated with the utmost courtesy from helpful and friendly staff at the DSS and tax offices Preston and feel that th efforts shouldn't unheralded.

Thanks!

Mr T A Blac
Preston, Lancash

A recent survey of customer waiting times showed that 99% of customers are seen at reception within 10 minutes of entering the office.

HANDLING EXCEPTIONS (3)

The Complaints Strategy has been revised to take account of staff and customer feedback and will be published after consultation with Trade Union Side.

We are currently contacting customers who have complained recently to ask for feedback on how we handled the complaint.

All commands are now developing their own strategies for examining cases which fall outside clearance time targets or are not resolved satisfactorily. Please feed any evidence of action

Finally, the Staff Perception Survey measured our success in this area:

* 88% of staff know how to find out what training is available
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These responses (with the exception of the first which was not measured) are all significantly improved compared with last year. The Equality Group are to look at how we might improve further.

STAFF SERVICES (7)

About 100 staff have attended Personal Safety Awareness sessions and feedback so far is very good.

The application form for the latest AA recruitment included an additional page which asked for examples of where competencies which are important in the BA today eg .teamwork have been demonstrated. This should help us to select the best people for the jobs.

Again the Staff Perception Survey helped us to measure success in this area:

* 94% of staff are satisfied with the services offered by Personnel Section
* 92% are satisfied with the services offered by Accommodation section
* 84% are satisfied with the services offered by Finance section
* 89% are satisfied with our general working environment

ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE (5)

Teambuilding events have started with CB teams who had their events first as they'll have other things on their minds between January and March!!

CB command now produce minutes (creative!) of their HEO/LO1 meetings; they have an LO2 working party to increase LO2 involvement in decision making; AAs now have regular meetings, which are minuted, to pool ideas and resolve problems; and of course Lee's "underpants" which are used to recognise achievement are now legendary!

The Communications Group are looking at whether there is value in cross command LO2 and AA networking.

The Staff Perception Survey goes some way towards helping us to measure our performance in this area:

* 87% of staff feel they are encouraged to ask questions and come up with new ideas
* 92% of LO1s feel they are involved in decision making
* 58.5% of all staff feel they are involved in decision making
* 84.5% feel they have personal responsibility for, and control over their own job
* 85.5% are aware of the meaning of empowerment and the responsibilities it brings

Each command is looking at ways of improving performance in these areas.

COMMUNICATION (5)

The Communication Group is now 14 strong and all commands are represented. The group is looking at ways to address some of the communication problems highlighted by the Staff Perception Survey eg:

* 55% of staff do not have time to digest all information received, which suggests that we should review the way that we distribute/circulate information

* 52% think that communications between commands could be improved - LO2/AA networking is a possibility which is being explored and a pilot copy of a District Gazette covering work related issues has just been published. The Communications Group would like your feedback on this.

However, despite the aforementioned problems, the Staff Survey has given us some very positive results:

* 91% of staff have regular weekly meetings with their line manager

* 93% find the meetings useful and informative

* 88% feel their line manager communicates openly about matters that affect them

* 75% feel their views are passed upwards by line manager

* 76% feel that communications have improved in the last year

INTERNAL CUSTOMER FOCUS (5)

The Staff Perception Survey showed that

* 96% of staff understand who their internal customers are

* 70% have seen some improvements in services from other sections

Half hour closure sessions continue to be used for liaison and to help staff gain awareness of other people's jobs and roles. The Visiting Officers have recently issued a follow up to their earlier internal customer survey. The document also serves as an informal Service Level Agreement as it sets out what internal customers can expect from Visiting Officers and what we can do to help things go smoothly.

Internal Customer Focus - Level Five

Although the District could demonstrate improvements generated by an understanding of the needs of internal customers it was clear that the process was at an early stage. Service level agreements were not formally monitored and therefore reviews of performance would tend to be less effective than if a more formal approach were taken.
The Group accepted the management's wish not to add to the paperwork , however formal measures and suitable graphs indicating performance would not only help improve the current service level agreements but also encourage the use in other areas. Work on Organisational Culture may also help in this area.

Handling Exceptions - Level Five

As with the other areas, the admirable drive by both staff and managers to cut down on paper and the District's early stage in the process, conspired against it. Verbal evidence from customers indicated systems are in place however the Group feel that a more rigorous approach to the process is required. Formally mapping the process(es) and setting responsibilities would assist. It may also assist the District in maintaining consistency and training given the number of existing and new staff who get involved.

Process Efficiency - Level Five

Comments as above. More rigour in mapping process, publishing measures and communicating success . In the long run any short term paperwork generated should be rewarded by greater (and more consistent) knowledge of each process making it easier to recognise success and areas for improvement. It may also help staff who are not directly involved with the process to generate that may help.

Comments On The Other Criteria

Customer Research **Level Six Claimed**

1-4 validator satisfied

Written evidence backed up with interviews with representatives of external organisations together with feedback from staff amply supported the claim level of six. **Level Six Appropriate.**

Service Delivery **Level Six Claimed**

1-4 validator satisfied

Results of local surveys reveal 66% of customers are fairly or very satisfied. This is supported by feedback from outside organisations about the perceived improvements by mutual clients. Despite general concerns about the validity of Mystery Shopping reports those examined in Preston revealed a high level of service which was confirmed by the validator's observations. Level Six Appropriate.

MANAGING BUDGETS (5)

The Economy Committee are up and running again, led by Garry Gibson.

Alex Dewar is available (and keen) to talk to groups of staff about the whole area of resources, complementing etc etc. We have just received an idea of our budget for 1995/96 so now is the time to use Alex's expertise to answer all those questions!

One interesting fact is that from April 1994 we have recruited 60 new members of staff and promoted 35 people; a clear indication that we are trying our hardest to maximise our resources and reduce unnecessary overtime.

PROCESS EFFICIENCY (3)

We are forging ahead now with process mapping in many areas of the office. Please feed results to Sue Gibson for BAQF evidence.

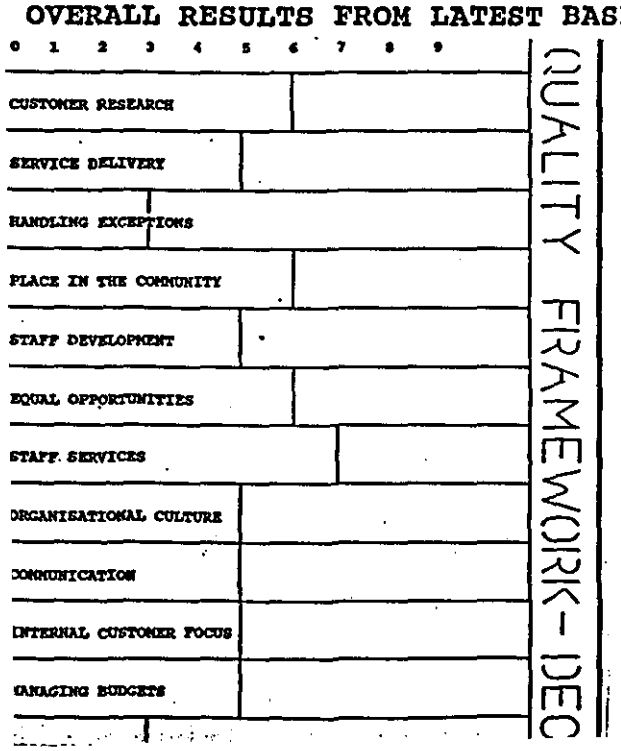
CB are looking at having dedicated telephone staff (with headsets) to cope with the expected increase in calls about Incapacity Benefit.

Angela Lonergan and Cath Ditchfield have been working with IS staff to improve accuracy on mortgage cases.

IS recently examined all clerical cases to check them for accuracy and to get as many as possible onto the system. A total of 139 cases were checked and 40% were either put on system, PA'd or transferred out. A training package is being devised to address some of the problems found.

Overpayment section have developed a strategy to reduce outstanding overpayments to less than 300 by end of Jan '95.

OVERALL RESULTS FROM LATEST BASELINING EXERCISE:



Thanks to everybody who took part in this exercise. It is encouraging that we've reached at least 5 in so many areas. The Staff Perception Survey results may in fact support a higher rating in some areas so we may not be very far off award standard.
Watch this space!!

BAQF REPRESENTATIVES

The following members of staff are involved with the Quality Framework either as Focus Group members or Command co-ordinators:

Command 1: Bob Watson
David Foster

Command 2: Jo Bark
Alan Caine
Clare Shackleton
Jackie Thomas
Derek McEwan

Command 3: Margaret Jackson
Tony Nash
Donna Fox

Command 4: Graham Riding
Alison Walsh
Sandra Hobbs
Karen Donnellan
Sheila Walmsley
Ann Green

Command 5: Peter Claxton
Paul Cuerden
Sal Yusuf
Michelle Aldridge

Command 6: Jean Hindle
Keiron Keeble

Command 7: Sylvia Menzies

The Communications Steering Group members are:

Karen Donnellan	Allison Thomson	Bob Watson
Alison Walsh	Sylvia Menzies	Jean Hindle
Keiron Keeble	Lorna Penny	Jackie Thomas
Zoey Cartwright	Derek McEwan	Anisha Patel
Yasmin Bodi	Carole Organ	Tony Nash

WHAT NEXT???

Hopefully, all the extra effort we're putting in now will give us the push up to an overall marking of 70. In particular, the Complaints Strategy and the Process Mapping exercise will improve our rating in the two areas where we score less than 5.

The Focus Group will continue to reassess our ratings until we reach the magic figure, and with a little more effort we hope to reach award level pretty early on in 1995!

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL!!

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APPENDIX L: FULL VALIDATION REPORT OF PRESTON DISTRICT

PRESTON DISTRICT VALIDATION VISIT

SUMMARY

To ensure a thorough validation the Group initially concentrated on satisfying itself that levels one to four had been achieved in all areas. Once convinced, it turned its attention to validating evidence presented for higher levels of achievement. This summary covers the Group's general comments on evidence that satisfied levels one to four and specific comments on the opportunities for improvement identified for those areas attracting a level five rating namely, Organisational Culture, Handling Exceptions, Internal Customer Focus and Process Efficiency.

Levels One to Four

It was evident from the moment the Group entered the building that this District had a good feel to it. Both the quality of the environment and the atmosphere within the working areas indicated a team confident in itself and in its ability to tackle the not inconsiderable challenges that lie ahead.

It was clear that staff, management and, where necessary, customers, had been consulted on each of the twelve areas and that management plans and methods of review were in place. During the various discussions it was also evident that the District is supported by a very solid management team. The staff demonstrated their maturity of thought through logically discussing how and why they approached delivering a quality service. They appear to take customer service very much in their stride. During the walkabouts our initial impressions were reinforced with staff being very open and helpful.

Finally, discussions with external customer representatives confirmed the Group's view of the District's performance.

Opportunities for Improvement

Organisational Culture - Level Five

The District demonstrated that the way the organisation ran itself was improving. However, during meetings it became clear to the Group that there was still a tendency to emphasise grade rather than an individual's ability to contribute. There also appeared to be some evidence of a 'reflective layer' at supervisor level. This manifested itself during diagonal slice meetings where hierarchy seemed to be particularly important to some and communication appeared to be 'fudged' by selective over or under emphasis of particular facts. These issues are more a reflection on the maturity of the change process (as empowerment and responsibility are pushed further down then it is natural that those most affected should hark back to the previous values) and not on the general direction. The management team may wish to work closer with the supervisory levels to ensure they are more comfortable with the changes required by BA.

COMMUNICATION (5)

The Communication Group is now 14 strong and all commands are represented. The group is looking at ways to address some of the communication problems highlighted by the Staff Perception Survey eg:

* 55% of staff do not have time to digest all information received, which suggests that we should review the way that we distribute/circulate information

* 52% think that communications between commands could be improved - LO2/AA networking is a possibility which is being explored and a pilot copy of a District Gazette covering work related issues has just been published. The Communications Group would like your feedback on this.

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INTERNAL CUSTOMER FOCUS (5)

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* 70% have seen some improvements in services from other sections

Half hour closure sessions continue to be used for liaison and to help staff gain awareness of other people's jobs and roles. The Visiting Officers have recently issued a follow up to their earlier internal customer survey. The document also serves as an informal Service Level Agreement as it sets out what internal customers can expect from Visiting Officers and what we can do to help things go smoothly.

Place in The Community **Level Seven Claimed**

1-4 validator satisfied

Evidence of considerable activity involving external liaison exists as does evidence participation in fund raising and activity to support local schools. Appreciation of outreach work confirmed by external representatives. Service to ethnic minorities especially commended. **Level Seven Appropriate.**

Staff Development **Level Seven Claimed**

1-4 validator satisfied

Evidence of a wide number of opportunities exist for staff development. This is publicised throughout the District. Discussions with staff and management confirm this. The award of IIP provides strong independent evidence to support their success in this area. **Level Seven Appropriate.**

Equal Opportunities **Level Seven Claimed**

1-4 validator satisfied

Observations confirmed evidence of minority representation amongst staff. Needs of disabled staff and customers addressed and facilities provided. Discussions with staff reinforced their confidence in the application of equal opportunities in this District. This substantiated the findings of the staff perception survey. In addition to this external representation of disabled and ethnic minorities further reinforced the District's claim. **Level Seven Appropriate.**

Staff Services **Level Seven Claimed**

1-4 validator satisfied

Informal observations and discussions with staff not only supported the substantial claims made by the district but also confirmed a very high level of satisfaction. The claimed rating of seven is justified. **Level Seven Appropriate.**

Communications **Level Six Claimed**

1-4 validator satisfied

There is an abundance of documentary evidence to illustrate the efforts that have been made in this area. Additionally, informal discussions with staff have made it clear that the measures adopted have been effective in overcoming some past difficulties. Some gaps were revealed in the course of informal conversations. **Level Six Appropriate.**

Managing Budgets

Level Six Claimed

1-4 validator satisfied

Discussions with the security staff illustrated strong commitment to both deterrence and detection of potential breaches. Effective budgetary control is exercised by the management team and mechanisms are in place to ensure that staff are regularly updated on budget status. External acknowledgement was available from the Area Director. **Level Six Appropriate.**

APPENDIX M: STAFF PERCEPTION QUESTIONNAIRE - PRESTON

AFF PERCEPTION QUESTIONNAIRE

ase read the following questions and statements and tick the column which most closely represents r view:

Column 1 = Total agree
Column 2 = Inclined to agree
Column 3 = Inclined to disagree
Column 4 = Totally disagree

About Communications	1	2	3	4
have regular weekly meetings with my Line Manager.				
The meetings are useful and informative.				
The meetings are a waste of time.				
My Line Manager communicates openly about matters that concern me.				
am kept informed of procedural/office changes.				
My views on important matters are passed upwards by my Manager.				
receive too much information.				
don't have time to take all the information in.				
The information I receive is relevant to my job.				
Most of the information does not affect me.				
Most information is circulated quickly and on time.				
find the staff news and information in the Barry Crier useful.				
have access to the 'BA Weekly'.				
read the announcements section at the beginning of the BA Weekly.				
This information I find informative/relevant.				
Communications are effective between commands and benefits.				
I have all the information I need to do my job well.				
I have been involved in identifying areas where communications could be improved.				
Overall I think that communications have improved in the last 12 months.				

bout Communications - Working Parties/Liaison Groups				
They aid communications within the commands.				
They assist communications with staff at all levels.				

Column 1 = Total agree
Column 2 = Inclined to agree
Column 3 = Inclined to disagree
Column 4 = Totally disagree

am aware that we have the following parties/groups currently:-

	Aware	Not Aware
LOI Liaison (Monthly Meeting).		
Security Focus Group.		
Staff Suggestions Committee (now Quality Ideas).		
Sports and Social.		
Economy Committee.		
Equal Opps. Focus Group (now Equality).		

About Communications - Market Testing.

	1	2	3	4
I understand what Market Testing means				
The information received is worthwhile.				
I know which areas are currently being market tested.				

If you don't have the information you need to do your job well please tell me where you think there is a problem and how to make a difference.

Column 1 = Total agree
Column 2 = Inclined to agree
Column 3 = Inclined to disagree
Column 4 = Totally disagree

About The Organisation	1	2	3	4
m encouraged to be honest, ask questions and come up with w ideas.				
on't speak up because no one listens to my opinions.				
m involved in decision making.				
et positive feedback on any ideas or suggestions that I do ake.				
uestions that I raise rarely get an answer.				
eel I have personal responsibility for , and control over my n job.				
m aware of the broad aims and visions of the organisation, hat goals we are working towards.				
eceive information about BA other than that directly ncerned with my own job.				
orking Parties/Liaison Groups are useful to analyse problems d recommend improvements.				
orking Parties/Liaison Groups enable staff to put forward ws on certain key issues.				
now that the BA is working towards a 'One Stop Shop' vice for its customers.				
m kept up to date with developments on One Stop Shopping.				
garding empowerment - the training received has made me are of the meaning of empowerment and the responsibilities rings.				

ut the Organisation.

ut the Management Team (HEO, SEO, District Manager).

e Management Team are in touch with my situation.				
views are listened to and taken into account.				
eel the Management Team are approachable.				

Column 1 = Total agree
Column 2 = Inclined to agree
Column 3 = Inclined to disagree
Column 4 = Totally disagree

About Staff Development	1	2	3	4
I know where I stand and what my job prospects are.				
I get feedback about my performance.				
I get feedback about my team's performance.				
I know how to find out what training is available to me.				
I know how to find out what external training may be available to me.				
I would welcome an awayday to discuss work issues with members of my team.				
I feel that the training offered by the District meets most of my needs.				
I discuss my development needs with my Line Manager and action is taken to address most of these.				

bout Staff Development - The Half Hour Closure.

I find it useful for discussion and training.				
It's a waste of time - I could be working.				
My Group can't fill the time - but we've got to be seen to be doing something.				
My Group need more than half an hour and have topics planned weeks in advance.				
Training sessions are relevant/useful.				

About Staff Services	1	2	3	4
I am satisfied with the services offered by - Personnel				
- Accommodation				
- Finance				
I am satisfied with my general working environment.				

Column 1 = Total agree
Column 2 = Inclined to agree
Column 3 = Inclined to disagree
Column 4 = Totally disagree

About Staff Services	1	2	3	4
have been involved in District Office initiatives such as Aids ıwareness, Staff Welfare Talks, Look After Your Heart Campaign.				
he security awareness training I have received was useful and ıformative.				
he security training has made me more aware of the importance ıf good security practices.				

r staff with less than 6 months service.

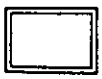
am satisfied with the recruitment process within the District.				
found the induction sessions useful.				

About Internal Customers	1	2	3	4
Other Sections, Commands and Departments don't realise what is nvolved in my job.				
understand who my internal customers are.				
have seen improvements in some services offered to me as a customer (ie. from other Sections within the District).				

About Equal Opportunities	1	2	3	4
am aware that the Benefits Agency is committed to Equal Opportunities.				
think the District Office is free from discrimination.				
understand how to make a complaint about discrimination.				
am aware that there are trained sexual harassment counsellors in the District Office.				
believe that there is equality in career opportunities for:-				
a) Part-timers				
b) Staff with disabilities				
c) Members of Ethnic Minorities				

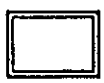
What is your grade?
(Please tick)

HEO or above 

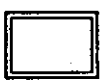
LOI 

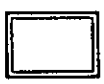
LOII 

AA 

SGB2/Typist 

Which benefit do you work on?
(Please tick)

IS Command 1 

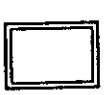
CB Command 4 

SF Command 3 

Customer Services Command 5 

Appeals/OP/QA etc Command 2 

Personnel/Staff Dev
Resources/OOHS Command 7 

Finance/Acomm
One Stop Command 6 

ank you for your co-operation

APPENDIX N: INTERPRETATIONS OF EMPOWERMENT - NORTH LEICESTERSHIRE

Definitions of Empowerment

Group One	Group Two
More flexible responsibility between grades Delegation with negotiation To try new ideas without fear of failure/retribution All grades working as equals in a team Makes higher grades more approachable Receiving support of all levels	Staff having more say in the running of their own sections. Responsibility to be passed down to make own decisions. Problems to be discussed as opposed to being told. Could mean easement of rules, regulations, cutting corners etc. Rule books don't always have to be followed to the letter as long as work is being done correctly. Short cuts need to be made because of lack of staff. Could mean taking on responsibilities that staff are not recognised for. Do we need team leaders? Some decisions made by management (LOIs) could be made by their staff but staff should be given credit.
Group Three "Can mean" Passing the buck. Off-loading jobs that the higher grade doesn't want to do. Taking on more jobs for little or no recognition. Being more accountable for mistakes that are beyond your control. Doing a "higher" job for less pay.	Group Three "Should mean" Delegating responsibility with an aim to creating greater job satisfaction. Leading to greater experience, and confidence, and therefore increasing productivity. That there are no longer barriers between grades, we should all be respected for the job we are doing as part of a working team with all jobs being seen as equal. Career prospects should be enhanced.

APPENDIX O: PERCEIVED BARRIERS TO EMPOWERMENT - NORTH LEICESTERSHIRE

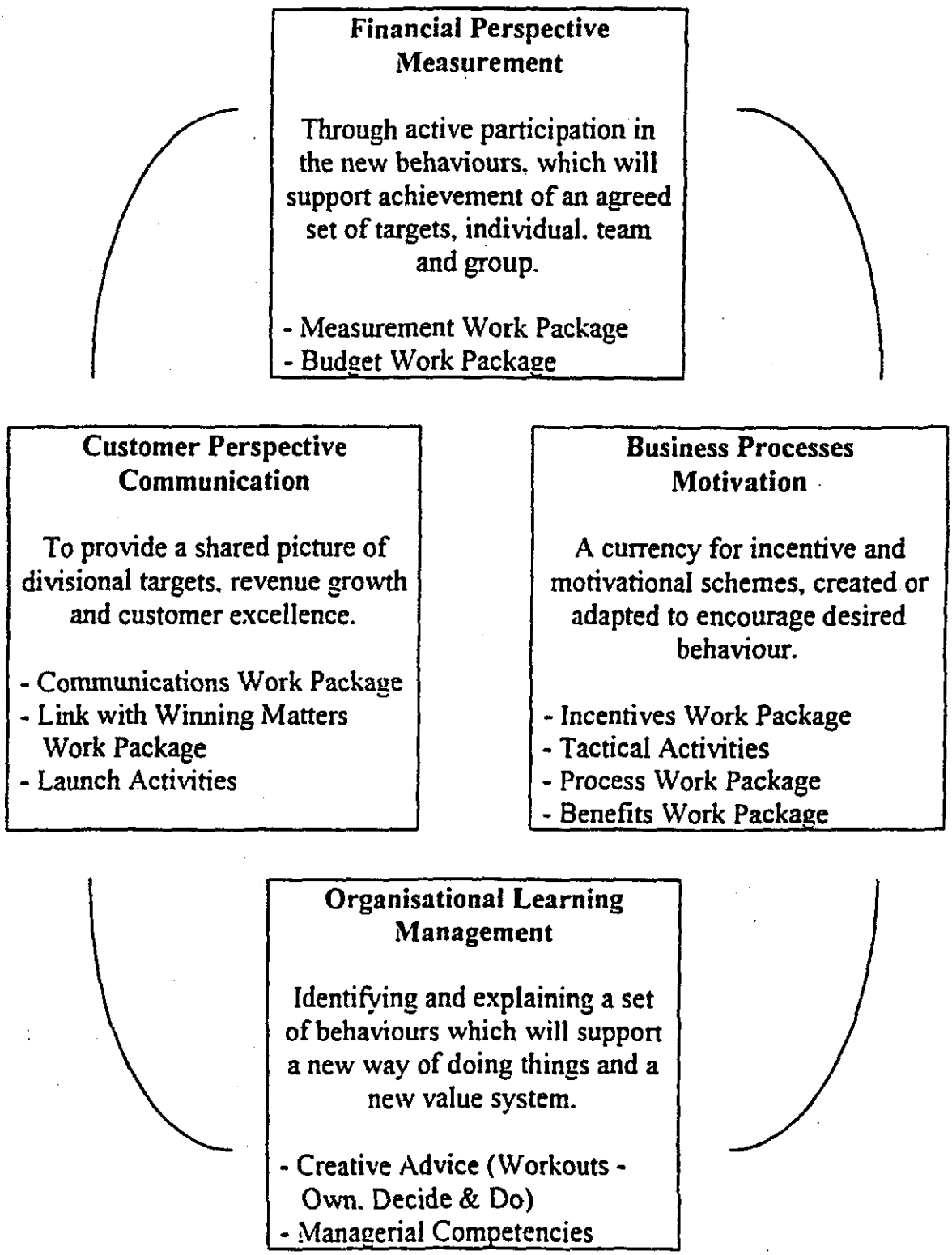
Barriers To Empowerment

Conflict of interests/Chain of Command
Lack of resources
Little knowledge is dangerous Lack of training
Out of touch/out of date
Worse service
Too much change at once
Extended opening hours
Lack of immediate expertise

APPENDIX P: BTPC CORPORATE SCORECARD

BT Corporate Scorecard

Using the Corporate Scorecard as a framework for demonstrating how this project supports some of the key internal strategic objectives for PC - in particular the 'Climate for Action' and how activities will develop the theme towards our vision.



ASIDE LINES

"An enjoyable day – a lot more interesting than previous workshops. The videos were entertaining as well as informative."

Helen Coles - Marketing

"Our team workout involved gaining points from different activities in the gym, the swimming pool and running across bridges!

As a group of managers we came back as a far *stronger team* and have seen how these behaviours can help us achieve so much more.

It was so well organised – a fantastic experience!"

Philip Miles – Payphones

"An entertaining and informative day, which demonstrates how the *...for a better life* values can be applied both at work and at home."

Karey Moore - Marketing

"We saw people turn around from being very negative to very positive in a short space of time. The workout has been a tremendous success for our team."

Rhoda Davison CSC

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Help! It's available

To help you design your Team Workout, there are several resources available to help you:

- Team Workout packs (distributed at Manager Workouts)
- Frank Dick's video (distributed at Manager Workouts)
- Team Briefing notes (distributed at the Manager Launch Events *October/November 1994*)
- *...for a better life* Coaching Team – contact details on back page
- *...for a better life* Project Office – Helpline number 01442 296400
- 'Buddy' partners – partnerships formed at Manager Workouts
- Talk to your colleagues and friends to see what they have planned...

UPPING YOUR GAME

What happens next?

Your successful Team Workout will have explained the new game plan, motivated your people and started them on the journey. However, athletes rarely develop as quickly as they would like and will encounter those walls and bleeps as they seek to learn new skills and do things differently. Your on-going coaching and support is key to keeping them moving forward. Team Workouts are the first step on the journey together. Coaches will need to take every opportunity to coach and encourage their teams to *continually spot and respond to* opportunities to put the behaviours into action.

How could you do this? Here are a few ideas:

- develop your own team strategy of review and practice sessions for the next six months to a year
- hold regular "practice sessions", using activities to explore and refine the behaviours in a safe environment and fun way, before returning your athletes to the public arena
- share team experience and learning together
- review your fitness plan together and set new stretching goals
- celebrate every success, small and large
- create a clear picture together of what achievement will look and feel like and keep this picture in your athletes' minds
- give regular feedback on how your team is contributing to the achievement of the goals set out for PC.

Your local game and fitness plans are all part of creating the climate for change. Do let the BT coaches or the *...for a better life* team know how you are getting on.

COACHES NUMBERS

Rosemary Ryan Personnel 01442 296024	Mary Higgins Finance 0181 553 7250	David Reid Marketing Strategy 01442 296 796
Dave Webber *Personnel* 01442 296063	Chris Grimshaw *Finance* 01254 666528	Lucy Handley *Marketing* 0171 356 8861
Andy Tubbs Personnel 01442 296026	Jill Davis Finance 01733 59339	Stuart Braid Finance 01382 302 158
Paul Burns Personnel 01442 295915	Sue Hunt CCU 0171 822 1168	Dave Stanley Payphones 0181 456 6740
Bridgid Hodges Personnel 01442 296027	Dave Barton Payphones 0171 922 8470	Gordon Welsh Marketing 031 345 6464
Kim Challis Personnel 01442 296064	Peter Briggs Finance 0171 920 6450	Alyson Cowper Payphones 0224 753 502
Alex McCrae Sales 0141 220 2570	Paul Ollerton Payphones 0151 229 4447	Alistair Haining Payphones 0224 753 504
Julie Harris Customer Service 01252 335440	Steve Murphy Payphones 0151 229 4447	Norman Wallace Payphones 0224 753 502
Carol Ann Baksh Sales 0181 666 7119	Greg Forsyth Payphones 01403 245 102	Mary Scarratt Sales 0782 288 386
Laura Wise Customer Service 01227 474889	Dave O'Brien Payphones 0181 290 0880	

NEWSLETTER Nº1 APRIL 1995

FIT

...for a better life!

LET'S GO!

A message from our chief coach.

"I hope you are in great shape - and that you're getting your 'athletes' that way too!

In the video, I suggested that, in the second stage of developing an athlete, his or her motivation takes a dip. Some of you may be feeling that now.

This newsletter is to support you in the task facing you and to give you some ideas on your Team Workouts and fitness plans.

"Remember that you are the role model for your people"

This is a tough stage for athletes and coaches. The key to keeping the momentum going is to remember that you are the role model for your people. Your athletes are having to understand the new game plan; *learn the new behaviours*, and deliver them in practice. That's a tall order, but give them challenges through a workout – and a continuing training plan – and they'll get there.

Nothing can become instinctive when the pressure is on in a championship – unless it's been practised – correctly and often. The best coaches develop their athletes by COACHING them and SUPPORTING them. This *is where the real returns come.* It needs a special kind of person with a special kind of commitment, but you know that, and you know that person well – it's you.

Thanks for your work in getting this new game plan on the move. Keep smiling."

Frank Dick

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Team Workouts in Action
Useful Contacts
Upping Your Game

LEADER COLUMN

Welcome to this first *...for a better life* Newsletter!

Many of you will already have run your Team Workouts and will now be implementing your fitness plans – for those of you who haven't, this issue gives you a lot of tips and suggestions on how to make it happen!

We in the *...for a better life* Project Team also want to hear from you about any ideas or suggestions you have that will help us all make these behaviours second nature. You may know people who you feel epitomise the *...for a better life* behaviours and deserve recognition – let us know who they are so we can help celebrate their success. You may feel that there are problems stopping you making progress, again, let us know your views and what you are doing about it.

Contact us on 01442 296400 or fax us on *01442 296397*.

If you want to hear more about

- resources available to help you.
- what's happening at the Team Workouts across the division.
- how to create your Fitness Plan.
- how to contact the coaches for help.

read on ...

NEWS ROUND-UP

Team Workouts in action – what did we do?

Customer Service
Keeley Lawler

"After an introduction, the team took a few balloons and wrote on each one something we wanted changing/abolishing from "the old behaviours" (eg a procedure or way of working). More on that later ...

The first exercise was our own version of the "electronic mat" exercise. We split into customers and BT staff; the staff had to lead the customers across the "minefield" as quickly as possible.

> The practical activities were the perfect way of reinforcing the "new behaviours".

The second task was to split into pairs; one of the two was blindfolded and the partner had to guide them round an obstacle course using only their voice.

The final exercise was to burst the "old behaviours" balloons! We did have the choice to let them go outside, but we unanimously decided to DESTROY THEM!

What were the benefits?

As we are quite a newly formed team, the workshop acted as a very successful catalyst for the team to get to know one another and break the ice.

The practical activities were the perfect way of reinforcing the "new behaviours". The event leaders constantly made relevant comparisons between the activities and our everyday working lives.

Speaking personally, I really enjoyed the whole morning. A lot of work went into the planning of the workshop and it was all worth while. What more can I say – it was EXCELLENT!"

Finance
Mike Heaps

"PFB is a team of professionals responsible for Financial Analysis and Control and Divisional Business Planning. As the team has only five non managers, the requirement was to build on the Manager Workouts and introduce the non managers to the concept. "We held three mini events:"

Event 1

Using a set of ten scenarios (samples below), that represented situations that have arisen or could plausibly arise in our work, we allocated the questions between three teams. We then went through the scenarios and then discussed in plenary the behaviours that should be used to deal with each. This had the benefit of enabling everyone to think about the correct behaviours and identify where behaviours can be changed/ improved with hindsight. A valuable learning exercise with the opportunity to consider these issues away from the pressure of the work place.

Scenario sample 1. A customer comes to you requesting authority to purchase some equipment, but the people who can authorise it are unavailable. If the purchase is not authorised immediately, BT will lose the opportunity to obtain a significant discount.

Scenario sample 2. A key person is leaving the unit on promotion, earlier than anticipated. The person has a key skill that cannot be quickly transferred to somebody else and their absence will cause significant problems.

Scenario sample 3. You are experiencing difficulties in agreeing the role of a key customer/supplier, despite trying diplomacy, the direct approach and escalation. If the person does not accept the role, then significant problems will arise.

Event 2

This was a variation on the game with blindfold, canes and tunnel. We split into teams of four and then paired up within the teams. The teams had to jointly agree the course layout using the materials in the room. The scoring system reflected both the skill in coaching a blindfolded colleague and the setting of team targets that encouraged the taking of considered risks.

> The Fitness Plans provided a powerful endorsement of this work.

Event 3

Over the two days we went through a number of syndicate exercises that examined our purpose and collective/individual objectives. We identified the key actions required to resolve issues and improve our working practices and relationship with customers/ suppliers. Using the guidance in the *fit...for a better life* workout guide, we split into our work teams and each produced a Fitness Plan. The Fitness Plans provided a powerful endorsement of this work.

Aldershot CSC
Julie Harris

"The two teams approached the afternoon with a mixture of excitement and trepidation. Will we need tracksuits we were asked? Well, as it was snowing in Aldershot at the time, the teams were advised that coats and wellies were probably a better bet! We held our event in the Sports and Social Club bar.

We used different coloured balloons asking them to identify a behaviour or work practice that they would like to see disappear.

We then re-capped on the behaviours that had been introduced to them on their one hour launch events in December.

Our first activity was a Treasure Hunt - ten items to be collected within 30 minutes. We then had a good debrief session on the behaviours that people had demonstrated during the activity and presented the prizes to the winning team.

Our second activity was the "I will" exercise (details in your "Getting Fit *...for a better life*" Team Workout Pack). Customers were won as demonstrations of the four behaviours shone through and lost when opportunities were missed. It worked well relating the scenarios back to work situations and got lots of group discussion going.

For the team fitness plans teams split back into their actual work teams and, with their managers, agreed an area where they could focus on one of the behaviours. Everyone was happy to sign up and received a copy of the agreed fitness plan.

We closed by looking forward to the things that *...for a better life* will bring us, both in terms of personal satisfaction and also in making PC a more enjoyable division to work in and to do business with.

Finally, we have our own "Sign up" boards. These were signed and when the photos come out will be decorated with photographs and displayed in the Team Meeting Rooms in Aldershot CSC.

Oh yes, and those bad behaviour balloons – well, what do you think? We stamped them out, of course!

Creating a new game plan

If you are wondering how to put together your Fitness Plan with your team, have a look at these examples that have already been sent in – they may give you some ideas.

FITNESS PLAN

Area to focus on	Actions we will take	How will we know we have succeeded
BAN – Boss always makes decisions.	Come up with ideas/solutions when flagging problems to Tier1.	Our ideas will be implemented more frequently.
BUILD on working together.	Integrate new people into team from other Units.	Gain feedback from new team members.
BAN – Who is to blame?	Focus on putting things right with corrective action as necessary.	Problems will get solved more quickly, less moaning.
Taking considered risks with authority levels and procedures.	Discuss with managers that if risks are taken, they will be backed by their manager.	Clearer understanding of what risks are OK to take. Things will happen more quickly as we will not be waiting for agreement.
To find out further information about other internal departments' guidelines for decision-making to help us make considered risks.	Contact and maybe visit other departments. Invite them to visit us.	We will feel confident to make decisions and take risks without having to ask permission. Less need for a line manager to intervene.

Ideally your first team fitness plan should:

- focus on the behaviours
- list individual and team actions agreed on where and how they will be put into practice
- if your action is to change a process or procedure for doing things, show how doing this will demonstrate the behaviours

APPENDIX R: ITEMS ON DIMENSION "WORKING TOGETHER...*for a better life*"

Ownership

8.4 I feel proud to work for BT

PC People.....
9.1 They are polite and courteous
9.2 They give their name
9.3 They want to understand my requirements
9.4 They readily offer ways of helping me
9.5 I feel reassured that they have taken responsibility
9.6 They say when they will meet my requirements
9.7 My manager encourages me to take personal ownership of customers requirements
9.8 I feel I am able to take personal ownership of customers requirements
9.9 My manager takes personal ownership of customers requirements

Support and Upward Feedback

5.8 I feel that my manager does his/her job well
5.10 My manager's manager can be relied on to do what he/she says he/she will do
5.7 I get help and support from my manager when I need it
6.3 My manager's manager communicates openly on matters of importance to me

Contribute

5.4 I have targets or objectives which I have discussed with my manager
5.2 I understand how my team contributes to the success of BT
9.16 I understand how I can contribute to PC's Vision and Mission

Decisive

9.10 My manager encourages me to make decisions
9.11 I feel confident about making decisions to meet my customers needs
9.12 My manager makes effective decisions

Risks

9.13 My manager encourages me to take considered risks on behalf of the customer
9.14 I feel confident to take considered risk on behalf of a customer
9.15 My manager takes considered risks as part of his job

This is To certify that

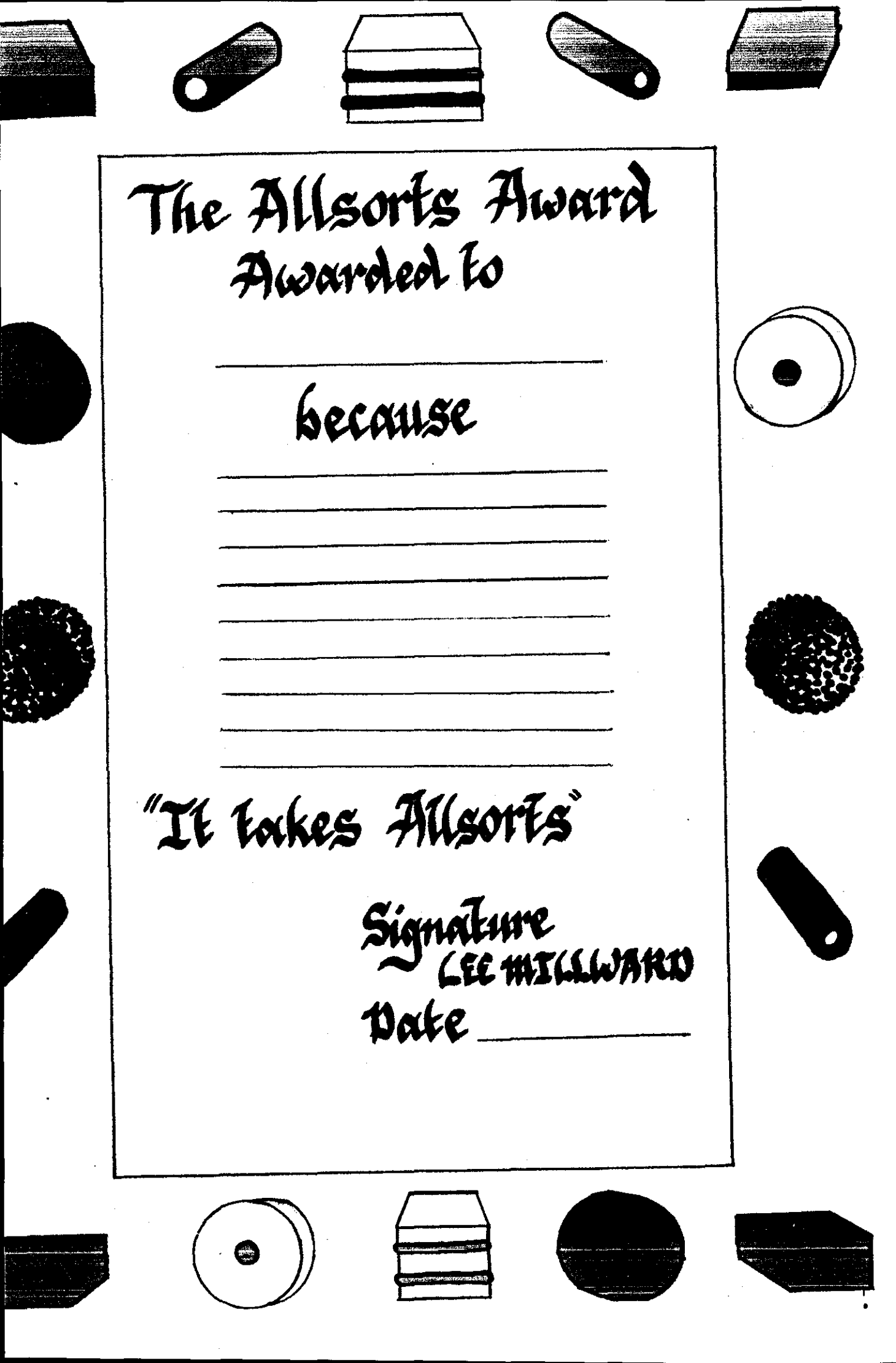
_____

is a
G.E.M.
for "Going an Extra Mile"
by

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Signature _____
LEE MILLWARD

Date _____



The Allsorts Award

Awarded to

_____

because

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"It takes Allsorts"

Signature
LEE MILLWARD

Date _____

hen judging a friend remember he is judging you with the ame godlike and superior impartiality.

are are three kinds of people in the world, the wills, the won'ts and e can'ts. The first accomplish everything; the second oppose verything; the third fail in everything.

well is wise;
ghtly wiser;
ell wisest and
ffall

A MAN
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G.E.M.
GO the extra mile
Recognition Certificate and Gemstone

Information sheet

The opportunity to formally recognise a fellow contributory benefit colleague for going an extra mile to provide customers or fellow employees with outstanding service. Feel free to recognise a co-worker or your supervisor. GEM starts 7 to 94
The GEM certificates will be issued at the beginning of each month. A ROLL OF HONOUR will be hung on the Reference Board.

WHY GEM?

G.E.M. is a tool you can use to acknowledge colleagues who go the extra mile to give extraordinary service. When you recognise people for doing jobs well, you take the essential step in helping them feel proud about what they do.

Some Examples

- For going the extra mile to help a customer or fellow worker.
- For doing a great job ahead of schedule.
- For changing an angry customer into a satisfied one
- For solving an unusual problem

These are only suggestions. Feel free to recognise a fellow C.B. colleague for other reasons. The point is to recognise a person of employees whose skills and personalities reflect the Agency's Core Values.

Never judge your neighbour until you have been in the same situation.

Next to excellence is the appreciation of it.

An action is the perfection and pursuation of thought.

No man has a right to do as he pleases, except when he pleases to do right.

We should not judge of a man's merits by his great qualities but by the use he makes of them.

100 forward.

You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all of the time.

There are people who make things happen, people who watch things happen and people who don't know anything

When judging a friend remember he is judging you with the same godlike and superior impartiality.

There are three kinds of people in the world, the wills, the wants and the can'ts. The first accomplish everything; the second oppose everything; the third fail in everything.

king well is wise;
inking well wise;
ng well wisest and
est of all

HAT A MAN
OES TELLS
S WHAT HE IS.

Never judge yo
neighbour unt
you have been i
same situation

Next to excell
is the appree
of it.

ALL SORTS

It takes all sorts

Certificate

The integrity of man is to be measured by their conduct, not by their professions.

The opportunity to recognise anyone in the office for exemplary attitude and conduct.

To acknowledge any one who:
(1) always behaves with consideration to others, is helpful and cheerful
(2) despite difficulties continues to give 100%.
(3) clearly demonstrates the Agency's core values.
(4) follows through / does what they promise.

An action is l
perfection an
pursuation o
thought.

Every man is valued in this world as he shows by his conduct that he wishes to be valued.

Perfection consists not in doing extraordinary things but in doing ordinary things extraordinarily well.

No man ha
right to do
as he pleas
except when
pleases to d
right.

We should no
judge of an
merits by hi
qualities bu
the use he m
of them.

Allsorts starts 7/09/14

Allsort nomination forms will be held in CEIS Box for nomination on F&D. Certificates will be issued at the beginning of each month. Names of certificate holders will be displayed on F&D Notice board.

100% followed.

You can fool all the people some of the time, and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all of the time.

There are people who make things happen, people who watch things happen and people who don't know anythi

APPENDIX T: Tables of Biographical Statistics

Biographical Statistics for Entire Sample

BIOGRAPHICAL STATISTICS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
	n = 342 (unless stated)	
GENDER: Male	128	37.4
Female	214	62.6
AGE (n=339)	Mean = 32.42; s.d = 9.80	Range = 17 - 64
DEPENDENTS (n=340)	147	43.2
EARNER: Sole	62	18.1
Main	47	13.7
Joint	168	49.1
Live with parents	65	19
QUALIFICATIONS: GCSEs	315	92.1
NVQ	24	7
A-levels	173	50.6
Degree	45	13.2
Higher degree	9	2.6
Professional qualification	31	9.1
FULL TIME	290	84.8
WORK AS PART OF A TEAM	331	96.8
RESPONSIBLE FOR STAFF	14	4.1
TENURE: In Organization (n = 330)	Mean = 8.47; s.d. = 7.42	Range: 0 - 43
In Role (n = 334)	Mean = 3.12; s.d. = 4.32	Range: 0 - 43
In Grade (n = 338)	Mean = 5.92; s.d. = 6.38	Range: 0 - 43
WHY LEAVE? : Own Decision	135	39.5
Relocation	20	5.8
Retirement	63	18.4
Redundancy	62	18.1
Termination	0	0
Couldn't say	62	18.1
IF DIDN'T HAVE TO WORK:		
Would still prefer paid job	153	44.7
Wouldn't bother	65	19
Voluntary work	71	20.8
Other	33	9.6
Don't Know	20	5.8
PREVIOUS EXPOSURE TO EMPOWERMENT (n = 335)	168	50.1
MEMBER OF TRADE UNION (n = 341)	186	54.5

Biographical Statistics for BT and The Benefits Agency

BIOGRAPHICAL STATISTICS	The Benefits Agency				BT			
	Mean	sd	%	n	Mean	sd	%	n
GENDER: Male			25.5	235			63.6	107
Female			74.5	235			36.4	107
AGE	30.59	9.75		235	36.56	8.61		104
DEPENDENTS			36.2	235			59	105
EARNER: Sole			15.3	235			23.4	107
Main			6.8	235			29	107
Joint			51.9	235			43	107
Live with parents			26	235			4.7	107
QUALIFICATIONS: GCSEs			94.5	235			87.9	107
NVQ			7.7	235			5.6	107
BT Apprenticeship			.	.			7.5	107
A-levels			58.3	235			34.6	107
Degree			13.2	235			13.1	107
Higher degree			3.4	235			0.9	107
Professional qualification			7.2	235			13.1	107
FULL TIME			81.3	235			92.5	107
WORK AS PART OF A TEAM			97.4	235			95.3	107
RESPONSIBLE FOR STAFF			1.7	235			9.3	107
TENURE: In Organization	8.47	7.42		226	11.75	7.50		104
In Role	3.12	4.32		230	3.70	3.95		104
In Grade	5.92	6.38		233	6.29	5.94		105
WHY LEAVE? : Own Decision			45.5	235			26.2	107
Relocation			4.7	235			8.4	107
Retirement			16.6	235			22.4	107
Redundancy			12.8	235			29.9	107
Termination			0	235			0	107
Couldn't say			20.4	235			13.1	107
IF DIDN'T HAVE TO WORK:								
Would still prefer paid job			44.7	235			44.9	107
Wouldn't bother			22.6	235			11.2	107
Voluntary work			17	235			29	107
Other			10.2	235			8.4	107
Don't Know			5.5	235			6.5	107
PREVIOUS EXPOSURE TO EMPOWERMENT			61.1	234			24.8	101
MEMBER OF TRADE UNION			45.1	235			75.5	106

Biographical Statistics By Benefits Agency District

BIOGRAPHICAL STATISTICS	PRESTON				NORTH LEICESTERSHIRE			
	Mean	sd	%	n	Mean	sd	%	n
GENDER: Male			24.3	140			27.4	95
Female			75.7	140			72.6	95
AGE	28.36	8.78		140	33.87	10.22		95
DEPENDENTS			27.1	140			49.5	95
EARNER: Sole			11.4	140			21.1	95
Main			6.4	140			7.4	95
Joint			47.1	140			58.9	95
Live with parents			35	140			12.6	95
QUALIFICATIONS: GCSEs			96.4	140			90.5	95
NVQ			6.4	140			9.5	95
A-levels			65.7	140			47.4	95
Degree			14.3	140			11.6	95
Higher degree			2.1	140			5.3	95
Professional qualification			7.9	140			6.3	95
FULL TIME			88.6	140			70.5	95
WORK AS PART OF A TEAM			98.6	140			95.8	95
RESPONSIBLE FOR STAFF			1.4	140			2.1	95
TENURE: In Organization	5.99	5.91		134	8.36	7.92		92
In Role	2.63	3.34		136	3.18	5.70		94
In Grade	4.99	5.86		139	6.89	7.40		94
WHY LEAVE? : Own Decision			48.6	140			41.1	95
Relocation			2.9	140			7.4	95
Retirement			15.7	140			17.9	95
Redundancy			7.9	140			20	95
Termination			0	140			0	95
Couldn't say			25	140			13.7	95
IF DIDN'T HAVE TO WORK:								
Would still prefer paid job			42.9	140			47.4	95
Wouldn't bother			25	140			18.9	95
Voluntary work			17.1	140			16.8	95
Other			8.6	140			12.6	95
Don't Know			6.4	140			4.2	95
PREVIOUS EXPOSURE TO EMPOWERMENT			66.2	139			53.7	95
MEMBER OF TRADE UNION			38.6	140			54.7	95

Biographical Statistics By BT Directorate

BIOGRAPHICAL STATISTICS	PAYPHONES				MARKETING			
	Mean	sd	%	n	Mean	sd	%	n
GENDER: Male			78.7	61			43.5	46
Female			21.3	61			56.5	46
AGE	37.93	8.78		60	34.68	8.08		44
DEPENDENTS			73.8	61			38.6	46
EARNER: Sole			24.6	61			21.7	46
Main			36.1	61			19.6	46
Joint			36.1	61			52.2	46
Live with parents			3.3	61			6.5	46
QUALIFICATIONS: GCSEs			83.6	61			93.5	46
NVQ			3.3	61			8.7	46
BT Apprenticeship			11.5	61			2.2	46
A-levels			26.2	61			45.7	46
Degree			8.2	61			19.6	46
Higher degree			0	61			2.2	46
Professional qualification			9.8	61			17.4	46
FULL TIME			93.4	61			91.3	46
WORK AS PART OF A TEAM			95.1	61			95.7	46
RESPONSIBLE FOR STAFF			14.8	61			2.2	46
TENURE: In Organization	13.09	7.57		58	10.07	7.14		46
In Role	5.43	4.01		58	1.52	2.57		46
In Grade	7.44	5.97		59	4.80	5.63		46
WHY LEAVE? : Own Decision			19.7	61			34.8	46
Relocation			3.3	61			15.2	46
Retirement			34.4	61			6.5	46
Redundancy			32.8	61			26.1	46
Termination			0	61			0	46
Couldn't say			9.8	61			17.4	46
IF DIDN'T HAVE TO WORK:								
Would still prefer paid job			49.2	61			39.1	46
Wouldn't bother			11.5	61			10.9	46
Voluntary work			27.9	61			30.4	46
Other			4.9	61			13	46
Don't Know			6.6	61			6.5	46
PREVIOUS EXPOSURE TO EMPOWERMENT			22.4	58			27.9	43
MEMBER OF TRADE UNION			85	60			63	46