



**Towards the measurement of
organisational culture**

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APPENDIX A1**Study I: Subject categories identified in preliminary data analysis.**

1. Impact of critical events (including responses of divisional members)
2. Role perceptions (ie. perceptions of supervisors, shopfloor workers, and apprentices)
3. Divisional leadership
4. 'Them/Us' relationships
5. Autonomy of the individual
6. Approach to decision making
7. Promotional practices
8. Reward and recognition
9. Performance evaluation
10. Sectional differences within the division
11. The division's relationship with the main manufacturing and assembly plant
12. Status of tradesmen
13. Pride in skill
14. Family company
15. Changes over time
16. Anticipated sale of the division
17. Insecurity
18. Trust
19. Rumours
20. Reasons for the decline of division
21. Current atmosphere/climate
22. Interest in company versus self-interest
23. The future of the division
24. Change imperatives
25. Common Imagery

APPENDIX A2

Study I: Copy of 'punctuality' directive from divisional management.

August 25, 1988.

IN THE INTEREST OF ACHIEVING A REASONABLE LEVEL OF WORK PRODUCTIVITY IN PLANT 5 THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS MUST BE MAINTAINED.

1. WORK MUST COMMENCE ON TIME AT 7.30 A.M.
2. THE MORNING TEA BREAK IS 12 MINUTES (TOTAL) THIS INCLUDES ANY TIME YOU MAY TAKE TO WIPE HANDS ETC.
3. LUNCH BREAK IS 12.30 P.M. TO 1.00 P.M. TOTAL. THIS IS 12.30 P.M. FROM YOUR WORK PLACE TO START LUNCH AND 1.00 P.M. AT YOUR WORK PLACE TO COMMENCE WORK AGAIN, THE TRADITIONAL FIVE (5) MINUTES PRIOR TO 12.30 P.M. FOR HAND WASHING IS OK, BUT FIVE (5) MINUTES ONLY
4. THE AFTERNOON TEA BREAK OF 8 MINUTES ONCE AGAIN IS 8 MINUTES TOTAL.
5. KNOCKOFF TIME AT 4.00 P.M. IS 4.00P.M. IN YOUR WORK AREA, ONCE AGAIN THE TRADITIONAL TIME OF FIVE MINUTES ONLY PRIOR TO CEASE OF WORK FOR HAND WASHING IS ACCEPTABLE.

WE INTEND TO MAINTAIN A COMPETITIVE BUSINESS HERE, AND IT IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL THAT THESE CONDITIONS OF WORK ARE MAINTAINED BY ALL, YOUR CO-OPERATION IS APPRECIATED.



APPENDIX B1

Study II: Interview protocol

STUDY II INTERVIEW

THE ROLE OF WORKERS / THE ROLE OF SUPERVISORS

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

PART A: THE ROLE OF WORKERS

Open-ended question

Q1: What do the workers in this division do?

Theory X, Theory Y rating

Q2: In some organisations (or work groups) the role of workers is primarily a *passive* one. Workers are seen by their supervisors, and see themselves, primarily as people who follow instructions and carry out orders. This does not mean that workers are lazy, or that they don't get things done, but rather that what they do, and how they do it, is usually decided upon by someone else. Workers who play a passive role tend to do pretty much as they are told to do, and accept things mostly without question.

In other organisations (or work groups) workers play a more *active* role. This means that they have more input into, and take more responsibility for, decisions which affect them. They are more inclined to take the initiative for solving their own problems and, if they have an idea about how to improve things, they will say so. Workers who play an active role are also more likely to challenge, rather than simply accept, things that they don't understand, or that they disagree with.

Now, think about the role of workers in this division at the present time. Tick the description which corresponds most closely to your perception of the role of workers in this division.

- | | |
|--------------------|------|
| very passive | ---- |
| moderately passive | ---- |
| slightly passive | ---- |
| slightly active | ---- |
| moderately active | ---- |
| very active | ---- |

Evaluation questions

Q3: How satisfied are you with the role that workers play in this division at the present time? Please tick one.

- extremely satisfied -----
- moderately satisfied -----
- slightly satisfied -----
- neither satisfied nor
dissatisfied -----
- slightly dissatisfied -----
- moderately dissatisfied -----
- extremely dissatisfied -----

Q4: How would you rate the effectiveness of the workers in this division at the present time? Please tick one.

- extremely effective -----
- moderately effective -----
- slightly effective -----
- neither effective
nor ineffective -----
- slightly ineffective -----
- moderately ineffective -----
- very ineffective -----

Give reasons for your rating.

Personal experience questions

Q5: Think about the *best* worker you have ever had (worked with, known) in this division.

- a) What was it that you admired or liked about this worker?
- b) How important is it to you that workers have these particular characteristics (attitudes, behaviours)? Why?
- c) What was this worker's view of the organisation?
- d) How did this worker relate to supervision?
- e) How did this worker relate to his/her coworkers?

Q6: Think about the *worst* worker you have ever had (worked with, known) in this division.

- a) What was it that you disliked, or regarded as problematic, about this worker?
- b) What was this worker's view of the organisation?
- c) How did this worker relate to supervision?
- d) How did this worker relate to his/her coworkers?

Context questions

Q7: What was the role played by workers in this division in the past? Did it differ? How? Give examples. How long ago was this?

Q8: Do you think that the role played by workers in this division at the present time is likely to change/stay the same? If you think that it will change, how will it change? Why will it change in this way? If you think that it will stay the same, why?

Q9: Are you aware of the role played by workers in other organisations? Give examples. What was the nature of the other organisation(s) and how did you come to know about it?

PART B: THE ROLE OF SUPERVISORS

Open-ended question:

Q1: What do the supervisors in this division do?

Theory X, Theory Y rating

Q2: In some organisations (work groups) the role of supervisors is primarily a *directive* one. That is, the supervisor's job is limited to giving workers instructions about what to do, and then making sure that these instructions are carried out.

In other organisations (work groups) supervisors plays more of a *consultative* role. That is, in addition to providing direction, the supervisor also encourages workers to come up with their own ideas which (s)he then discusses with them. The supervisor tries to provide workers with the guidance and support that they need to perform their work effectively and to gain satisfaction from it.

Now, think about the role of supervisors in this division at the present time. Tick the description which corresponds most closely to your perception of the role of supervisors in this division.

very directive	----
moderately directive	----
slightly directive	----
slightly consultative	----
moderately consultative	----
very consultative	----

Evaluation questions

Q3: How satisfied are you with the role that supervisors play in this division at the present time? Please tick one.

extremely satisfied	-----
moderately satisfied	-----
slightly satisfied	-----
neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	-----
slightly dissatisfied	-----
moderately dissatisfied	-----
extremely dissatisfied	-----

Q4: How would you rate the effectiveness of the supervisors in this division at the present time? Please tick one.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------|
| extremely effective | ---- |
| moderately effective | ---- |
| slightly effective | ---- |
| neither effective
nor ineffective | ---- |
| slightly ineffective | ---- |
| moderately ineffective | ---- |
| extremely ineffective | ---- |

Give reasons for your rating.

Personal experience questions

Q5: Think about the *best* supervisor you have ever had in this division.

- What was it that you valued most about this supervisor?
- How important do you think it is for supervisors to have these particular characteristics (attitudes, behaviours)? Why?
- What was this supervisor's view of the organisation?
- How did this supervisor relate to employees in general?
- How did this supervisor relate to you in particular?

Q6: Think about the *worst* supervisor you have ever had in this division.

- What was it that you disliked, or regarded as problematic, about this supervisor?
- What was this supervisor's view of the organisation?
- How did this supervisor relate to employees in general?
- How did this supervisor relate to you in particular?

Context questions

- Q7: What was the role played by supervisors in this division in the past? Did it differ? How? Give examples. How long ago was this?
- Q8: Do you think that the role played by supervisors in this division at the present time is likely to change/stay the same? If you think it will change, how and why? If you think it will stay the same, why?
- Q9: Are you aware of the role played by supervisors in other organisations? Give examples. What was nature of the other organisation(s) and how did you come to know about it?

APPENDIX B2

Study II: Results for 'The Role of Supervisors'Open-ended question

Q1: What do supervisors do in this division?

Tooling Division. This initial open question was asked of three participants only. These participants variously indicated that supervisors "control the organisation", "[do] nothing" and "supervise".

Production Division. Five participants responded to this question. One participant indicated, simply, that supervisors "supervise", while a second was more specific and described work-related activities such as "writing pass-outs", "making sure that jobs are running okay", "counselling", and "paperwork". The remaining three participants made reference to the level of activity of supervisors, indicating that supervisors "[do] more than what they used to do", "sit back and take the money", and "[do] as little as possible".

Theory X, Theory Y rating

Q2: What is your perception of the current role of supervisors in this division? (Rate on a six-point scale from 'very directive' to 'very consultative'.)

Tooling Division. All participants responded to this question. Three were unable to give an *overall* rating of the role of supervisors. Of these, one indicated that some supervisors were very directive while others were more consultative. A second reported that the supervisors in his section – the Pattern Shop – differed from supervisors on the shop floor. The former were rated as 'moderately consultative' and the latter, 'moderately directive'. This difference was attributed to the contrasting nature of the work performed in each of these areas, with the shop floor involved primarily in standard manufacturing (building dies in the way that "they've always [been] built"), and the Pattern Shop involved more in experimental work (building prototypes) which necessitated greater collaboration between workers and their supervisors. A third participant reported seniority differences, with higher level supervisors (general foremen and superintendents) rated as playing a predominantly directive role and first level supervisors (foremen) a role that combined both consultative and directive elements. In

the former, a supervisor's position in the chain of command meant that he had direct responsibility for a few people only, namely his foreman. As indicated:

...he's dealing just with his foremen, who he's directing. He's giving them work and saying 'I want this done and I want it done by such and such a time'. (staff, supervisory)

First line supervisors, on the other hand, were responsible for more people, in this case workers. Rather than just give out orders from a position of relative detachment, supervision at this level demanded more involvement with subordinates:

[The foreman] might be directing 20 or 30 people, and therefore he's got to come up with an answer for all of their problems, so he's got to have this consultative role sort of interwoven with the directive role.

The participant's use of 'consultative' in this context is somewhat questionable and not entirely consistent with the definition originally provided. Note that the more consultative foreman still 'directs' his subordinates and, instead of helping them to solve their own problems (as a truly consultative supervisor would do), he solves their problems for them.

The remaining three participants judged the role of supervisors in the tooling division to be directive. The specific ratings were as follows. One participant rated the role as 'slightly directive', arguing that the structure of the division did not allow for more consultation between workers and their supervisors. Unlike the Hardware division at Elizabeth, where autonomous work groups were reported to operate, workers in the tooling division had no say in decisions about the type of work that they performed. As such, to the extent that consultation between workers and their supervisors was possible at all, it was in relation to *how* to do the work and not *what* work to do. A second participant reported a 'moderately directive' role for supervisors and argued that a more consultative role was unlikely to work. This was because workers were not aware of, neither could they be aware of, all of the facts and information required to do a job. In this sense, workers would always be reliant on the supervisor "to gather all that information and feed whatever is necessary to the workers". Furthermore, for a consultative approach to be successful, one would need "a whole shop full of workers that were 100%", that is, workers with the 'right talent'. It was argued that, given the current workforce, a more consultative approach would be highly inefficient:

You'd spend 99% of your time trying to explain to [workers] what's going on and only having 1% of the work done. ('wages' employee, leading hand)

A third participant rated the role of supervisors as 'very directive' but was not asked to elaborate on this response. Subsequently, however, supervisors were criticised on the grounds that they were elitist. They sought to establish "their own little kingdoms" and displayed a tendency toward "empire building" that, according to this participant, was bred into them from the time of their entry into the role.

Production Division. All participants responded to this question. Two judged the current role of supervisors in the division to be 'slightly consultative', two judged it to be 'slightly directive', one 'moderately directive', and one 'very directive'. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, only two of these participants were asked to explain their ratings. Data on the criteria used to evaluate the current role of supervisors are therefore limited.

The participant who judged the current role of supervisors in the division to be 'moderately directive' based her assessment on the observation that supervisors did not encourage workers to discuss their ideas with them. On the contrary, "[Supervisors] tell you just what has to be done and that's it – you just do it". In a similar vein, the participant who rated the current role of supervisors as 'very directive' indicated that supervisors did not encourage workers to "think for themselves". In his opinion, supervisors had a vested interest in fostering passivity in workers. Workers who did not think for themselves, but passively accepted instructions from their superiors, would be less inclined than more active workers to figure out what their superiors did and subsequently to "aspire to do their jobs". That current supervisors were very protective of their positions was evident from the fact that, in the past six or seven years, only one employee in the division had been promoted from the shop-floor to a supervisory position. One of the consequences of supervisors adopting a very directive role was that subordinates who, in this participant's opinion, would have made good supervisors (having qualities such as an ability to think for themselves), were unable to work in this climate, and subsequently sought transfers to other departments or left the organisation altogether. The remaining workers were those who were easily supervised, or "kept down". Alternatively, workers (in particular, leading hands) became "clones of the supervisor" and modelled the directive and authoritarian behaviour of supervisors. Ironically, certain aspects of this very behaviour (reference was made to the legitimacy of supervisors "spitting the dummy") prevented leading hands from being promoted to supervisory positions:

A supervisor can get away with what's known as spitting the dummy because he's a supervisor. The person on the shop floor can't. So that leading hands who are like the supervisor are never taken seriously because they spit the dummy all the time. (staff, supervisory)

There was one other participant from this division who referred to the tendency of supervisors and managers in the division to be overly concerned about the security of their own positions. However, this was discussed not in relation to supervisory style (whether directive or consultative), as above, but in relation to a supervisor's, or manager's, preparedness to make decisions and take actions which, while they might ultimately be in the best interests of the organisation, might "put his job on the line". According to this participant, the attitude of many supervisors and managers in the division was that "They've got security and they don't want to risk it".

The data above illustrate one of the main limitations of a purely quantitative approach to the investigation of deeper level meaning and beliefs. What does it mean, for example, if the role of supervisors is rated as 'slightly directive'? As we have seen from previous examples where additional information has been sought, we can not necessarily assume that, in making this rating, the participant used the criteria that (s)he was intended to use (that is, criteria implied in the given definitions of, in this case, a consultative versus a directive role for supervisors). It is only by asking the participant to explain his/her rating, and ideally to provide some kind of illustrative data, that we are able to comment with any reliability on what the rating means. Furthermore, it is in this more qualitative data that the insights we are seeking are often to be found. A good example of this is provided above by the tooling division participant who argued that foremen needed to be more consultative than supervisors at higher levels (eg. superintendants) because they were responsible for more people, and had to "come up with an answer for all of their problems". As indicated previously, the implication here is that the more consultative foreman, while he might be involved with, and talk to, more subordinates, does not encourage them to solve their own problems but rather does their thinking for them. This participant's notion of what constitutes consultative behaviour in a supervisor (which, to a certain extent, must be a product of his own experience) therefore differs in an important way from the interpretation that might be inferred from a rating alone.

Evaluation questions

Q3: How satisfied are you with the role that supervisors play in this division at the present time? (Rate on a seven-point scale from 'extremely satisfied' to 'extremely dissatisfied'.)

Tooling Division. Of the five participants who responded to this question, four indicated that they were satisfied with the role of supervisors as they saw it at the present time. In three cases, the degree of satisfaction reported was moderate. For these participants satisfaction was associated with: a consultative role for supervisors¹¹⁵ (one participant); a 'slightly directive' role for supervisors (one participant); and a role that combined consultative and directive elements (one participant). The last of these participants indicated that, were it not for supervisors losing "a bit of interest in the place" over the years, he would be extremely satisfied, and not just moderately satisfied, with their role. In a fourth case, the degree of satisfaction reported was extreme. This was associated with a 'moderately directive' role for supervisors. Dissatisfaction was reported in one case only. This participant indicated that he was 'extremely dissatisfied' with the current role of supervisors which he judged to be 'very directive'.

Production Division. Five participants indicated that they were dissatisfied with the role of supervisors as they saw it at the present time. Of these, three rated the degree of dissatisfaction as slight. This was associated with a 'slightly directive' role for supervisors in two cases, and a 'slightly consultative' role in one case. A fourth participant expressed moderate dissatisfaction with the 'moderately directive' role that supervisors were judged to play and a fifth participant, extreme dissatisfaction with the 'very directive' role of supervisors. This latter participant believed that, in the whole division, there was possibly only one good supervisor. I asked this participant (himself a supervisor) to describe the ideal supervisor (from his own point of view, not necessarily from the organisation's point of view). His response is summarised briefly as follows.

According to this participant, the ideal supervisor first "lays a foundation". He does this by categorising his workers, that is, identifying those who have leadership qualities and those who do not. The former must be fostered and recognised for their talent, and the latter, whose role it is to "work and support you", must be "entrenched". Having set up systems and allocated subordinates to their various roles, the organisation (section)

¹¹⁵ A specific rating of how consultative the role of supervisors was perceived to be was not given.

should operate with the same efficiency and effectiveness as an “ant colony”. Having accomplished all of this, a supervisor can then “come to work and sit in his office for eight hours and not do anything”. The supervisor is needed on the shop-floor only when there is “a severe breakdown”, or when “something out of the ordinary happens”. Such a supervisor is “a great supervisor”.

Only one participant from the production division expressed satisfaction with the current role of supervisors in this division. This participant indicated that he was ‘moderately satisfied’ with the ‘slightly consultative’ role that he judged supervisors to be playing.

Overall, these data show a trend among production division participants for dissatisfaction to be associated with a more or less directive role for supervisors. In the tooling division data, reported above, no such trend was observed. Tooling division participants were generally more satisfied with the current role of supervisors, and satisfaction was, in this instance, associated with both consultative and directive roles. Again, it may have been useful to have questioned all participants further regarding the reasons for their satisfaction ratings.

Q4. How would you rate the effectiveness of supervisors in this division at the present time? (Rate on a seven-point scale from ‘extremely effective’ to ‘extremely ineffective’.)

Give reasons for your rating.

Tooling Division. This question was asked of five participants. Of these, three judged supervisors in the division to be effective. The specific ratings were ‘moderately effective’ (two participants) and ‘slightly effective’ (one participant). It is interesting to consider the criteria that these participants used in making their judgements. One participant who rated supervisors as ‘moderately effective’ gave the following reasons for his assessment:

Generally [supervisors] get the job done. They do control the work [and] solve problems. Most of them don’t cause too many waves. (‘waves’ employee, leading hand)

‘Causing waves’ was subsequently interpreted by the participant to mean the tendency of some supervisors to want more involvement in a job, and control over it, than was necessary:

When [the job’s] flowing along nicely, [the supervisor] should step back and let it flow instead of sticking his big nose in and trying to upset everything and telling everybody they’ve got to do it a different way.

The second participant who rated supervisors as 'moderately effective' based his assessment on similar criteria, although without the same note of caution regarding the misuse of power by supervisors. This participant regarded supervisors as effective to the extent that they were in control and took responsibility for making decisions and solving problems. The participant reported a decline in supervisor effectiveness in recent years which was associated with a loss of respect for supervisors by their subordinates and the gradual erosion of the supervisor's power base. The key factors contributing to this situation were judged to be an increase in union power as well as a broader social change whereby "everything's wrapped up in legalities now", the implication for supervisors being that no action could be taken without strict adherence to a rigid set of policies and procedures. The participant described the grievance procedure – a series of "legal steps" for reporting a grievance and having it resolved. This procedure applied in a number of situations, one being where a supervisor wished to take disciplinary action against a subordinate. Unlike the past, where the supervisor could act independently, the supervisor was no longer at liberty to rely on his own judgement with respect to such matters and was likely to be penalised for doing so. In this sense, supervision on the shop floor was considered by this participant to be analogous to legal proceedings in a courtroom. It was argued that, as a result of such constraints on their behaviour, supervisors had become increasingly complacent, showed less interest in their work than they had previously, and did only "what they [had] to do and not much more". In a similar vein, the participant argued that supervisors had less control now than they did in the past with respect to more general decision making:

The decision-making process, a lot of that has been taken away, individual decision making. There's a sort of group decision made now for you by other departments in the organisation. You've got to make your decisions along with the group decision, or the overall decision, if you get what I mean. (staff, supervisory)

In this sense, then, a supervisor could be effective only to the extent that he could exercise legitimate power and control over his subordinates. According to this participant, the means by which supervisors could become 'extremely effective' was to give them "100% control over their people".

In contrast to the above, the participant who rated supervisors as 'slightly effective' implied that effectiveness was a function of age, ambition and education. Older supervisors were often less effective than their younger counterparts because "they've

done their years here and they want to retire". Younger supervisors were thought to be generally better educated and more ambitious:

I think we've got enough good people out there, young ones, to take over and lift the supervisory position up, to become more effective. That's the only way I think we're going to lift it. (staff, supervisory)

Of the remaining two participants, one rated supervisors as 'neither effective nor ineffective' and the other rated them as 'moderately ineffective'. The criteria upon which the former assessment was made were not entirely clear. The participant seemed to be suggesting that supervisors could not be effective because there were simply too many of them and from the point of view of the worker this made it difficult to "cater to them all" (that is, satisfy all of the needs and demands of supervisors). It was argued that supervisors would be more likely to be effective if they operated entirely from their offices (with no significant presence on the shop-floor) and made themselves "available [to workers] when required". Typically, supervisors would be required only when decisions had to be made or at times when issues of control arose:

Okay, fair enough, [the supervisors] should be there at 7:30 because we do have to clock on. If they did away with time clocks or something, he may have to be there to see who did come in late because we're only human and someone would try to beat the system, and instead of being there at 7:30, they'd roll in at 7:35. There he may be required, but once everybody's got the job and they get on with it, he's not really needed then until a decision needs to be made. ('wages' employee)

The above excerpt is of particular interest. It gives some insight into the participant's underlying notions about the role of a supervisor (that is, decision making and control), and can be contrasted with the participant's previous rating of the current role of supervisors in the division as 'very directive' and his expression of extreme dissatisfaction with that role.

Finally, the participant who judged supervisors to be 'moderately ineffective', made reference to the diminished power of supervisors and the lack of influence that they had over decisions related to promotion and the running of the Company. Supervisors no longer had any ambition, most of them were reportedly just "waiting to get out of the firm" and, in the meantime, they were "quite happy to see the status quo maintained". As this participant saw it, at this point in the division's history, one of the main functions of supervisors was to put pressure on the Company to make decisions and take action (for example, in relation to the upgrading of equipment and the procurement of contracts to maintain production levels) that would ensure the ongoing viability of the

division. That this was not happening was a further indication of the ineffectiveness of supervisors at the present time.

In summary, it can be said that while the specific ratings of supervisor effectiveness varied considerably (ranging from 'moderately ineffective' to 'moderately effective'), the data above are instructive in that they provide some insight into participant beliefs about the fundamental role of supervisors. Some commonalities can be identified here with four of the five participants making references to the 'control' aspect of supervision. To the extent that a much larger group of divisional personnel can be shown to hold similar views, this phenomenon may be a cultural phenomenon.

Production Division. All participants responded to this question. Four judged supervisors in the division to be effective, with the specific ratings being 'moderately effective' (three participants) and 'slightly effective' (one participant). A fifth participant judged supervisors to be 'neither effective nor ineffective', and a sixth participant judged them to be 'slightly ineffective'.

Three participants only were asked to explain their ratings. One, who judged supervisors to be 'slightly effective', believed that "things could improve" if supervisors allowed workers on the shop-floor more say. This participant made reference to a more positive past in this respect when workers formed groups for the purpose of discussing and resolving problems. In contrast, the current approach relied more on individual workers to make suggestions for change. This approach was less effective because it represented only one person's view and, as such, there was "no weight behind the suggestion". The implication was that, because supervisors currently held most of the power, they were not making full use of all of the resources available to them (that is, ideas and suggestions for change from their subordinates). Similar views were expressed by the participant who rated supervisors as 'neither effective nor ineffective'. In this case, it was argued that supervisor effectiveness could be improved if supervisors involved workers more. Such an approach would result in supervisors having a better understanding of their areas, and this in turn would lead to the early identification and resolution of potentially serious problems. This participant argued that, at present, supervisors had little understanding of their areas beyond "coming in at the start and finish of a shift, or when there's something wrong".

In the third case, the participant rated supervisors as 'moderately effective' on the grounds that "they're getting the job done right now". However, the participant

expressed some doubts about whether supervisors would continue to be effective in more demanding circumstances, where they were under more production pressure. I asked this participant how he would go about improving supervisor effectiveness. An important strategy in his opinion was to improve the selection of supervisors. He was critical of the selection criteria which had operated in the past (and possibly still operated today), namely “having a trade background”, “knowing the right people”, “having the right face”, “being in the right place at the right time” etc. It was also suggested that, in the early days of its set-up, the division may have been a kind of “dumping ground” for unwanted supervisors from elsewhere in the organisation. It should be noted here that many similar notions about selection and promotion emerged in the Study I interviews that were conducted in the tooling division.

A second strategy for improving supervisor effectiveness was to provide supervisors with adequate training to do the job. The participant argued that, contrary to popular opinion in the organisation, good supervisors did not necessarily have to have a trade. In his opinion, qualities such as leadership, the ability to communicate well with people, to motivate people, and to make people feel wanted and part of a team, were critical to effective supervision. Apart from human relations skills, supervisors also needed some basic financial management skills. Finally, this participant commented on the limited training opportunities currently available for supervisors in the organisation and suggested that this may reflect an attitude among supervisors that, because they have a trade and came in and worked their way up, “that there really isn’t a need for further training”.

Personal experience questions

Q5: Think about the best supervisor you have ever had in this division.

(a) What was it that you valued most about this supervisor?

Tooling Division. Six participants responded to this question. Five described a supervisor that they had know or worked with in the past. Of these, one participant, a ‘wages’ employee, was emphatic that the supervisor he was about to describe “definitely wouldn’t be” a current supervisor. A second participant, himself a supervisor, described a past supervisory colleague indicating that:

I certainly didn’t have any good supervisors before I was in a supervisory position myself, none that I would recommend. (staff, supervisory)

In this case the supervisor described was “a person with a personality very much like my own – that was the person that I got on best with”. Only one participant described a supervisor who was currently working in the division.

Participants attributed a range of different qualities to their ‘best’ supervisor, a summary of which is provided in Table B2.1. As indicated, three broad categories of ‘best’ supervisor qualities were suggested, namely: (i) job skills; (ii) people skills; and (iii) personal characteristics. The detailed findings associated with each of these categories are discussed below.

1. Job skills. Five of the six participants made reference to some aspect of their ‘best’ supervisor’s skills with respect to the actual job. The main quality mentioned here was knowledge and ability on the job. All five participants described this quality which was considered important for a number of reasons, the main one being that “you can’t really respect an answer from someone [who doesn’t have] an intimate knowledge of the job”. The following excerpt provides a good summary of this view:

I mean if you ask a bloke how to ski behind a boat, and he was an airline pilot, you wouldn’t respect his opinion very much, as against a champion skier that you asked, would you? (staff, supervisory)

One participant argued that supervisors, at the shop-floor level, needed to have good job knowledge because it was their responsibility to approve and sign “job details”. The system in the division was such that no job could proceed without first being authorised by the supervisor. For example:

The machine shop won’t accept the detail without it being signed by the foreman because they’re not allowed to accept the detail. (‘wages’ employee)

Given the supervisor’s responsibilities in this regard, the participant argued that he and his co-workers “[would] like to think that [the supervisor] knows what he’s talking about”. Knowledge of the job (including experience in doing the job) was also considered important because it ensured that the supervisor had some familiarity with the problems encountered by his subordinates. In contrast to the above responses, one participant suggested a less critical role for job knowledge among supervisors. Job knowledge was thought to be useful, but not essential:

It doesn’t seem to be necessary for a supervisor to know his job. He can rely on others if he can manage them. But it certainly helps if he can join in and solve problems. (‘wages’ employee, leading hand)

In addition to job knowledge and ability, one participant referred to the decision-making skills of his ‘best’ supervisor. The importance of this quality for supervisors

Table B2.1 Characteristics of supervisors judged to be 'Best' Supervisors by Tooling Division (TD) participants.

Interviewee # and perspective	Job skills	People skills	Personal characteristics
TD01 – 'wages' describing supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability on job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of subordinates with promise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honesty
TD02 – 'wages' describing supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability/knowledge on job • Decision-making skills 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of humour
TD04 – 'wages' describing supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairness in exercising power 	
TD05 – 'wages' describing supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approachable; easy to talk to 	
TD03 - supervisor describing colleague	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to share ideas, listen to, and consider opinions of colleagues 	
TD06 - supervisor describing superior		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly defined goals and ability to communicate goals to others 	

was argued in the context of the relationship between a leader (the primary decision-maker) and his men:

It's like a leader and his men. If you don't lead them, they scatter. You get no direction. If someone makes a decision, even though it's wrong, at least the men can follow it and it's something to do that's positive. It's not negative – put it that way, it's positive. ('wages' employee)

It is interesting to note the suggestion here that any decision, even a bad one, is better than no decision at all. Note also the underlying assumption that decision-making is the sole domain of the supervisor and has little to do with subordinates.

2. People skills. Five participants (including three 'wages' employees and two supervisors) attributed people skills to their 'best' supervisors. Of the 'wages' employees, one talked about his 'best' supervisor's willingness to develop subordinates who showed that they had "the capabilities to go a little bit further". The participant considered it very important for supervisors to have this quality because it helped to ensure that promotional decisions were made on the basis of merit rather than, as was reportedly often the case, on the basis of family membership or personal or social connections. Reference was made to a period in the division's past when it seemed that an employee's promotional prospects were influenced more by his membership with the Freemasons than by performance factors. As indicated, this was a common theme to emerge in the data for this division which were collected in Study I. Apart from a concern for developing subordinates, this participant also emphasised the need for supervisors to be skilled communicators. This was important because supervisors had to be able to "understand other people's views".

A second 'wages' employee indicated that his 'best' supervisor was "approachable" and that "you could talk to him about anything". This was regarded as the single most important quality for supervisors, and although the participant suggested that supervisors were more approachable now than they had been in the past (the current climate being such that "They see us all in the same boat, the same situation sort of thing"), it was still the case that "there are some people here that you cannot talk to". I asked the participant if he thought that workers should be able to talk to supervisors about personal matters. He replied:

Yes... It's nice to be able to talk to someone. Why shouldn't it be a supervisor if you can talk to him? ('wages' employee)

A third 'wages' employee indicated that the quality he admired most in the 'best' supervisor he described was "fairness". It was argued that supervisors, by virtue of their

position, had considerable power. To the extent that this power was exercised fairly, it earned a supervisor the respect of his subordinates:

There's a fair bit of power that goes with the job and if that can be metered out fairly, that generates a lot of respect. If it's abused, then there isn't any respect whatsoever. ('wages' employee, leading hand)

The participant went on to explain that without the respect of his subordinates, a supervisor was "nothing":

If you haven't got any respect for something, then you just abuse it. You try to upset it; you try to do anything really against it. If you've got no respect for an object or anything, you just don't care about it, you kick it around.

Both of the supervisors in the sample attributed people skills to their 'best' supervisor. It should be noted here that in both cases, the perspective was that of one supervisor describing another supervisor (not as above, where the perspective was that of a 'wages' employee). One of the supervisors described a colleague, that is, a supervisor at the same level as himself, while the other described a supervisor in a more senior position. The former made reference to the supervisor's willingness to listen to the ideas and suggestions of other supervisors. As implied in the following excerpt, this was a somewhat rare quality:

A lot of the supervisors here used to suggest things and it would be wiped off straight away, even though the idea was a good idea. (staff, supervisory)

The importance of this quality was argued on the grounds that a consideration of the opinions of others could lead to a refinement, or modification, of one's own opinions. This was because:

One person is not the smartest guy in the world. The more brains there are on a problem the better answer you will come up with.

In the latter case, the participant described his 'best' supervisor's ability to communicate clear and unambiguous role expectations to those below him (that is, lower-level supervisors):

The point that I liked was that I knew exactly what he wanted, so that if I had to make a decision out on the shop floor, I knew exactly which way he wanted to go, without going and asking him. (staff, supervisory)

The participant argued that it was very important for supervisors at different levels to have clearly defined roles because this helped to ensure some consistency in supervisory work methods and decision-making. In other words, it ensured that supervisors were all "going down the same path". Where this wasn't the case, for example, where "a senior

supervisor had an idea that went one way and the foreman had an idea that went another way”, confusion at the level of the shop floor would be the inevitable result:

The people down below them, they're going to be that confused that they just don't know where to go.

3. Personal characteristics. Two participants (both 'wages' employees) made reference to some aspect of their 'best' supervisor's character which they admired. In one case, the supervisor was reported to be honest in the sense that he was prepared to admit that he was wrong if this was the case. In the other, the supervisor was reported to have a good (though somewhat strange) sense of humour.

The above data suggest the following general conclusions. Again, in view of the small sample size, these conclusions must be regarded as being, at best, only suggestive:

1. A key quality of 'best' supervisors was their knowledge and ability with respect to the actual job. It was this quality which earned supervisors the respect of their subordinates, respect being the foundation of a good superior-subordinate relationship.

2. People skills (that is, skills associated with interpersonal interaction) attributed to 'best' supervisors by 'wages' employees included a willingness to develop subordinates who "showed promise", being approachable and easy to talk to, and exercising power fairly. No reference was made to a 'best' supervisor who engaged in active consultation with subordinates and who perceived subordinates as a valuable source of knowledge and experience. This latter notion was expressed only in the context of a supervisor's relationship with his peers.

3. Within the present sample, one can draw a tentative parallel between a supervisor's notion of a good superior (that is, a higher-level supervisor) and the notion that a 'wages' employee has of a good superior (that is, his immediate supervisor). In both cases, there is a sense in which the superior is regarded by the subordinate as responsible for providing direction and maintaining order and control. As indicated above, in describing the qualities of a superior that he admired, one of the supervisors made reference to the superior's ability to communicate his expectations clearly to subordinates such that "if I had to make a decision out on the shop floor, I knew exactly which way he wanted to go". Implicit in the superior-subordinate relationship portrayed here is the idea that the superior is the primary decision-maker and that it is the subordinate's role to act in accordance with the decisions of his superior.

Production division. Six participants responded to this question, three describing a past supervisor and three a present supervisor. In one case, the participant expressed

some difficulty in identifying a 'best' supervisor and indicated that "there's none of them [that have] been outstanding". The participant went on to describe a supervisor who was currently employed with the Company. However, it is suggested (though not explicitly stated) in the participant's account that this supervisor worked, not in the production division but in some other division of the Company. This points to the necessity of seeking more specific information from participants about where their 'best' (or 'worst') supervisor works. (Alternatively, it might be stipulated from the outset that participants only describe supervisors with whom they have worked, or work at present, in their current division. An obvious limitation with this approach is that the supervisor identified may embody only some of the characteristics of the 'best' or 'worst' supervisor that the participant might select if sampling from his/her experience within the *entire* organisation.)

The production division data on 'best' supervisor qualities and characteristics were able to be classified according to the same three categories used above for the tooling division data. The findings for the production division are summarised in Table B2.2 and discussed in more detail below.

1. Job skills. In contrast with tooling division participants, only two participants from the production division described their 'best' supervisor in terms of qualities that related directly to his performance on the actual job. Also in contrast with the tooling division data, the qualities listed were behavioural and attitudinal rather than specifically skill or knowledge based. For example, one participant attributed the qualities of adaptability and initiative to his 'best' supervisor:

He's properly geared to change with the times and he's the one who's first to ask to be given new assignments, to be given new tasks, when he could have sat back on his bum and still drawn his money in. ('wages' employee)

The supervisor was also described as a person who was "not afraid of a challenge". A second participant made reference to the efficiency of his 'best' supervisor. This supervisor had very high expectations of himself and his subordinates:

He expected a person to be 100%; he expected a person to do his job properly – just attend to everything, housekeeping, doing his job, and he was a pretty efficient person himself. ('wages' employee)

2. People skills. Among production division participants, people skills constituted the most commonly referred to qualities of 'best' supervisors. All six participants made reference to at least one aspect of their 'best' supervisor's skill in working with others (though in one case, this was in the context of a more general discussion about what the

Table B2.2 Characteristics of supervisors judged to be 'Best' Supervisors by Production Division (PD) participants.

Interviewee # and perspective	Job Skills	People skills	Personal characteristics
PD02 – 'wages' describing supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adaptability • Initiative • Not afraid of a challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gets on with people • Doesn't abuse power 	
PD03 – 'wages' describing supervisor		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows confidence in ability of subordinates • Approachable • Counselling role 	
PD04 – 'wages' describing supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiency • High expectations of self and others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ideal supervisor shows concern for welfare of workers and takes what they say seriously 	
PD05 – 'wages' describing supervisor		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendly and approachable • Counselling role • Tries to meet needs of subordinates • Keeps subordinates informed 	
PD01 – supervisor describing supervisor (relative position not clear)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listens and discusses issues with subordinates • Defends subordinates 	
PD06 - supervisor describing superior		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivates subordinates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently positive mood • Work not "be all and end all"

participant believed constituted the most important qualities for a supervisor). The specific qualities reported are discussed below.

One participant implied that his 'best' supervisor exercised power fairly. The supervisor understood that it was not necessary, indeed that it was counterproductive, to adopt a style of supervision that served to promote the supervisor's "superiority" by subjugating and humiliating subordinates. The supervisor was familiar with this style of supervision and realised that it generated considerable worker resentment towards supervisors. The participant argued that supervisors should have a greater presence on the shop-floor. This would enable them to understand their subordinates better – "to know the people, know all their idiosyncrasies, get to know their temperament" – and would further ensure the allocation of work on the basis of the capabilities of individual workers (selection of the 'right man' for the job). According to the participant the situation currently was that leading hands took primary responsibility for this role leaving the supervisor "trapped back in his little glass tank – like a goldfish watching the world go round outside". Within this context, the participant also made reference to some of the problems associated with promoting engineering personnel, who typically do not have people management skills, to supervisory positions which might involve responsibility for up to fifty people:

It's like they come from another planet... They come down from this one-to-one [environment] [referring to the more insular engineering environment where the engineer is typically responsible only for him/herself and where interactions with others are on a one to one basis], they stay in the office, they don't want to go out on the floor... [they have] this agoraphobia of being released onto the shop floor. ('wages' employee)

Being approachable was a quality that two participants (both 'wages' employees) attributed to their 'best' supervisors. Both participants considered this quality to be very important, arguing that workers needed to be able to turn to their supervisors for support and help in relation to problems encountered at work and at home. In this context, then, the supervisor is seen to have a sort of informal counselling role. The following excerpts, from each participant, serve to illustrate:

...people come in to work, and things aren't good at home. They like to bitch about work, but it isn't really work that they're bitching about; it's this terrible situation they've got at home, and usually if they start off and the supervisor's approachable, and we've got some good supervisors in here, that are very understanding, usually they get to the bottom of it, and they find out, you know, they're not real shitted off with this job; their life at the moment just isn't too good, and I think [the supervisors] do tend to help people. Once they've got it off their chest they can go back to work, and do their job maybe feeling a little bit

better in themselves because they've been able to spill it to somebody, because they don't really want to spill it on the shop floor, because it gets around. ('wages' employee)

...if you have something going on at home, or you need to get out for a couple of hours, or you couldn't get along with a certain worker, or you had trouble with your leading hand, you could just talk to him about it, without feeling that you were going to get into trouble, or be laughed at, or whatever. ('wages' employee)

In the latter case, the participant went on to point out that even though the supervisor in question had transferred to another section in the division, "a lot of people on the shift will still go and see him".

The two participants above attributed a number of other people-related skills to their 'best' supervisor. In the former, the supervisor was regarded highly because he showed confidence in the participant's ability on the job. The importance of this quality was argued on the grounds that a supervisor's expression of confidence in a subordinate's ability could help the subordinate overcome his/her own lack of confidence and thereby achieve things that (s)he previously thought too difficult to achieve:

...some people lack confidence in doing the simplest task, and... I've found anyway if you say to them 'Of course you can do it. You can do anything you want', they do, and they can, and they're quite surprised that they've achieved [it], the fact that they could do it, and do it well. ('wages' employee)

Subordinates responded particularly well to feedback of this kind when it came from their supervisor rather than, say, a co-worker:

...then they feel recognised, that they're not just here, that they are a person. It gives them that feeling of identity, and not a number.

In the latter case, the participant made additional reference to the supervisor's friendly nature and his responsiveness to the needs of subordinates:

Every day he was there at the start of the shift to say hello to you, 'How are you?'. He'd talk to every person in the area. He would always stop and have a chat with you. He would always listen to what you had to say and a lot of times you could see him. If you thought that a stand to hold your metho tin was going to make your job a hell of a lot easier, he'd have it there for you straight away. He was really good in that way. ('wages' employee)

This supervisor was also reported to keep subordinates informed about "what was going on in the place", and to involve subordinates "an awful lot".

A fourth participant, who had previously described his 'best' supervisor in terms of his efficiency on the job, was subsequently asked to comment on what he thought were the *most* important qualities for a supervisor to possess. He argued that supervisors should be concerned about the welfare of their workers and that they could show their

concern by responding more actively, “not just giving lip service”, to the problems that workers encountered on the shop-floor. I also asked this participant what he thought a supervisor’s job really was and he replied:

To make sure that things get done. He’s there to make the decisions, you know, the decisions for [the workers]. And basically I suppose he’s keeping in the background, you know. He’s got to be there if he’s needed. I suppose a good supervisor isn’t really noticed, possibly. (‘wages’ employee)

In this participant’s view, then, the supervisor is a kind of a caretaker. He is concerned about the welfare of his workers and attends to their needs. This view is not incompatible with the perception above of the supervisor as a counsellor (although the context here is somewhat narrower in that the supervisor’s care-taking responsibilities do not extend beyond the immediate work environment). The supervisor is also seen as the primary decision maker, who should be available only when, and as, required by subordinates to make decisions. This notion has been encountered previously in data from both the tooling division and the production division (see, for example, tooling division data on pp. 141-142, Section 2.4.1, concerning the relationship between a ‘best’ worker and his supervisor, and production division data on pp. 575-576 of this appendix concerning the role of the ‘ideal’ supervisor).

A fifth participant (himself a supervisor) made reference to the consultative behaviour of his ‘best’ supervisor:

...he was the one guy who, as a supervisor, would stop, listen, talk, and discuss things with you. (staff, supervisory)

Unfortunately, the participant’s position relative to this supervisor was not established. That is, the participant was not asked to indicate whether he was a ‘wages’ employee, or a supervisor, at the particular time to which he was referring. Contextual information of this kind may be of considerable significance since, in their selection of a ‘best’ supervisor, workers may use quite different criteria from supervisors.

Apart from consulting with his subordinates, this supervisor was highly regarded because he would “defend his people to the hilt, no matter what happened”. The importance of this quality was argued on the grounds that life in the workplace was analogous to life in the army where “if you don’t support [your men], or have the back-up of the guys that are with you, you’re a dead man”. Survival in the workplace was about achieving “the ultimate goal of productivity”, and in order to do this “you must support [subordinates], you must encourage them, you must develop them, and you’ve

got to defend them to the hilt if they're right". In the following metaphorical description of an organisational, this idea is elaborated on further:

The only way to describe it is like a plane taking off on a runway. You take off on a runway and at the shop floor level you see the houses at the end of the runway. They look awfully big... but you take off and then go up about 100 feet. The houses don't look so big now, that's the next level of leading hand. You go 200 feet and they don't look that big, but you go 3,000 feet and you can't see the houses any more, and the problem being that that's what's happened higher up. They're not relating back down to what's happened higher up. They're not relating back down to what's happening on the shop floor, but the point being that they've got to come down. If that runway is not maintained, repaired... where's that plane going to come down? (staff, supervisory)

Finally, a sixth participant made reference to his 'best' supervisor's ability to motivate subordinates, "to gee everybody up to get the job done". This was considered to be a very important quality for supervisors, particularly in an environment such as the present one where jobs were designed to be "as simple as possible", with the result being that most jobs were "very, very boring". The participant pointed out that individual employees contributed only a very small part to the manufacture of a whole car and that, in this sense, their efforts were somehow removed from the "big picture". Employees themselves perceived their efforts to be relatively insignificant, so that "As far as they're concerned, they're little things". The implication for how to manage in this environment is suggested in the following excerpt:

Now, they get used to doing these little things and if it's not the fact of trying to get the environment up, and people interested and gung-ho and taking their minds off their immediate jobs, and just keeping them happy and satisfied with what they're doing, you lose it. (staff, supervisory)

3. Personal characteristics. In addition to his ability to motivate subordinates, the 'best' supervisor described above was reported to have a very positive disposition:

[He] was never down. No matter how bad things were, no matter how tough the day was or how badly it went, just before knock-off time he was still up, he still wanted to try, he still wanted to give his best. He was never deflated in the work environment. (staff, supervisory)

The supervisor was also reported to view work from the right perspective, such that "he doesn't get carried away as though it's the be all and end all of his life". It is implied that these two personal qualities (a consistently positive mood and having work in the right perspective) underlie the supervisor's ability to motivate people in a work environment where the jobs themselves are not inherently satisfying.

The above data suggest the following general (but not necessarily generalisable) conclusions:

1. In the production division, a supervisor's classification as a 'best' supervisor seemed to be determined more by the supervisor's people skills than by his/her job skills. Supervisors who were regarded highly did not abuse their power, were prepared to defend subordinates, showed confidence in their subordinates, protected the welfare of subordinates, were friendly and approachable, and played a kind of informal counselling role whereby they would listen to subordinates and help them solve both work-related and home-related problems. Some reference was made to the consultative behaviour of 'best' supervisors. However, the impression (of the researcher) was that, to the extent that there was consultation of subordinates, it occurred passively, rather than actively. In other words, while supervisors might listen to their subordinates, and take what they say seriously, they may not actively seek out the ideas and opinions of subordinates. One 'best' supervisor was attributed with the ability to motivate subordinates.

2. Fewer references were made to the job skills of 'best' supervisors. Furthermore, ability on the job was described in terms of behavioural and attitudinal variables (for example, adaptability, initiative, efficiency), rather than in terms of specific job-related knowledge or experience.

5(c) What was this supervisor's view of the organisation?¹¹⁶

Tooling Division. All participants responded to this question. In two cases, the 'best' supervisor was reported to have a negative view of the organisation, while in the remaining four cases, the picture was less clear, that is, the views reported were neither entirely positive nor entirely negative. The specific responses are described in more detail as follows.

Both of the participants reporting negative views made some reference to their 'best' supervisor's dissatisfaction with upper management. In one case, it was reported that the supervisor "felt that the Company was going to go downhill", to a large extent because of mismanagement at the upper levels. This supervisor was described as being very much an individual who "worked in his own way" and who knew his job so well that "there [weren't] too many others in supervision that could tell him what to do". In the second case, the supervisor was described as having a cynical view of the organisation because, while he was "a knowledgeable person [who] had some good

¹¹⁶ Question 5(b), which asked about the importance to the interviewee, of supervisors having the particular characteristics which the interviewee had attributed to his/her 'best' supervisor, was not asked. This question, when asked previously in relation to the role of workers, had proven to be somewhat redundant.

ideas”, management at higher levels “stymied those ideas” and “presented stumbling blocks to them”.

Two participants described ‘best’ supervisors whose views about the organisation were less positive than they might have been had their expectations about advancement in the Company been satisfied. In one case, the supervisor (a foreman) was in line for a promotion which he was reportedly fairly confident that he would get, given his 25 years of service with the Company. However, the position was filled by someone else – “somebody jumped over the top” – and the supervisor, whose view of the Company had previously been “quite good”, was now left with the impression that the Company had “turned out to be a load of bastards”. According to the participant, this experience led to the supervisor’s subsequent resignation from the Company. In the second case, a similar (though less extreme) account of the ‘best’ supervisor’s view of the organisation was provided:

Well, I wouldn’t go so far as to say he loved the Company, but he was more than happy to be here. A bit disappointed – he thought he should have gone higher. (‘wages’ employee)

One participant described a supervisor who “would have tried to do anything he could to assist the organisation, and to help build it up”. However, it was suggested that this behaviour may have been motivated more by a desire for self-promotion than by a genuine commitment to the well-being of the organisation.

Finally, one participant indicated that it was difficult for him to comment on his ‘best’ supervisor’s view of the organisation. This supervisor, “like everybody else”, came to work only “to get his money”. The participant seemed to be suggesting that the issue in question, namely an employee’s view of the organisation, was not particularly important or relevant. It was argued that the nature of the work was such that “it’s not an ambition in life” unlike the work of, say, a writer. Work in this setting was simply a means to an end and, as such, employees were unlikely to form any significant attachment to the organisation:

It comes down to the primary reason for coming here and the only primary reason is to take home the pay packet. You don’t come here for a social outing. If they stopped paying us, I think we’d stop coming the next day sort of thing. (‘wages’ employee, leading hand)

Production Division. All participants responded to this question. Four reported that their ‘best’ supervisor had a positive view of the organisation; one reported a negative view; and one indicated that he could not comment.

Positive views were judged according to a number of different criteria. One participant made reference to his 'best' supervisor's "respect for the organisation":

...he was very receptive to the Company, very Company-minded, very loyal to the Company, never took a day off. As I say, very, very loyal – played it by the book with them. (staff, supervisory)

This supervisor was reported to have said: "Holden's has never done wrong by me". Ironically, as the participant pointed out, this supervisor was ultimately sacked. The participant did not elaborate on the reasons for the sacking except to suggest that it was due to "personality clashes". A second participant judged her 'best' supervisor's view of the organisation to be "quite good" on the grounds that his attitude to the "organisation as a whole" was that: "[This] is the place to work, this is the place that's going places". At the same time, however, it was reported that this supervisor felt that "there was a lot more that could be done to improve relations with workers on the shop floor". A third participant indicated that she thought her 'best' supervisor had a "good view of the Company" because "he was very much involved in Plastics and he wanted Plastics to go somewhere". According to the participant, this supervisor's positive attitudes toward the Company were evident from the way in which he involved subordinates, explained to them what was expected of them (in terms of good housekeeping etc.), and how their efforts would contribute to the well-being of the Company. This was discussed with specific reference to a past incident when the production division underwent a conformance appraisal (quality assessment) which was conducted by external government agents. The results of the appraisal were apparently quite negative, to the extent that the loss of additional demerit points may have jeopardised the survival of the division. The participant described her 'best' supervisor's concern about this outcome, and his attempts to engender the same concern in his subordinates.

A fourth participant described his 'best' supervisor as a "30-year General Motors person". It was argued that up until the last ten years or so, the supervisor would have had a very high opinion of the Company. This was because:

GMH ten years ago... it was the best company in Australia. You couldn't ask for better. The money was good. Your position of being on staff especially – you were looked after. It was great, you know, you were it. Everyone who ever left school wanted to join General Motors as an apprentice or wanted to get in as a tradesman. It was where it was at. (staff, supervisory)

However, because of the decline of the Company in recent years, the supervisor's opinion of the Company was reported to have moderated somewhat such that "he seems to feel that the Company isn't as good as it used to be".

It is worth noting that, of the four supervisors above who were reported to have positive views of the organisation, three (namely the first three) were supervisors that the participants had known, or worked with, in the past. While the fourth supervisor was in fact a current supervisor, it was suggested that his past views were more positive than his present views.

One participant only described a 'best' supervisor with negative views of the organisation. This was a present supervisor who reportedly felt that the Company and the division were operating in such a way that their true potential was unlikely to be reached. It always seemed to be a case of "two steps forward and one step back". The supervisor was reportedly also disillusioned by the negative climate in which he worked:

To hear the negative vibes and negative thoughts that come out, I think it's taken a bit of a shine off him. ('wages' employee)

Brief reference was made to "back-stabbing" in the organisation, but the implication here was not really clear.

Finally, one participant reported that he was unable to comment on how his 'best' supervisor viewed the organisation. No clarification was sought in relation to this response.

5(d) How did this supervisor relate to employees in general?

Tooling Division. All participants responded to this question, five describing a generally positive relationship between their 'best' supervisor and other employees, and one describing a negative relationship. Participants used a number of different criteria in evaluating these relationships. The criteria for positive relationships were as follows.

One participant judged the relationship between his 'best' supervisor and employees to be "very good" on the grounds that the supervisor was a good disciplinarian (he didn't avoid his responsibilities in this regard) and that he was prepared to defend his subordinates:

He was strong enough that if you were doing something you shouldn't have been doing he was strong enough to come up and tell you – no problems about that. He wouldn't beat around the bush; he wouldn't send somebody else to come and tell you; he'd come and tell you himself. And I believe that if somebody said something about his guys which wasn't true, he was supportive of you. ('wages' employee, leading hand)

A second participant reported that his 'best' supervisor "got on very well with all of his employees". The relationship was described as "the normal supervisor-employee relationship" which, according to this participant, was one in which the supervisor maintained some social distance from his subordinates. It was argued that supervisors could not really afford to get too friendly with subordinates and, to the extent that they did, they risked finding themselves in the compromising position of being asked to grant special favours to subordinates. The ultimate outcome of more intimate bonds between supervisors and subordinates was seen to be the erosion of the supervisor's power base (with workers seeing themselves as being "more or less [on] the same level" as supervisors), as well as a loss of respect among subordinates for their supervisors. The ideal situation was one in which supervisors kept subordinates "at arm's length". Apart from these characteristics, the supervisor-employee relationship described by this participant was one in which "employees respected [the supervisor] for his knowledge".

Similar views were expressed by a third participant who indicated that, while his 'best' supervisor related "fairly well" to employees, it was inappropriate for him to be "totally integrated with them". It was argued that a supervisor was likely to lose respect if he attempted to become "one of the boys". Furthermore, without a "slight barrier" between supervisors and subordinates, it would be difficult for a supervisor to assert his authority, particularly in situations where the supervisor might be required to adopt a more directive role (eg. when "something goes wrong"). In situations such as this, it was important that subordinates respected the "say-so" of the supervisor.

In contrast with the two responses above, a fourth participant judged the relationship between his 'best' supervisor and employees to be "very good" on the grounds that the supervisor was approachable and that he mixed socially with workers after hours:

He would mix socially with you outside the organisation – you know, he'd come down to the rugby club and we used to have blue movies and gambling at nights, and he'd come down with the fellows. ('wages' employee)

The participant also indicated that he had never heard anyone say a bad word about this supervisor. I asked this participant to comment on what he thought was the ideal role for supervisors. He indicated:

Personally, it's to see that the section is running smoothly... Be there to make a decision...

When asked how the supervisor could ensure the smooth running of the section, the participant replied:

Stay out of it. I mean, make sure there's plenty of work for the section, that there's not going to be any bottle-necks in getting parts or things, [make sure] everything's available... just generally see that the section is running smoothly and be available if required.

It is interesting to note that this fourth participant was an ordinary 'wages' employee with no responsibility for other employees. The previous two participants, however, both had supervisory responsibilities, one being a leading hand and the other a shop-floor supervisor. With a larger group of participants (including participants with and without supervisory responsibilities), it will be possible to establish whether or not the above arguments in favour of a social distance between superiors and subordinates, constitute part of a cultural phenomenon which is specific to shop-floor supervisors and leading hands. Data from the Study I interviews certainly suggested that there may be a norm operating among the members of this group sanctioning against more intimate supervisor-subordinate relationships. As one divisional member suggested, it is frowned upon if supervisors get "too pally with workers".

Finally, the fifth participant did not elaborate on the relationship between his 'best' supervisor and employees except to say that:

The [workers] that worked got on well with him. The ones that didn't work, didn't. In other words, he got onto ones that didn't work, tried to pull them into line a bit. But the ones that did work... and did a day's work, got on okay with him. ('wages' employee)

Thus, in this instance, the quality of the supervisor-employee relationship appeared to be mediated by employee performance. I asked the participant to indicate how this supervisor managed subordinates who didn't work. He replied:

He put a bit of pressure on them. If someone wasn't doing the right thing, he'd talk to them and tell them, you know, 'You're not doing the right thing. What's the problem?' And he'd say to them, 'Look, we expect a bit more from you'.

The participant went on to point out that, if the worker failed to respond to feedback of this kind, there was really nothing else that the supervisor could do because then, as now, supervisors had "no power to sack anyone, or anything like that".

One participant only reported a negative relationship between his 'best' supervisor and other employees. This supervisor was reportedly not liked because he was too much of a disciplinarian, and had very set ideas about how things should be done. In addition, some people were wary of this supervisor's character, feeling that "they could never trust him" and that he might betray their confidences to management in order to further his own progress and advancement in the Company. The participant went on to

argue that “being a disciplinarian” was not a quality which he would rate as critical to good supervision. On the contrary, “a good supervisor can get people to work for him without having to go and discipline them”. The key was to gain the respect of subordinates and, in order to do this, it was important for the supervisor to “get to know [subordinates], to be able to converse with them, and to be able to treat them as equals”. Subordinates who respected their supervisors were likely to have confidence in the decisions that they made and their ability to solve work-related problems:

As they get to know you, they get to respect your decisions on the job. They start to say ‘Yes, if I’ve got a problem I can always go to somebody. I can go to him and he’ll give me an answer, and he’ll fix it, and help me in these other areas’.
(staff, supervisory)

It was also important for a supervisor’s reputation (as a person worthy of respect) to extend beyond his immediate area of responsibility:

[If] the people working for you know that other people in other areas respect you, then they’ll give you information and do whatever you want, in time.

I asked this participant to comment on what he thought was the most critical quality needed by supervisors. He indicated that it was “Probably temperament” and went on to explain:

A supervisor is always put under a fair bit of stress all the time, because he’s not only got to organise and supervise his work, he’s got to be able to handle all his workers’ problems, he’s got to be able to relate to his management, and I think he’s just got to have the right temperament to [do] that. I’ve seen a supervisor here that one question too many and they just go to pieces sort of thing.

The above data are interesting for a number of reasons. They present a picture of the supervisor as a person who, by virtue of his position, is required to have all the answers, or at least most of the answers. The supervisor is responsible for solving workers’ problems. There is no suggestion that the supervisor’s role is to help workers solve their own problems. The supervisor must manage subordinates in such a way as to ensure their compliance with his wishes. While the recommended strategy here is for the supervisor to gain the respect of his subordinates, it is very much a ‘one-way street’ in the sense that the subordinate must come to respect, and accept, the decisions of his superiors with no reciprocal respect on the part of the supervisor for the knowledge, opinions etc. of his subordinates. This picture of the supervisor as the ultimate and legitimate authority has emerged fairly consistently in the tooling division data, both in the present interviews and in the interviews conducted in Study I.

Production Division. All participants responded to this question and, in all cases, the relationship between the 'best' supervisor and other employees (subordinates rather than superiors) was judged to be relatively positive. The specific responses were as follows.

Of the four 'wages' employees in the study, three used very similar criteria by which to judge the relationship between their 'best' supervisor and other employees. A positive relationship was indicated on the grounds that the supervisor was approachable and treated workers as people, rather than as "numbers" on a production line. As indicated in the following excerpt, positive attitudes toward workers were communicated through relatively simple behaviours:

It's amazing what it does when the foreman comes in in the morning and says 'Good morning' to everybody. They [that is, foremen that adopt this approach] let [the workers] know that they're there... and they wish them a good day. You can get a supervisor who you won't see at all, like they just don't acknowledge you. ('wages' employee)

Similarly, one supervisor was described as a person with whom workers could joke. This supervisor was not snobbish and did not "stick his nose up in the air".

The fourth 'wages' employee indicated that about 75% of his 'best' supervisor's subordinates would rate him as a good supervisor. This was because he followed-up subordinate inquiries (regarding work-related problems) and did not just give lip service to such matters. He also responded positively to the ideas of subordinates such that if someone "[came] up with an idea", his response was "You do it and you find out if it works and come and see me and we'll look it over". The participant highlighted one area of difficulty experienced by this supervisor in relating to subordinates. However, it was suggested that this problem was one which was encountered by all supervisors – it was more or less part of the supervisor's lot:

I'd say he gets on extremely well until there's a personal grievance between two of his workers and he has to make the decision. I mean that's the sort of negative side of being a supervisor – one's got to be right and one's got to be wrong. Then you get the other one turning around and calling [the foreman] all sorts of superlatives and the other chap saying he's a good foreman. ('wages' employee)

Both of the supervisors in the study reported good relationships between their 'best' supervisor and subordinates. In one case, the 'best' supervisor was described as being "very well-respected [and] well-thought of" by both his subordinates and people at his own level. The supervisor had a reputation for defending his subordinates, even in the face of opposition from superiors. For this reason, he was regarded by some of his superiors as "very bombastic [and] inflexible in the sense that he wouldn't bend to suit

what senior management wanted done”. Subsequently this supervisor was dismissed, reportedly because of his refusal to cooperate with a new manager’s decision to utilise the services of an external consultant. The participant attributed this lack of cooperation to a personality clash between the supervisor and his new superior. At the same time, it was emphasised that there were other superiors who held this supervisor in high regard, as evidenced by the fact that:

He was the highest paid merit guy I’ve ever seen in my life. He had about five merit increases, and [was] made up to superintendent. (staff, supervisory)

The second supervisor attributed similar qualities to the ‘best’ supervisor he described. This ‘best’ supervisor reportedly related “very well” to subordinates and, as above, was prepared to ‘go out on a limb’ to support and defend subordinates:

He would sort of go out to the employees much more than he would to management. He’d tend to hang himself out a fair bit for the employees if they were good employees. (staff, supervisory)

This approach to supervision was reportedly not approved of by some of the supervisor’s peers, particularly supervisors from the “old school” who considered the approach “too soft” and not sufficiently “regimented”. Other less traditional supervisors did not criticise the approach but regarded it, simply, as “democratic”.

Q6: Think about the worst supervisor you have ever had in this division.

(a) What was it that you disliked most about this supervisor?

Tooling Division. Due to time constraints, only four of the six tooling division participants responded to this question. Two described a ‘worst’ supervisor from the past, and two a present ‘worst’ supervisor. In all cases, ‘worst’ supervisors were attributed with deficits relating to their ability to get on with others, particularly subordinates. The specific responses of these participants are summarised in Table B2.3 and discussed in more detail below.

One participant indicated that, while he respected his ‘worst’ supervisor “in his qualifications, in his position, [and] his knowledge of the job”, the supervisor was a poor communicator. His approach was entirely directive – he would give an order and expect it to be followed without question. This approach was characteristic of what the participant called “the older style of management”. It was argued that, in contrast to this more traditional approach, workers today expected to be consulted more on decisions likely to affect them, whether the mechanism for this was through “Shop Stewards” or “works committees”, or some other form of worker representation. The ideal approach,

Table B2.3 Characteristics of supervisors judged to be 'Worst' Supervisors by Tooling Division (TD) participants.

Interviewee # and perspective	Job Skills	People Skills	Personal Characteristics
TD01 – 'wages' describing supervisor		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not consult subordinates ("older style of management") 	
TD02 – missing data			
TD04 – 'wages' describing supervisor		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes out personal problems on subordinates • Uses power unfairly (as a means for personal advancement) • Takes credit for subordinates' ideas 	
TD05 – 'wages' describing supervisor		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not prepared to consider the ideas of others (in particular subordinates); insists on own approach being followed • Asserts authority unfairly 	
TD03 – missing data			
TD06 – supervisor describing supervisor (relative position not clear)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tendency to aggravate and upset subordinates • Takes credit for subordinates' work, at same time as putting them down 	

according to this participant, was one in which supervisors said to their subordinates "Look, we would like to do this, what do you think?"

A second participant indicated that he could think of "a couple of supervisors [with] very bad qualities". Of these, one was criticised on the grounds that he allowed problems at home to impact negatively on his relationships with subordinates. That is, he would take out personal problems on those below him. A second supervisor was criticised on the grounds that he used his power unfairly, largely as a means for self-advancement within the company. The participant argued that supervisors like this tended to change their behaviour towards subordinates depending upon the circumstances – adopting a very directive approach in the presence of their own superiors (presumably, this would impress superiors), but then reverting to more friendly behaviour when superiors were absent:

When their boss comes along, they're a totally different person to when he's not there. They start screaming and yelling at the men [to] 'Get on with your job', and all this sort of thing. 'You don't know what you're doing', and abusing them in front of the boss and when the boss has gone, patting them on the back, [saying] 'How are you going?' It's a totally different person. ('wages' employee, leading hand)

Supervisors like this were also inclined to use the ideas of their subordinates to their own advantage, and not give credit where credit was due:

He wants to get [the workers] on side and sort of get what he can out of them. Sort of asking them 'What are you doing?' [and] 'How would you do that?' and, as soon as the guy tells him, when the boss comes along, [he himself says] 'I would do it this way' and 'I would do it that way'. And he tries to make it look like it's all his idea, and that the bloke who told him how to do it doesn't know anything, and he's an idiot, and [he] even virtually tells him so.

A third participant described a 'worst' supervisor who, while "he knew his job backwards", had very definite views about how the job should be done, and was not prepared to consider alternative approaches (particularly those suggested by subordinates, but even those suggested by his immediate superior):

He would lie, steal, beg, or borrow to get the job done his way. ('wages' employee)

The participant described two incidents (in which he was involved personally) to illustrate his point. On one occasion, the supervisor had tried to get a job moving ahead of time by completing the job detail (formal specifications for the job) himself, recording the participant's name on the detail, and then signing the detail to authorise the job to commence. Apparently the usual procedure would be for the person

responsible for working on the job (in this case, the participant) to complete his own job detail, and only when he was ready to commence work on the job. On a second occasion, the supervisor reportedly insisted that the participant prepare to leave work, not from his work bench, which was very close to the time clock, but from the area in which he was working at the time, which was some distance from the time clock. The participant suggested to the supervisor that he was being victimised since there were a number of other workers who were not expected to follow this rule. However, despite his objections, the participant pointed out that “[the supervisor] won out in the end”. The following excerpt summarises the participant’s perception of this supervisor’s character:

He did it his way. I mean, it didn’t matter whether you were a general foreman or whatever, it was done [X’s] way and that was it. And he was only a foreman, a supervisor. His immediate supervisor couldn’t get [X] to do anything [X] didn’t want to do.

Finally, a fourth participant was critical of his ‘worst’ supervisor’s character which was such that “no matter how much he tries he will always aggravate some person, or upset some person”. This supervisor was described as a “non-contributor” who was inclined to come in at the last moment and take credit for achievements which were the result, not of his own efforts, but of the efforts of his subordinates. The supervisor was also reported to have a fairly high opinion of himself and his own ideas. This was reflected in his tendency to ridicule the work of his subordinates. Despite these criticisms, the participant expressed a commitment to working cooperatively with this supervisor because he considered this to be “in the best interests of the job and the best interests of the people working for me”.

Production Division. All participants responded to this question. It can be seen from Table B2.4 that the criteria used by production division participants to classify a supervisor as a ‘worst’ supervisor were similar to those used by tooling division participants. That is, the emphasis was on deficits in people skills rather than on deficits in work skills, attitudes, or behaviours.

Before considering individual responses to this question, brief reference should be made to a methodological problem that became apparent in analysing the responses of supervisory staff. When asked to describe a ‘worst’ supervisor, these participants (of whom there were two from each division) were not asked to indicate their own position in relation to this supervisor – whether subordinate, peer, or superior. In some cases,

Table B2.4 Characteristics of supervisors judged to be ‘Worst’ Supervisors by Production Division (PD) participants.

Interviewee # and perspective	Job Skills	People skills	Personal characteristics
PD02 – ‘wages’ describing supervisor		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abuse of power (uses threat of punishment to gain subordinate compliance) • Lack of respect for subordinates 	
PD03 – ‘wages’ describing supervisor		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexist attitudes (believed that “women should be home in the kitchen”) • Set female workers up for failure 	
PD04 – ‘wages’ describing supervisor		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abuse of power (uses threat of punishment to gain subordinate compliance); supervisors like this were “bully boys” 	
PD05 – ‘wages’ describing supervisor		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Didn’t have subordinates’ trust (“you never knew where you stood with him”) • Tendency to ridicule subordinates 	
PD01 – supervisor describing supervisor (relative position not clear)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrogant attitudes (“a very bombastic sort of guy”) • Abuse of power 	
PD06 – supervisor describing supervisor (relative position not clear)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overly familiar with subordinates (physical intimacy implied) 	

this information could be inferred from the data, but other cases it could not. Since the criteria by which supervisors judge one another may be influenced by their relative positions in the hierarchy of authority, this information should be explicitly sought in any subsequent revision of this interview protocol. Similarly, if a supervisor describes a past supervisor, the nature of the past relationship should be clarified. For example, the former may be referring to a time before he was promoted to supervisory status. This argument applies to data concerning both 'best' and 'worst' supervisors.

In describing the characteristics of their 'worst' supervisors, three of the six production division participants who responded to this question made reference to the supervisor somehow abusing his power. In two cases, the reference was explicit. For example, one supervisor was described as "a very bombastic sort of guy", whose attitude was that "You do as I tell you, don't do what I do". This supervisor abused the power of his position, thinking that "I'm God" and therefore "You do as I say".

Similarly, a second supervisor was described who, by virtue of his position, had come to regard himself as a kind of "demi-god", whose power over his subordinates was such that: "Your job is in my hands. I can sack you when I am ready". The participant described his first encounter with this supervisor in which he was ordered, rather than requested, to do a job which was outside of his normal duties. The participant refused to comply with the order, primarily because of the way in which it was given:

...it was the way I was spoken to: 'Hey, you, come here.' 'What do you want?' 'I want you to do this...' I said: 'Excuse me, sir, but that's not the way you ask people', and he said: 'You'll do as I tell you and this is where you'll work.'
('wages' employee)

Despite verbal abuse and a threat from the supervisor to take the matter further, the participant refused to submit to the supervisor and maintained his position that "A please and a thank you go a long way with me – demands and orders don't". The participant suggested that this initial encounter helped to set the tone of his subsequent relationship with this supervisor:

From that time on we got on, but he's still doing it and I've seen him do it countless times to other people, so it's in his character. That person should not be a supervisor.

A third participant described a 'worst' supervisor who was typical (in terms of his approach to supervision) of many of the older style supervisors with the Company. It was argued that, in the past, supervisors were very much "bully-boys" with a "whip in

their hand". The supervisor's job was "to keep a firm hold on the worker" such that "if you talked to the person next to you, he'd jump on you kind of thing". The implication in this example was that the supervisor was simply doing his job. In this sense, the 'abuse of power' theme is implicit, rather than explicit as in the two previous examples.

A fourth participant indicated that she was unable to describe a 'worst' supervisor, since all of her supervisors to date had been "pretty good". I suggested, therefore, that she describe a 'least preferred' supervisor. The main criticism of this supervisor was that he was untrustworthy in the sense that "you never knew where you stood with him, if you could go to him, or if you couldn't go to him". A behavioural manifestation of this supervisor's untrustworthiness was his tendency to 'spy' on workers:

He was one of those supervisors that stood behind a pole and watched you to see if you were doing the job properly, or if you weren't, or how long you were standing and talking to someone. ('wages' employee)

A tendency to ridicule workers and make them feel "stupid" was also reported:

He snickers at you. If you say something to him, he'd tend to snicker at you a little bit.

A fifth participant attributed sexist values to her 'worst' supervisor. This supervisor reportedly believed that women should be "home in the kitchen", rather than at work. His disapproval of working women was evident in his attempts to set them up for failure in the workplace, for example, by ordering them to move objects likely to be too heavy for them to move.

It is perhaps worth noting at this point that, in all of the above cases, 'worst' supervisors were at fault because of negative behaviour (of one kind or another) towards subordinates. Furthermore, while it is not always stated explicitly, there is a sense in which all of the above supervisors are depicted as somehow abusing the power of their position. In contrast with this general theme, a sixth participant from the production division described a 'worst' supervisor whose primary fault was that he was too familiar with subordinates. The participant argued that supervisors who formed too many "personal bonds" with subordinates inevitably compromised their authority over subordinates and lost respect. In the participant's own words:

[Supervisors] develop very strong bonds with certain employees they like – the sort of thing that after hours they'd go down to the pub and drink with the employees, or on weekends work on their cars or get employees to do the jobs for them, that sort of thing. They get so involved personally with employees that when it came time to differentiate, to tell them what to do, they couldn't because they would jeopardise this friendship they had built up. So they wouldn't be able to sack an employee or... I mean even if he went out and told an employee to do

something, they'd look and laugh and say 'Nick off, you're my friend', sort of thing, 'you're not really a supervisor'. And so the whole thing of being a supervisor is just brought down. (staff, supervisory)

6(b) What was this supervisor's view of the organisation?

Tooling Division. Four participants responded to this question. In three cases, 'worst' supervisors were attributed with negative views of the organisation, and in one case, positive views were reported.

Of those supervisors with negative views, one was reported to be using the organisation solely as a means by which he could satisfy his own ends – which were seen to be predominantly financial, but which may also have been associated with opportunities for “power and prestige”:

It's very hard to say whether [supervisors of this kind] actually come only for the money because they've sort of got a lot of ambition, or whether they come also for power and prestige or something. They get as much out of that as they get out of getting the money perhaps, I don't know, but there's some sort of driving force underneath. Or whether they're just trying to get the promotion to end up with more money in the end, I don't know. But there's some driving force behind it there somewhere. ('wages' employee, leading hand)

This theme of selfishness, whereby the supervisor was seen as putting his own needs before those of the Company, was alluded to by a second participant:

His overall view of the Company I don't think is very high. I've got no real reason to be able to justify that. I think overall he believes that he himself would be more important than the Company. (staff, supervisory)

In contrast to the two responses above, a third participant made reference to his 'worst' supervisor's negative attitudes to the way in which the Company went about doing things. Specifically, this supervisor had been “let down” by the Company's practice, in recent years, of filling senior vacancies in the tooling division, not with divisional personnel (which would be consistent with the traditional practice of promoting from within), but with personnel transferred from (in this participant's words, “cleared out of”) other divisions in the Company:

People have come over the top which I think is the 'General' over the last few years, whereas he's progressed through the organisation in his amount of years of service that he's been here, he's progressed, but he's come to a full-stop... I do believe that that has coloured his attitude; that he thought that if there was a position higher, he should have got that position. ('wages' employee)

Despite this supervisor's personal disappointment with his failure to advance further in the division (and his associated negative attitudes toward the Company), he continued to fulfil the requirements of his position satisfactorily. In the participant's own words:

He obviously carries out his duties as the Company tells him to do.

One participant judged his 'worst' supervisor's view of the organisation to be positive. This supervisor was described as being "a real company man" who behaved almost as if the Company belonged to him. I asked the participant to explain the meaning of 'company man' in this context and he replied:

A company man in [the] respect that he would go virtually for 110% efficiency in the work. The faster you could do the work or get the job finished, the better he liked it, you know. ('wages' employee)

Through further questioning it was established that the common understanding of 'company man' among tooling division employees, at least according to this participant, was someone who did not 'rock the boat':

We say that the measure of a company man is – you know, if their immediate supervisor said 'Jump', they'd jump; they wouldn't ask why they have to jump or anything like that, they'd just do it. They don't question it.

Similar views to the above were expressed in the Study I interviews. A common theme to emerge in these interviews was that compliance with authority, not "rocking the boat", and being a "yes" man were important factors influencing one's ability to get ahead in the tooling division.

Production Division. Five participants responded to this question. Three judged their 'worst' supervisor's view of the organisation to be negative; one indicated that she was unable to comment; and in one case the response was ambiguous.

Of those supervisors with negative views, one was considered to be using the organisation solely as a means to an end. This supervisor's main interests and commitments reportedly lay elsewhere:

...he had other outside commitments, other interests. You know, it was only a means to an end for him; that's all this was. (staff, supervisory)

A second supervisor was reported to behave in a way which suggested that he did not care about the organisation:

He had more sick leave than any other supervisor in the plant. He's been seen to be drunk on the premises; he's been seen to be obnoxious about a million times from different other people I spoke to. ('wages' employee)

The participant indicated that his own relationship with this particular supervisor was "great", but only because he had been prepared to make a stand, and assert his rights with this supervisor, on the first occasion that a problem had been encountered. A third

'worst' supervisor was reported to have "complete contempt for the whole organisation", thinking that the organisation "completely stinks" and that "it's rubbish".

One participant indicated that because her 'worst' supervisor "never talked to you", she could not comment on how he viewed the organisation. And finally, the response of one participant to this question was somewhat ambiguous. That is, the supervisor's view of the organisation, as described below, was difficult to classify as either a positive or a negative view:

I suppose [the supervisor] was just doing as he was told and that was it, you know. I suppose he was maybe pretty passive towards his upper management. ('wages' employee)

6(c) How did this supervisor relate to employees in general?

Tooling Division. Four participants responded to this question. In three cases, the relationship between the 'worst' supervisor and other employees (notably subordinates) could be classified as negative. In one case, the relationship was neither negative nor positive. Specific responses are examined in some detail below.

One participant indicated that his 'worst' supervisor's relationship with employees in general was "not good". Subordinates lacked respect for this supervisor because he was "not fair", meaning that he used his position of power as a means for self-advancement in the Company, for example, by trying to impress his superiors by adopting a very autocratic approach with subordinates when the former were present, and taking personal credit for the ideas and achievements of subordinates. Interestingly, it was pointed out that the relationship between this supervisor and his subordinates had not declined to the point "where they refuse to talk to him or sort of jack up about it". Criticism of this supervisor tended to be private (that is, "behind his back") rather than public ("to his face").

A second participant reported that his 'worst' supervisor engendered "fear" in subordinates. This supervisor had a reputation for insisting that things be done his own way and, as described in the following excerpt, his expectations had come to have the status of "unwritten laws" that were rarely put to the test:

...there was more or less an unwritten law here that if you didn't front up on Friday, you didn't work overtime on the weekend. [X's] attitude was that if you had a day off, regardless [of] whether it was Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, you didn't get asked in the next weekend for overtime. We got one bloke called [Y]... he had the Friday off once and he come into work on Saturday and poor old [X] nearly had a coronary. You know, 'What are you doing here?' 'You asked me on Thursday if I wanted to work Saturday.' 'But you didn't

come in yesterday.' 'No, I was sick yesterday; I'm all right today, so I'm in.' [X] didn't know what to say; it had just never been tried. ('wages' employee)

A third participant reported that other employees (referring, I think, to subordinates) did not have a "very high" opinion of the 'worst' supervisor he described. He suggested that the reason for this was that the supervisor was rarely seen on the shop-floor and that this probably led subordinates to think that "for most of the day he does nothing". The participant went on to talk about the importance of supervisors and managers having a presence on the shop-floor:

It's part of the team, they should be out there and be seen, and they should be out there getting to know the people, be part of the people. (staff, supervisory)

He suggested that his 'worst' supervisor's lack of visibility on the shop-floor may have been the result of a certain aloofness, or sense of superiority over others:

I would think he puts himself a step up from [shop-floor workers], not to be bothered by people down there.

Finally, one participant described his 'worst' supervisor's relationship with subordinates as "So, so... It's not that good, but it's not that bad". This supervisor had previously been described as being very autocratic in his approach, with poor communication skills and a tendency to give orders which he expected to be followed without question. The participant suggested that, from the Company's point of view, this supervisor was probably "a very good person" because he was "always thinking about the job". However the supervisor's ability to relate well to subordinates was, in the participant's opinion, limited by the fact that he did not share any outside interests (for example, "footy") with subordinates. The supervisor had reportedly been with the Company a very long time and, as such, "General Motor's [was] his life". The implication here is that shared interests constitute an important component of a good supervisor-subordinate relationship.

Overall, the tooling division data on 'worst' supervisors are interesting because, despite the common criticism that 'worst' supervisors somehow abused the power of their position (by being overly directive and bossy; by taking credit for the achievements of others; by insisting on things being done their way, with no possibility of a compromise; and by adopting attitudes of self-importance and superiority over subordinates), there is no suggestion here of these supervisors being overtly resisted by their subordinates. On the contrary, compliance seems to be the main response, with some subordinates even being afraid of the supervisor. This finding is not inconsistent

with the general theme (that has emerged in these data and the data from the Study I interviews) that subservience to those in authority is a necessary (possibly taken-for-granted) aspect of the superior-subordinate relationship. Support for hierarchical assumptions of this kind is stronger and more consistent in the tooling division data than in the production division data.

Production Division. Five participants responded to this question. Of these, three reported a negative relationship between their 'worst' supervisor and other employees; one reported a positive relationship; and one inferred that the relationship was inappropriate.

The three participants reporting negative relationships were 'wages' employees. One described his 'worst' supervisor as a person with "no respect for the worker as a person, let alone as a worker". It was estimated that, "of the 30 or 40 people that he controls", this supervisor was probably liked by only "one or two". The participant also suggested that, to the extent that this supervisor had any redeeming qualities as a supervisor, these were very difficult to assess because of the "personal venom" he showed toward subordinates. A second 'wages' employee indicated that she had had very little to do with the 'worst' supervisor she described. However, in response to the question 'What did other employees, other operators think of him?' she replied:

Not very nice because he was always sneaking, he was always watching from a distance. He used to make you very nervous. He used to stand right behind you and watch what you were doing. That would put you right off and then you couldn't do it properly. ('wages' employee)

When mistakes were made, subordinates were made to feel intimidated, not by anything that the supervisor said, but simply because "you knew that he knew that you'd made a mistake". The third 'wages' employee described not so much a negative, as a neutral, relationship between his 'worst' supervisor and subordinates. He argued that supervisors in the past typically had a very directive role. As such, their contact with subordinates was limited to giving orders and taking disciplinary action if orders were not complied with. In this sense, supervisors and subordinates constituted two entirely separate groups:

[The supervisor] was just one level and you were another level and that was it. ('wages' employee)

One participant (a supervisor) reported a positive relationship between his 'worst' supervisor (a "very bombastic sort of guy" with a directive 'Do as I say, not as I do' approach) and shop-floor employees. It was suggested that employees on the shop-floor

identified with this supervisor's attitude to the Company, namely, that "it was only a means to an end". Among employees at this level, the supervisor had acquired the status of a "folk hero":

The employees thought he was great because he used to relate to them say screwing the Company. Anybody that screws the Company is looked at like a folk hero, you know, like a Ned Kelly type effect. (staff, supervisory)

This 'worst' supervisor was also reported to have considerable popularity with female employees.

Finally, one participant (also a supervisor) described a relationship between his 'worst' supervisor and subordinates which might be classified here as inappropriate. This participant was critical of the supervisor's familiarity with subordinates, arguing that insufficient social distance between superiors and their subordinates could only lead to the authority of the former being compromised and a loss of respect:

[Subordinates] lose all respect. It's the old familiarity breeds contempt shall we say, and that's basically what happens. They don't take [their supervisors] seriously any more. (staff, supervisory)

In order to explore this issue in more depth, the participant was also asked to comment on his 'worst' supervisor's relationship with other supervisors at the same level. He indicated that although other supervisors made an effort to get on with this supervisor, at least "on face value", the relationship between them was less than satisfactory. The main problem was that the 'worst' supervisor presented a role model (social closeness to subordinates) which conflicted with the role model adopted by his peers (social distance from subordinates). To the extent that subordinates were exposed to the former approach, they became less responsive to latter approach, making the job of other supervisors "that much more difficult". The participant argued further that supervisors who became too familiar with subordinates were in danger of behaving in ways (for example, getting drunk at a social occasion in the presence of subordinates) which would eventually compromise their credibility. He described the reaction of subordinates to a supervisor who "falls from grace":

...the moment one supervisor falls from grace for any sort of reason – they either got into trouble or anything – the people love it, they lap it up. It's like with... here's an elephant with a leg damaged and the bloody wolves drag it and pull it down. So you don't want that to really happen... You have to have a certain amount of decorum there.

Context questions

Q7: What was the role played by supervisors in this division in the past? Did it differ? How? Give examples. How long ago was this?

Tooling Division. All six participants responded to this question. One participant only reported that the past role of supervisors was different from their role at present; four participants reported no change; and one participant indicated that he could not comment on the role of supervisors in the past. The specific responses are considered in more detail as follows.

One participant described the role of supervisors some 35 to 40 years ago. He argued that at this time supervisors had considerably more power and control than they did at present. They had more decision making responsibilities and were able to act independently without being bound by the legalities within which they were now required to operate. In the past, supervisors had more status and were more highly respected at all levels of the organisational hierarchy:

A person who was a supervisor was held on a higher pedestal years ago than what they are now, because of probably this lack of respect that's gradually been eroded. The companies themselves have reduced the importance of supervisors. (staff, supervisory)

In describing the past role of supervisors no reference was made by this participant to the 'directive-consultative' dichotomy that had been applied in relation to the earlier question regarding the current role of supervisors.

As indicated, four participants reported no difference between the past role of supervisors and their present role. One participant perceived that supervisors (at least those on the shop floor) had always been 'moderately directive'. This participant did not offer, neither was he asked for, any elaboration of this response. A second participant argued that supervisors had always been very directive and implied that this was a characteristic that was inherent in ("bred into") them. A third participant, who judged the current role of supervisors to be 'moderately directive', indicated that their role in the past (some 15 years ago) was "not a lot different from this". At the same time, however, the participant suggested that supervisors in the past possibly maintained more direct control over operations for which they were responsible than they did at present. Supervisors today were more inclined to let operations "flow along" and supervise from a greater distance than previously. The participant gave several reasons which he thought might account for this change. Supervisors had grown older and

because of this (and presumably also because of the declining state of the division) they were now less interested in controlling and supervising operations as closely as they had done in the past. Furthermore, there was no longer any “driving force behind them to drive them to anything else”. The participant also argued that perhaps supervisors had “learned a little bit”, namely, that “it’s better to do it that way” (that is, let operations proceed without constant supervision). The fourth participant reported that the role of supervisors in the past was “about the same” as it was at present, that is, ‘slightly directive’. At the same time, however, it was suggested that in the past “bullying tactics” had been used by some supervisors to frighten subordinates into compliance and to ensure that, at least in the presence of supervisors, subordinates were on task. It was argued that such tactics “don’t mean anything to anybody any more” and that subordinates were no longer frightened of their supervisors. The implication for the current role of supervisors (and managers) was that now “[they] have got to work to get to know the people, to get them to do the work without them being frightened”.

Finally, one participant indicated that he was unable to comment on the past role of supervisors in the division. He referred to a period in the division’s history (year not specified) when there were some two to three thousand workers in the tooling division, at least eight times the number of workers currently employed. This was a time when job security was assured and when employment opportunities, both in the Company and elsewhere, were good, so that “if you didn’t like the job, you just chucked it in and you went somewhere else and you didn’t even think about it”. The participant argued that, in this climate, “a lot of things [went] unnoticed”. In contrast, the current climate was characterised by high unemployment in the general community, high levels of uncertainty regarding one’s future in the division, such that “at any time we could be laid off, given the boot, retrenchment, whatever you want to call it”, and a workforce, many of whom hated their current situation but were bound to it, not just because of the uncertainty of securing employment elsewhere but because of the hope of eventually being ‘paid out’ by the Company. In this climate workers were more mindful of supervisors and more critical of what they did and did not do.

Underlying this participant’s response then is the notion that, at the level of the individual worker, a supervisor’s behaviour becomes salient only when it is perceived by the worker to have a direct impact (in this case, a negative impact) on his immediate situation. Furthermore, these data suggest a perception of supervisory responsibility that

extends to keeping the division 'on course', and ensuring that there is no threat to the security of workers in the division. When problems arise workers look to their superiors for the cause. There is no sense of shared accountability or responsibility for the problem or its resolution.

As with previous questions which require the participant to comment on some aspect of his/her past experience, it will be important in the forthcoming main study to revise this question so that the exact period of time to which the participant is referring is established.

Production Division. Five participants responded to this question. In all cases, the role of supervisors in the division in the past was judged to be different from their role at present. This finding contrasts with the tooling division data where the majority of participants reported no change in the role of supervisors, which they judged to be more or less directive. The tooling division finding possibly reflects the longer history of the division, its set-up and continued operation according to fairly traditional management practices, and a more permanent staff, in the sense of longer tenure and possibly also less turnover. The specific responses of production division participants were as follows.

Two participants reported a more directive role for supervisors in the past. In one case, this was compared with the 'slightly consultative' role that supervisors played at present. According to this participant, supervision in the past "was just completely giving orders", which subordinates were expected to carry out precisely. This participant also suggested that supervisors in the past were less effective in that they tended to treat each new job as quite separate from the previous job, so that there was little transfer of learning, and a tendency for mistakes to be perpetuated. It is important to note here that, for this participant, the past extended back only eighteen months. The second participant who reported a 'very directive' current role for supervisors indicated that, in the past, the role of supervisors was even more directive. It was "so autocratic it wasn't funny". Since this participant had been with the Company for a short time only, his evaluation was based, not on personal experience, but on what he had heard from others (current employees and one ex-employee with whom he was associated). According to these reports, the situation some five to ten years ago was that subordinates would have been disinclined to talk to their supervisors, or even their leading hands. Social exchanges between these groups (eg. greetings) were also rare. A

further indication of “how bad it used to be” was that, in those days, “people caught reading the newspaper at their desk were instantly dismissed”.

A third participant, who judged the current role of supervisors to be ‘slightly directive’, indicated that in the past (four to five years ago), the role of supervisors suffered from a lack of clarity. At this time, the team concept was a major influence on management practice and, while it is not stated explicitly, it is nevertheless implied that this innovation (or the implementation and management of it), helped to create some of the role ambiguity experienced by supervisors at the time. As indicated:

Supervisor’s didn’t know what to do. There were no set hard and fast rules. Senior management changed every so often. Different managers would come in and have different rules of how the game was supposed to be played. There was no stable leadership, no one at the helm to direct the ship the way it should be going. (staff, supervisory)

This situation had reportedly improved in recent years with more stable leadership and greater role clarity for supervisors:

[Supervisors] have some sort of direction because you’ve deleted those sort of grey areas. In other words, you know now what the lines are, what we can and what we can’t do.

It was argued further that the role ambiguity experienced by supervisors in the past (at least in part a consequence of the introduction of the team concept), also led to the demise of the innovation. This participant’s view of the past role of supervisors can be contrasted with that of a fourth participant who described the same period in the history of the division, approximately four years ago. The fourth participant argued that supervisors at that time collaborated more with workers. They were more willing to listen to the ideas and suggestions of workers, and communicate them to higher level supervisors and managers who had the power to act upon them. It was at this higher level, and not at the level of one’s immediate supervisor that the resistance to these ideas and suggestions originated.

What is interesting about the two responses above is that, in the first case, the participant was a supervisor, whereas in the second the participant was a ‘wages’ employee. From the supervisor’s perspective, the team concept created uncertainty but from the worker’s perspective, it provided opportunities for involvement and having one’s suggestions heard, and possibly acted upon.

Finally, a fifth participant, who judged the current role of supervisors in the division to be ‘moderately directive’, indicated that in the past it was “better” in the sense that

“we’ve had other supervisors that have involved the area far more”. It was subsequently established that this participant was referring to a change in the supervision in her section that dated back only “a couple of months”. By way of example, the participant described the different approaches of her past and present supervisors to solving problems encountered on the shop-floor. The past supervisor “would come into the area and talk to you about what was wrong and from there he’d find out the best way to go about fixing that particular problem”. In contrast, the current supervisor tended not to consult with workers when problems arose: “He’ll come into the area and if there is something wrong, he will tell you how he wants it fixed”. While the participant indicated that she preferred the latter approach, other workers in the section, many of whom had only been with the organisation for a few weeks, were inclined to “accept it”. The participant also explained that her experience was specific to the section in which she worked because “we don’t have anything to do with the other supervisors” (that is, supervisors from other sections). The participant was asked to comment on the role of supervisors in the division when she first commenced work there, some three and a half years ago. She indicated that, at that time, she had very little contact with her supervisor and was primarily responsible to, and took instructions from, the leading hand in the section. The supervisor was “just someone that was there – like the big boss – that you didn’t have an awful lot to do with”.

The data above have a number of implications for the design of the forthcoming main study. Clearly, the context of an individual’s experience is a variable that must be understood if we are to draw any meaningful conclusions about the characteristics of a particular culture or sub-culture. More rigorous data will therefore need to be obtained concerning individual differences in time perspective (related to factors such as age and length of employment) and differences in perspective resulting from seniority differences, sectional differences etc.

Q8: Do you think that the role played by supervisors in this division at the present time is likely to change/stay the same? If you think it will change, how and why? If you think it will stay the same, why?

Tooling Division. Five participants responded to this question. Of these, two indicated that the current role of supervisors in the division, judged to be ‘moderately directive’ in one case and ‘very directive’ in the other, was unlikely to change in the future. The former argued that union power and the expectations of a more educated

workforce who had been “brought up to expect a certain amount of freedom and not [to] be treated like slaves”, would prevent supervisors from assuming a more directive role. At the same time, however, this participant argued that supervisors could not become less directive because this would mean a loss of control for supervisors. The ideal, according to this participant, was a “sort of a balance somewhere in the middle”, between supervisors having total control and very little control. In the latter case, it was argued that unless new management was hired “to sweep the old ideas aside”, supervisors in the division would continue to play a ‘very directive’ role.

One participant indicated that he was hopeful of a change for the better with regard to future supervision in the division. This would involve more, and better, training for supervisors particularly in areas related to decision-making and people management, the latter of which required supervisors to “recognise different people as individuals instead of treating people as all the same”. According to this participant, in the past, supervisors received virtually no training to prepare them for work in this role. The participant gave no indication of how likely he thought it was that the hoped-for changes would eventuate. It should also be noted that, in responding to this question, the participant made no reference to the ‘directive-consultative’ framework within which the role of supervisors was intended to be considered.

A fourth participant, who rated the current role of supervisors as combining directive and consultative elements, predicted that in the future the importance and authority of supervisors would be eroded further. This prediction was based on a perception that subordinate respect for those in authority was declining and that, because of changes in Company policy whereby decision-making responsibilities were allocated to groups rather than individuals, supervisors no longer had the control over their subordinates that they once had. It was also argued that the Company’s plan to rationalise the number of supervisory positions by removing the category of general foreman, was a further indication of the declining status of supervisors. Given these factors, there was little incentive for future employees to aspire to the role of a supervisor:

People might take it on, but they won’t show the same interest or drive; they’ll only take it on for the monetary reward. (staff, supervisory)

Finally, a fifth participant argued that supervisors who currently played a ‘moderately directive’ role, were likely to become more consultative in the future. This change would more or less be forced upon supervisors because of the decreasing size of work groups (brought about by increased automation in the industry) and the technically more

demanding role (again a result of increased automation and technological advances) that all employees would be required to play in the future. The participant argued in favour of more consultation between workers and managers/supervisors on the grounds that this would enhance everybody's interest in their work and that:

When you get to know people better, you perform better, you know what people's abilities are, what they're capable of. Maybe your poorest worker, you'll only lift him up to being an average worker, but you've gained something. (staff, supervisory)

Production Division. Of the five participants who responded to this question, two anticipated a change in the future role of supervisors in the division; one suggested that the role *could* change; one that it *must* change; and one participant anticipated no change. These responses are described in more detail as follows.

Both of the participants who anticipated a change in the future role of supervisors had similar views about the nature of this change. Neither participant described the change in terms of supervisors becoming more or less consultative or more or less directive. Rather, a more fundamental change was anticipated whereby the supervisor's current role would be almost completely redefined. The current responsibilities of first-level supervisors (controlling the work and organising people to do the work) would, in future, be allocated further down the line to leading hands. It was suggested that there would be fewer supervisory levels, and hence fewer supervisors overall. In one case, it was argued that the supervisor of the future would be more of a planner and technical adviser and in the other, the supervisor would act as an overseer of operations on the shop-floor. Interestingly, both participants predicted that supervisors would continue to be the main disciplinarians. As one participant pointed out, leading hands were no different from their co-workers in the sense that they were classified as 'wages' employees and belonged to the same union. As such they "would not be able to discipline [a co-worker]", but would have to refer disciplinary problems to their superiors, that is, senior supervisors. However, as suggested by the other participant (himself a supervisor), herein lay one of the main problems associated with a role redefinition for supervisors and leading hands. Precisely because leading hands were equal in status to their co-workers (in terms of their 'wages' classification and union membership) and because there existed a shop-floor culture which promoted the notion that "no fellow will dob a fellow worker in unless he's a right mongrel", it was unlikely that disciplinary problems would, in fact, be referred by the leading hand to a higher

authority. Finally, one participant emphasised the need for supervisor training to equip future supervisors with the skills necessary to perform this disciplinary role (which he considered to be analogous to that of a personnel officer) effectively. This participant also argued for training for leading hands in “communication skills and supervisory skills”.

A third participant, who judged the current role of supervisors in the division to be ‘moderately directive’, indicated that in future this role could change to become more consultative. Interestingly, it was suggested that the impetus for this change would come, not from higher levels in the organisation, but from the workers themselves through their continued demonstration of high levels of competence, including a capacity for generating “good ideas on how to get things running”. In this way, the supervisor in the section who was reportedly disinclined to involve workers in decisions about the running of the section, would gradually come to realise the resourcefulness of his subordinates and that “there’s a large group of people down there that are all trying to make things happen”. What the supervisor needed according to this participant was for “people to show him that they are capable of making decisions – more or less themselves but with some help from him”. The likely outcome would be that things “could work a lot better”.

A fourth participant was emphatic that, if the Company was to compete on the world market (which he maintained it must do in order to survive), then its overall effectiveness must improve. Divisions (and presumably sections within divisions) would need to be managed more like small businesses in the private sector. This would mean a major shift in the role of supervisors from their current ‘very directive’ role to a much more consultative role:

Supervisors are going to have to liase a lot more with people... general employees are going to demand much more than sort of coming to work and me saying ‘You go on this machine and this is what you do’. They want to be part of the organisation. (staff, supervisory)

It was argued that in the future, there would be no place for autocratic supervision. Instead, the supervisor would be required to be more like the “coach of a team”. In consultation with employees, systems would be set-up, and training provided, so that “everyone knows exactly what they have to do... and what’s expected of them”. As a coach, the supervisor’s job would then be to motivate the team and maintain their performance at a high level – in the words of the participant “to get them up, to keep

them up, to keep them active". The participant also maintained that, in order to operate effectively as separate business units, each division would have to become "more insular" and less reliant, or dependent, on what happened in other divisions. The current interdependence of divisions, which restricted what one could and could not do in one's own division, made it "very hard to run here".

Finally, a fifth participant predicted that, because the current management seemed more inclined toward directive rather than consultative approaches, the future role of supervisors would be likely to remain the same as it was at present, in this case 'slightly directive'. The implication here is that management are ultimately responsible for the style of supervision that predominates in the division. If managers are directive, then supervisors will also be directive. Similarly, if managers are consultative, then supervisors will be consultative. The participant was asked to describe a situation that, in his opinion, was illustrative of the more directive orientation of current management. He commented that: "[It's] just the way they work on the shop floor", and went on to explain that there was very little opportunity for significant involvement and input from the shop-floor. The means currently available for worker participation did not extend much beyond the suggestion box, and the occasional meeting in the canteen in which workers might be shown a video of how the Company was going, with the opportunity to ask questions afterwards. While it was possible for a worker to take up an issue "individually", the participant felt that it was important to have "a collective view from the people on the shop-floor".

Q9: Are you aware of the role played by supervisors in other organisations? Give examples. What was nature of the other organisation(s) and how did you come to know about it?

Tooling Division. Five participants responded to this question. Of these, three indicated that they could not comment on the role of supervisors in other organisations. Presumably these participants had little or no experience in other organisations, although this was confirmed in one case only. It will be important in the forthcoming main study to gain more accurate information concerning the extent of participants' employment experience elsewhere. The remaining two participants were both able to comment on the role of supervisors in smaller firms. In one case, the participant had direct experience, having worked previously in a number of smaller firms. He argued that smaller firms were more efficient, with less "time to mess around", and that

supervisors in these firms had more power to “sack people”. In contrast, in larger firms, supervisors did not seem to have any power to dismiss workers and this had led to the attitude among workers that: “He can’t sack me so I can do as I like”. Another difference between the tooling division and these smaller firms, according to this participant, was that the tooling division provided a service which was primarily ‘in-house’, whereas the smaller firms tended to operate as sub-contractors for other larger firms. In the former, the quality of service provision was compromised by what the participant called the “Holden’s attitude”, namely that:

I’ve done this 100 times before. I know what I can do and what I can’t, and what I can get away with and what I can’t. (‘wages’ employee, leading hand)

The participant described a situation in the past when the tooling division accepted a major contract with the aircraft industry. In contrast to the attitudes that permeated the ‘in-house’ service, he argued that this was “the only time we’ve ever rushed and really worked hard... it amazed me really, we really worked as team on that project”. It should be noted here that the participant does not describe the role of supervisors in other organisations in terms of the ‘directive-consultative’ dichotomy, as intended.

The second participant had indirect experience of supervision elsewhere as a result of visits to a number of smaller firms. In a similar vein to the argument above, it was suggested that supervisors in smaller firms acted more as “technical advisers” than “disciplinarians”, the latter role being more appropriate to supervision in larger firms where there was more opportunity for people who wanted to avoid work to do so:

There’ll always be a percentage of workers that don’t really want to do their job... and I think the bigger an organisation is, the more these people that don’t want to do a job can hide, and there’s less opportunity for you to be able to do anything about it. (staff, supervisory)

In contrast, in smaller organisations:

If you’ve got somebody not wanting to do a job, you can pick that more readily, and then you can move in and start your corrective guidance with him and try and get him to do his job.

Production Division. Five participants responded to this question. Of these, two had never worked with any other company and so were unable to comment on the basis of personal experience. However, one of these participants surmised that, because of the efficiency demands in smaller organisations, supervisors in these organisations would have to be more consultative. The participant commented on the advantages of the team approach of the past and contrasted the ideal group size (no more than 10 per group at

that time) with the current practice of allocating one leading hand (chosen by management rather than the team) to 30 workers.

The remaining three participants had all had some prior experience in other organisations. One participant, who had spent some time in the army, commented on the highly authoritarian nature of supervision in this organisation. The implication was that supervisors in the army were considerably more directive than their counterparts in the production division, who were judged by this participant to be 'slightly directive'. When asked to comment on the 'ideal' role of supervisors, this participant argued for a balance between a consultative approach and a directive approach. Workers should be given responsibilities but within certain clearly defined limits so that "you cut the grey areas out". The supervisor's job was to ensure that workers met their responsibilities. If they failed to do so, the supervisor must find out why and then take whatever action was necessary to resolve the problem. The participant was very much against supervisors adopting an entirely consultative approach on the one hand, or an entirely directive approach on the other, arguing that:

If you step over either end, that's when you've hung yourself. (staff, supervisory)

A second participant responded to this question by comparing the communication skills of supervisors in an organisation employing only men with those of supervisors in an organisation (such as the production division) where both men and women were employed. This participant had worked previously on a building site and argued that supervisors in this environment spoke to subordinates in a manner that was very different from that which they would have used, had women been present:

I've seen foremen on the building site, if they talked to people like that here, they'd be done for defamation and God knows what else. ('wages' employee)

In contrast, supervisors in the production division were considered to be more "tolerant" of workers, more aware of "equal rights", and "more careful about how they relate to people". Note that in responding to this question, the participant did not discuss role differences in terms of the extent to which supervisors on the building site were more or less consultative or directive than supervisors in the production division.

Finally, a third participant described the role of supervisors in some of the more successful companies in which he had worked. These companies were characterised by a "very flat structure", they were considerably smaller than the present company, and they had succeeded in "bridging the gap between upper management and workers". The

role of supervisors in these companies was to co-ordinate the activities of workers, to “fix the problems, the personal problems”, and to “understand things with people”.

At this point, it is useful to refer back to the suggestion made previously about a possible relationship between the extent of a participant’s experience or knowledge of other organisations and the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction that (s)he expresses in relation to the current situation. It can be hypothesised, for example, that employees with either no experience of other organisations (that is, no point of comparison), or experience that is perceived negatively in relation to the current situation, will be more likely to express satisfaction with their current situation than employees whose experience of other organisations is rated more positively than current experience. So far, no clear patterns of this kind emerge in the data from either division. One of the main problems here is that, as indicated, participants often discussed their experience of other organisations in terms that were different from the terms suggested by the question. To take an example from the data above, instead of talking about the role of supervisors in other organisations in terms of how directive or consultative they were, one participant compared the communication style (that is, how supervisors spoke to subordinates) of supervisors in the production division with that of supervisors elsewhere. Inconsistencies of this kind render comparisons between satisfaction data and data on experience in other organisations meaningless.

APPENDIX C1

Study III: Interview Protocol

STUDY III INTERVIEW

THE ROLE OF WORKERS

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

PART A: DUTIES/ACTIVITIES

THE PRESENT CONTEXT

Open-ended questions (OQ)

- OQ1. Organisations (divisions) generally have a list of duties for workers to carry out. In this division at the present time, what are the main duties that workers *actually* carry out?
- OQ2. Apart from doing their immediate job, is there anything else that workers in this division do at the present time?

Prompts (P)

[In this section, the respondent is presented with a number of activities in which workers in the division might get involved. The purpose of these 'prompts' is to jog the respondent's memory so that aspects of the role of the worker not referred to in response to the open-ended questions above (either because the respondent has simply forgotten to mention them or because they are taken for granted and therefore not usually spoken about) can be elicited. As indicated, for each activity the interviewer must establish whether or not workers in the division are involved in the activity at the present time, and if so, to what extent. If the activity has been mentioned previously (that is, in response to either of the open-ended questions), there is clearly no need to ask about it again. However, for each activity mentioned spontaneously, the interviewer should subsequently obtain an estimate of the extent of worker involvement in the activity.]

In this section, as elsewhere, respondents should not be restricted to one-word responses. To the extent that longer responses are needed to clarify the meaning of what is being said, these should be encouraged. At the same time, a Response Summary Sheet is provided on which to record a brief summary of the respondent's answers. Summary data on the present will provide a useful aid to questioning in subsequent stages (for example, when trying to establish whether or not the past role of workers in the division differed from their present role). The Response Summary Sheet should be completed for each successive stage of questioning.

In introducing the prompts, the format outlined below is suggested.]

Workers in different organisations (divisions) may do different things in addition to their immediate jobs. You have said that in this division at the present time, in addition to their immediate jobs, workers..... *[Paraphrase response to OQ2 above]*. Here are some other things that workers may do in addition to their immediate jobs. Indicate which, if any of these, workers in this division do at the present time. For each of the activities you have mentioned, rate the extent of worker involvement in the activity using the scale(s) provided.

P1. Do workers attend meetings?

Yes/No

If 'Yes':

What meetings?

[Ask the respondent to briefly describe each kind of meeting.]

What percentage of workers attend at the present time?

[Ask for each type of meeting.]

How often are the meetings held?

[Ask for each type of meeting.]

[Go on now to ask the respondent about worker involvement in meetings which (s)he has not mentioned above. A list of different types of meetings is presented below. Ask only about those meetings to which the respondent has not already referred. Establish whether or not workers attend these meetings and, if so, ask what percentage of workers attend and how often the meetings are held. Respondents who indicate from the outset that workers are not involved in any meetings (namely, a 'No' response above) may also be presented with these prompts.]

- (a) *Planning meetings* in which decisions are made about such things as the future directions of the division, forthcoming work schedules, forthcoming equipment needs, and training needs.
- (b) *Information meetings* (such as 'State of the Nation' meetings) in which workers are given information by those above them about such things as the current performance of the division, future directions of the division and anything else considered to be of relevance to the shop floor.
- (c) *Work Group meetings* in which workers collaborate with other divisional personnel (for example, technical people, union officials, or supervisors) to discuss ways in which the effectiveness of the division (or a particular section) might be enhanced (for example, in terms of quality of work produced, output, worker satisfaction etc.).
- (d) *Safety meetings*
- (e) *Union meetings*

P2. Do workers help other workers in their work if and when they need help?

Yes/No

If 'Yes':

What percentage of workers engage in this activity at the present time?

P3. Do workers record information about what they do which is given to those above them?

[For example, workers might record quality and productivity data.]

Yes/No

If 'Yes':

What percentage of workers engage in this activity at the present time?

How often is this information recorded?

- P4. Do workers attend training or professional development programmes?

[Need to specify that this does not include apprenticeship training; also need to specify that this does not include training that the worker does in his/her own time and that is not sponsored by the Company.]

Yes/No

If 'Yes':

What % of workers are involved in training at the present time?

How much time is spent in training?

[This could be evaluated in terms of hours per week/month; alternatively, the respondent might be able to specify the length of time that particular training courses run for.]

- P5. Do workers participate in social activities?

[A distinction is made here between formal and informal social activities. Formal social activities are those which are organised by the Company (that is, by an established committee or by some other elected body or individual). Some examples are: Christmas functions, sporting events, family days, and film evenings. Informal social activities are more impromptu. There is no committee or individual formally responsible for their organisation. Some examples of informal social activities are: drinks after work, card games or other leisure activities in work breaks, and celebrations of employee birthdays, engagements etc.]

If the respondent mentions more than one activity in either category, it is not necessary for him/her to rate the frequency of worker involvement in each activity separately. Rather, the respondent should provide an overall estimate of how often (weekly, monthly, annually) workers are involved in activities in that category.]

Formal

Yes/No

If 'Yes':

What % of workers participate in these activities at the present time?

How often are they held?

Do staff also attend?

Yes/No

Informal

Yes/No

If 'Yes':

What % of workers participate in these activities at the present time?

How often are they held?

Do staff also attend?

Yes/No

- P6. When they are at work, do workers talk to their supervisors either about work, or about social things?

[It should be specified here that this does not include worker-supervisor interactions that are part of formally organised meetings.]

Yes/No

If 'Yes':

What % of workers do this?

How often do workers do this?

What % of these interactions are supervisor-initiated compared to worker-initiated?

What % of these interactions are negative and concerned with problems?

What % of these interactions are neutral and concerned with problems?

What % of these interactions are concerned with information giving?

What % of these interactions are positive and concerned with praise for achievements?

What % of these interactions are concerned with personal/social issues?

THE PAST CONTEXT

Open-ended questions

OQ1. Main duties

- (a) What were the *main* duties of workers in this division in the past? Were they the same as, or different from, the main duties of workers in this division at the present time?

[If the respondent asks what is meant by the 'past', point out that it can either be during the time that (s)he has been with the division, or before that. For some respondents, it may be the case that the 'past' extends further back than their year of commencement with the division, or even the Company.]

Same/Different/Don't know

If 'Different':

In what way were the main duties of workers different in the past?

If 'Same':

How long have the main duties of workers remained the same?

For as long as I have been here/Like this before I started

If 'Like this before I started':

For how long?

How do you know about this?

- (b) How did workers carry out their main duties in this division in the past? Were the methods used the same as, or different from, current methods?

Same/Different/Don't know

If 'Different':

In what way were past methods of doing the job different from current methods?

If 'Same':

How long have the methods of doing the job been the same?

For as long as I have been here/Like this before I started

If 'Like this before I started':

For how long?

How do you know about this?

[Ask the remaining questions for each change that the respondent mentions in response to OQ1(a) and OQ1(b) above.]

When did the change first become apparent?

More than 20 years ago

Between 10 and 20 years ago

Between 5 and 10 years ago

Less than five years ago

Were you there?

Yes/No

If 'No':

How do you know about the change?

To what do you attribute the change?

OQ2. Other activities

- (a) Apart from their immediate job was there anything else that workers did in this division in the past, that was different from what workers do at the present time?

Same/Different/Don't know

If 'Different':

In what way were the other activities of workers different in the past?

Prompts

[Use the Response Summary Sheet as an aid to questioning here. Refer first to the respondent's unprompted response to OQ2 in the 'Present Context' (if the response to this question is 'no other activities' proceed straight to the 'Prompts' section.) Establish whether or not things were different in the past with respect to these activities (this activity). Then ask about each of the activities in the 'Prompts' section which have not yet been discussed in relation to the past context. The suggested format for questioning is outlined below.]

You have said that, at the present time, in addition to doing their immediate job workers in this division *[Paraphrase response to OQ2. in the 'Present Context', and then go on to do the same for each of the prompts.]* Do you think that this was any different in the past?

Same/Different/Don't know

If 'Different':

In what way was it different?

[Ask the following questions for each of the changes (whether unprompted or prompted) that the respondent mentions in this section.]

When did the change first become apparent?

- More than 20 years ago
- Between 10 and 20 years ago
- Between 5 and 10 years ago
- Less than five years ago

Were you there?

Yes/No

If 'No':

How do you know about the change?

To what do you attribute the change?

[If, in the 'Present Context', the respondent has described one or more 'other' activities which workers do at the present time, but goes on in this section to indicate that worker involvement in these activities (this activity) was the same in the past as it is at present, then go on to ask the following questions. As above, these questions are designed to find out whether the respondent has a sense of the past which extends back further than the year in which (s)he commenced work with the division, or the Company.]

If 'Same':

How long has the involvement of workers in these activities (this activity) been the same?

For as long as I have been here/Like this before I started

If 'Like this before I started':

For how long?

How do you know about this?

THE FUTURE CONTEXT

Open-ended questions

OQ1. Main duties

- (a) In the future do you think that the *main* duties (that is, the duties comprising the actual job) of workers in this division will be the same as, or different from, the main duties of workers in this division at the present time?

Same/Different/Don't know

If 'Different':

In what way will the *main* duties of workers be different in the future?

If 'Same':

For how long do you think that the *main* duties of workers in this division will continue to be the same as they are at present?

- (b) In the future, do you think that the methods used by workers to do the job will be the same as, or different from, current methods?

Different/Same/Don't know

If 'Different':

In what way will the methods used by workers to do the job be different in the future?

If 'Same':

For how long do you think that the methods used by workers to do the job will continue to be the same?

[Ask the remaining questions for each change that the respondent mentions in response to OQ1(a) and OQ1(b) above.]

When do you think the change will occur?

Within the next six months

Within the next year

Within the next 2 years

Within the next 5 years

More than 5 years away

Why do you think the change will occur?

Do you think that the change you anticipate is a good thing, is it desirable?

Please explain.

OQ2. Other activities

- (a) In this division in the future, do you think that the things that workers do in addition to their immediate jobs, will be different from the things that they do at the present time?

Same/Different/Don't know

If 'Different':

In what way will the *other* activities of workers be different in the future?

Prompts

[Use the Response Summary Sheet as an aid to questioning here. Refer first to the respondent's unprompted response to OQ2 in the 'Present Context' (if the response to this question is 'no other activities' proceed straight to the 'Prompts' section). Establish whether or not the respondent thinks that things will be different in the future with respect to these activities (this activity). Then ask about each of the remaining activities in the 'Prompts' section which have not yet been discussed in relation to the future context. The suggested format for questioning is outlined below.]

You have said that, at the present time, in addition to doing their immediate job workers in this division..... *[Paraphrase response to OQ2 in the 'Present Context', and then go on to do the same for each of the prompts.]* Do you think that this will be different in the future?

Same/Different/Don't know

If 'Different':

In what way will it be different in the future?

[Ask the following questions for each of the changes (whether unprompted or prompted) that the respondent mentions in this section.]

When do you think the change will occur?

- Within the next six months
- Within the next year
- Within the next 2 years
- Within the next 5 years
- More than 5 years away

Why do you think the change will occur?

Do you think that the change you anticipate is a good thing, is it desirable?

[If, in the 'Present Context', the respondent has described one or more 'other' activities which workers do at the present time, but goes on in this section to indicate that worker involvement in these activities (this activity) will be the same in the future as it is at present, then go on to ask the following question. As above, this question is designed to find out what the respondent's notion of the future is, and how far beyond the present it extends.]

If 'Same':

For how long do you think that the involvement of workers in these *other* activities (this other activity) will continue to be the same as it is at present?

THE OTHER CONTEXT

Open-ended questions

[The aim of the first question in this section (OQ1) is to establish the familiarity of the respondent with the role of workers in other organisations.]

OQ1. Are you aware of what workers in other organisations do?

Yes/No

If 'Yes':

For each organisation with which you are familiar, indicate the source of your knowledge about the organisation. Indicate 'self' if you have personal experience of the organisation, 'other' if you have heard about it from friends or acquaintances who have worked there, and 'media' if you have read about it in newspapers or heard about it on radio or TV.

[The second and third questions in this section (OQ2 and OQ3) are asked in relation to the organisation about which the respondent has the most experience. OQ2 is asked only if the organisation is similar to the one in which (s)he currently works. Note that the respondent is not given any prompting in this section.]

OQ2. Main duties

How do workers in..... [*name of other organisation, or alternative identifier*] carry out their main duties? Are the methods that they use the same as, or different from, the methods used by workers in this organisation?

Same/Different/Don't know

If 'Different':

In what way are they different?

OQ3. Other activities

Are the things that workers in..... [*name of other organisation or alternative identifier*] do in addition to their immediate job different from the things that workers in this organisation do in addition to their immediate job?

Same/Different/Don't know

If 'Different':

In what way are they different?

THE IDEAL CONTEXT

Open-ended questions

OQ1. Main duties

If you were running a division like this one, would you make any changes to the *main* duties of workers (that is, the duties which comprise the actual job), in terms of what these duties are and/or how they are carried out? Please explain your response.

OQ2. Other activities

If you were running an organisation like this one, what sorts of things do you think workers *should* do in addition to their immediate jobs? Please explain your response.

Prompts

[Use the Response Summary Sheet as an aid to questioning here. Refer first to the respondent's unprompted response to OQ2 in the 'Present Context' (if the response to this question is 'no other activities' proceed straight to the 'Prompts' section). Establish whether or not the respondent thinks that worker involvement in these activities (this activity) should change or remain the same. Then ask about each of the remaining activities in the 'Prompts' section which have not yet been discussed in relation to the ideal context. The suggested format for questioning is outlined below.]

You have said that, at the present time, in addition to doing their immediate job, workers in this division..... [*Paraphrase response to OQ2 in the 'Present Context', and then go on to do the same for each of the prompts.*] If you were running a division like this one, would you make any changes to the involvement of workers in this activity? Please explain your response.

PART B: CHARACTERISTICS OF 'GOOD' WORKERS

THE PRESENT CONTEXT

Open-ended question (OQ)

[This following OQ asks about the characteristics of a 'good' worker from the organisation's perspective, that is, from the perspective of power-holders in the organisation. The question is not concerned with the respondent's personal views about what the characteristics of 'good' workers should be, this information being sought in the final section on the 'Ideal Context'. While it is acknowledged that personal and organisational ideologies with respect to what makes a 'good' worker might be the same, it is important that the respondent understands that, in this question, (s)he is being asked to comment on the latter. It may be necessary to include a 'don't know' response option, for respondents who seem unsure of what a 'good' worker is from the organisation's perspective.]

Different organisations (divisions) can have different ideas about what makes a 'good' worker. Think about the workers in your division at the present time who are generally regarded by those above them (that is, by their managers and supervisors) as being 'good' workers. Why are these workers thought of by those above them as 'good' workers?

Prompts (P)

[The purpose of the prompts is the same here as it is in Part A, namely, to jog the respondent's memory so that the characteristics of 'good' workers not referred to spontaneously in response to the initial open question (perhaps because they are taken-for-granted), can be brought into consciousness and articulated by the respondent. In this way, a more complete picture of the characteristics of 'good' workers (as defined by the division at the present time) is obtained. In introducing the prompts, the format outlined below is suggested. Do not present those prompts which the respondent has made reference to previously in response to the open-ended question.]

Different organisations (divisions) can have different ideas about what makes a 'good' worker. You have said that in your division at the present time, workers who are thought of as 'good' workers by those above them (that is, by their managers and supervisors) are workers who..... [*Paraphrase response to OQ*]. Here are some other characteristics of workers which may or may not be important in determining whether a worker in your division at the present time is thought of as 'good' worker by those above him/her. Think about each characteristic. Is it 'very important', 'moderately important', 'slightly important', or 'not important' in determining whether a worker is thought of as a 'good' worker? Perhaps the characteristic is 'disapproved of' so that, if a worker shows this characteristic, (s)he might even be thought of as a 'bad' worker? Let's start with 'initiative'. In order to be thought of as a 'good' worker by those above him/her, how important is it for a worker in this division at the present time to 'show initiative on the job'?

[Present each of the prompts in turn, prefacing each with the words: 'In order to be thought of as a 'good' worker by those above him/her, how important is it for a worker in this division at the present time to....?'. This will help to keep the exercise focussed

by reminding respondents that they are required to evaluate the characteristic in terms of its importance to the division, and not in terms of its importance with respect to their own personal values and beliefs. Most characteristics are rated on a five-point scale: 'very important', 'moderately important', 'slightly important', 'not important', 'disapproved of'. However, in two cases, an additional response category, 'no opportunity', is included to accommodate the possibility that, due to structural properties of the division, workers may have no opportunity to exhibit a particular characteristic (behaviour, attitude etc.). As indicated in Part A, respondents should not be discouraged from qualifying the ratings that they provide since it is often a qualifying comment that casts new light onto what a rating actually means. At the same time, however, the interviewer should be skilled in helping the respondent to 'get to the point' relatively quickly so that the next prompt can be presented.]

- P1. Show initiative on the job.
 Very important
 Moderately important
 Slightly important
 Not important
 Disapproved of
- P2. Do as (s)he is told and follow instructions exactly.
 Very important
 Moderately important
 Slightly important
 Not important
 Disapproved of
- P3. Come up with ideas for how to improve things which are discussed with his/her supervisor.
 Very important
 Moderately important
 Slightly important
 Not important
 Disapproved of
- P4. Plan out his/her own work and set his/her own goals.
 Very important
 Moderately important
 Slightly important
 Not important
 Disapproved of
 No opportunity
- P5. Consistently produce high quality work.
 Very important
 Moderately important
 Slightly important
 Not important
 Disapproved of

- P6. Maintain a high output of work.
Very important
Moderately important
Slightly important
Not important
Disapproved of
- P7. Be prepared to question existing ways of doing things and suggest alternatives.
Very important
Moderately important
Slightly important
Not important
Disapproved of
- P8. Spend time helping other workers in their work.
Very important
Moderately important
Slightly important
Not important
Disapproved of
- P9. Actively seek to learn new skills (either in own time or Company time).
Very important
Moderately important
Slightly important
Not important
Disapproved of
- P10. Show that (s)he is committed to the organisation and its welfare.
Very important
Moderately important
Slightly important
Not important
Disapproved of
- P11. Be able to work well in a team.
Very important
Moderately important
Slightly important
Not important
Disapproved of
No opportunity

THE PAST CONTEXT

Open-ended question

In this division in the past, were the characteristics of daily paid workers who were thought of by their supervisors and managers as 'good' workers different from the characteristics of 'good' workers at the present time?

[If the respondent asks what is meant by the 'past', point out that it can either be during the time that (s)he has been with the division, or before that. For some respondents, it may be the case that the 'past' extends further back than their year of commencement with the division or the Company.]

Same/Different/Don't know

If 'Different':

In what way were the characteristics of 'good' workers different in the past?

Prompts

[Use the Response Summary Sheet as an aid to questioning in this section. Refer first to the respondent's unprompted response to the OQ in the 'Present Context'. Establish whether the characteristics of 'good' workers referred to spontaneously in response to this question (that is, referred to before any of the prompts were introduced) were different in the past. The suggested format for questioning is outlined below.]

You have said that in this division at the present time, in order to be thought of by his/her supervisors and managers as a 'good' worker, it is important for a worker to.....

[Present each of the characteristics mentioned in response to the OQ in the 'Present Context', in turn]. Do you think that this was any different in the past?

Same/Different/Don't know

If 'Different':

In what way was it different? In other words, was this characteristic more or less important in the past than it is at the present time?

[Go on now to ask the respondent about each of the characteristics listed in the 'Prompts' section which have not yet been discussed in relation to the past context. Obtain a rating of the importance of each of these characteristics in the past, using the same rating scales as previously. The suggested format for questioning is outlined below.]

You have said that in this division at the present time, it is..... *[Remind the respondent of his/her 'importance' rating]* for a worker to..... *[Present each of the prompts in turn]* in order to be thought of by those above him/her as a 'good' worker. Do you think that this was any different in the past? That is, was this particular quality more or less important in the past?

[The following questions ask about the timing, and perceived cause, of changes from the past to the present in the worker qualities which are valued in the division. In asking these questions, the changes that are mentioned by the respondent (whether spontaneously or in response to prompting) should be considered as a whole, rather than separately. It is possible (though unlikely) that the respondent will mention only one such change, in which case this instruction does not apply.]

When did the change(s) first become apparent?

- More than 20 years ago
- Between 10 and 20 years ago
- Between 5 and 10 years ago
- Less than five years ago

Were you there?

Yes/No

If 'No':

How do you know about the change(s)?

To what do you attribute the change(s)?

[If the respondent says 'Same' in response to both the OQ and the P above, ask the following questions which are designed to find out whether the respondent has a sense of the past which extends back further than the year in which (s)he commenced work with the division or the Company.]

If 'Same':

You have indicated that, in this division in the past, in order to be thought of as a 'good' worker by those above him/her, a worker had to do much the same as (s)he has to do at present. How long have the characteristics of 'good' workers been the same?

For as long as I have been here/Like this before I started

If 'Like this before I started':

For how long?

How do you know about this?

THE FUTURE CONTEXT

Open-ended question

In this division in the future, do you think that the characteristics of daily paid workers who are thought of as 'good' workers by those above them, will be different from the characteristics of 'good' workers at the present time?

Same/Different/Don't know

If 'Different':

In what way will the characteristics of 'good' workers be different in the future?

Prompts

[Use the Response Summary Sheet as an aid to questioning in this section. Refer first to the respondent's unprompted response to the OQ in the 'Present Context'. Establish whether or not the respondent thinks that the characteristics of 'good' workers referred to spontaneously in response to this question (that is, referred to before any of the prompts were introduced) will be different in the future. The suggested format for questioning is outlined below.]

You have said that in this division at the present time, in order to be thought of by his/her supervisors and managers as a 'good' worker, it is important for a worker to.....
[Present each of the characteristics mentioned in response to the OQ in the 'Present Context', in turn]. Do you think that this will be different in the future?

Same/Different/Don't know

If 'Different':

In what way do you think it will be different? In other words, in this division in the future, will this characteristic be more or less important than it is at the present time?

[Go on now to ask the respondent about each of the characteristics listed in the 'Prompts' section which have not yet been asked in relation to the future context. Obtain a rating of the predicted importance of each of these characteristics in the future, using the same rating scales as previously. The suggested format for questioning is outlined below.]

You have said that in this division at the present time, it is..... *[Remind the respondent of his/her 'importance' rating]* for a worker to..... *[Present each of the prompts in turn]* in order to be thought of by those above him/her as a 'good' worker. Do you think that this will be any different in the future. That is, will this particular quality be more or less important in the future?

[The following questions ask about the timing, and perceived cause, of anticipated changes in the worker qualities which are valued in the division. In asking these questions, the changes that are mentioned by the respondent (whether spontaneously or in response to prompting) should be considered as a whole, rather than separately. It is possible (though unlikely) that the respondent will mention only one such change, in which case this instruction does not apply.]

When do you think the change(s) will occur?

Within the next six months

Within the next year

Within the next 2 years

Within the next 5 years

More than 5 years away

Why do you think the change(s) will occur?

Do you think that the change(s) you anticipate is a good thing, is it desirable?

Please explain.

[If the respondent says 'Same' in response to both the OQ and the P above, ask the following question which is designed to find out what the respondent's notion of the future is. In other words, for how many years does the respondent think that things will continue as they are at present?]

If 'Same':

You have indicated that, in this division in the future, in order to be thought of by those above him/her as a 'good' worker, a worker will have to do pretty much the same as what (s)he does at the present time. For how long do you think that the characteristics of 'good' workers in this organisation will continue to be the same as they are at present?

THE OTHER CONTEXT

Open-ended questions

[The aim of the first question in this section (OQ1) is to establish the familiarity of the respondent with the role of workers in other organisations.]

OQ1. Are you aware of the worker characteristics that are considered to be important in other organisations?

Yes/No

If 'Yes':

For each organisation with which you are familiar, indicate the source of your knowledge about the organisation. Indicate 'self' if you have personal experience of the organisation, 'other' if you have heard about it from friends or acquaintances who have worked there, and 'media' if you have read about it in newspapers or heard about it on radio or TV.

[The second question in this section (OQ2) is asked in relation to the organisation about which the respondent has the most experience. Note that the respondent is not given any prompting in this section.]

OQ2. Are the characteristics of 'good' workers in..... *[name of other organisation, or alternative identifier]* different from the characteristics of 'good' workers in this organisation at the present time?

Same/Different/Don't know

If 'Different':

In what way are they different?

THE IDEAL CONTEXT

Open-ended question

If you were running a division like this one, what sorts of characteristics (attitudes, behaviours etc.) would you consider it important for daily paid workers to have? In other words, what sorts of things would a daily paid worker have to do for you to think that (s)he was a 'good' worker? Please explain your response.

Prompts

[Use the Response Summary Sheet as an aid to questioning here. Refer first to the respondent's unprompted response to the OQ in the 'Present Context'. Using the same rating scales as previously, ask the respondent to rate the importance, to him/her personally, of each of the characteristics of 'good' workers referred to spontaneously in response to this question (that is, referred to before any of the prompts were introduced). The suggested format for questioning is outlined below.]

You have said that in this division at the present time, in order to be thought of by his/her supervisors and managers as a 'good' worker, it is important for a worker to..... *[Paraphrase response to the OQ in the 'Present Context']*. If you were running a division like this one, how important would it be to you that daily paid workers..... *[Present each of the characteristics mentioned in response to the OQ in the 'Present Context', in turn.]*

[Go on now to ask the respondent about each of the characteristics listed in the 'Prompts' section which have not yet been asked in relation to the ideal context. Using the same rating scales as previously, ask the respondent to rate the importance, to him/her personally, of each of these characteristics. The suggested format for questioning is outlined below.]

You have said that in this division at the present time, it is..... *[Remind the respondent of his/her 'importance' rating]* for a worker to..... *[Present each of the prompts in turn]* in order to be thought of by those above him/her as a 'good' worker. If you were running a division like this one, how important would it be to you that daily paid workers..... *[Present each of the prompts in turn]*.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR PART B

1. What percentage of daily paid workers in this division at the present time do you consider to be 'good' workers?
2. What would need to be done to make the remaining workers 'good' workers?

3. Was the percentage of 'good' workers in this division in the past different from the percentage of 'good' workers in this division at the present time?

Same/Different/Don't know

If 'Different':

What was the percentage of 'good' workers in this organisation in the past?

When did this change first become apparent?

More than 20 years ago

Between 10 and 20 years ago

Between 5 and 10 years ago

Less than 5 years ago

Were you there?

Yes/No

If 'No':

How do you know about this change?

To what do you attribute this change?

APPENDIX C2

Study III: Response Summary Sheet

STUDY III INTERVIEW

THE ROLE OF WORKERS

PART A: DUTIES / ACTIVITIES

RESPONSE SUMMARY SHEET

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

FUTURE	
<p>(a) What Same / Different / Don't Know</p> <p> <u>Same:</u> For how long same</p> <p> Why</p> <p> </p> <p> <u>Different:</u> In Future</p> <p> When Why</p> <p> Desirable Yes / No/ DK</p>	<p>OTHER ORGANISATIONS</p> <p>OQ1. Aware Y / N</p> <p> Self:</p> <p> Other:</p> <p> Media:</p> <p>OQ2. <u>Main Duties</u></p> <p> Same / Different / DK</p> <p> In Other Organisation(s)</p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p>OQ3. <u>Other Activities</u></p> <p> Same / Different / DK</p> <p> In Other Organisation(s)</p> <p> </p> <p> </p>
<p>(b) How Same / Different / Don't Know</p> <p> <u>Same:</u> For how long same</p> <p> Why</p> <p> </p> <p> <u>Different:</u> In Future</p> <p> When Why</p> <p> Desirable Yes / No/ DK</p>	<p>IDEAL</p> <p>OQ1. <u>Main Duties</u></p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p>OQ2. <u>Other Activities</u></p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p>
<p>Same / Different / Don't Know</p> <p>-----</p> <p><u>Same</u></p> <p>For how long same</p> <p>Why same</p> <p>-----</p> <p><u>Difference 1.</u></p> <p>In Future</p> <p> When Why</p> <p> Desirable Yes / No/ DK ...</p> <p>-----</p> <p><u>Difference 2.</u></p> <p>In Future</p> <p> When Why</p> <p> Desirable Yes / No/ DK ...</p> <p>-----</p> <p><u>Difference 3.</u></p> <p>In Future</p> <p> When Why</p> <p> Desirable Yes / No/ DK ...</p>	

PROMPTS (P)

PRESENT	PAST
P1. Attend meeting? Yes / No / DK	Same / Different / DK
(a) Planning Yes / No / DK % of workers who attend How often	Same / Different / DK In Past (more/less/none) When change How long same Why
(b) Information Yes / No / DK % of workers who attend How often	Same / Different / DK In Past (more/less/none) When change How long same Why
(c) Work Group Yes / No / DK % of workers who attend How often	Same / Different / DK In Past (more/less/none) When change How long same Why
(d) Safety Yes / No / DK % of workers who attend How often	Same / Different / DK In Past (more/less/none) When change How long same Why
(e) Union Yes / No / DK % of workers who attend How often	Same / Different / DK In Past (more/less/none) When change How long same Why
(f) Other 2 Yes / No / DK % of workers who attend How often	Same / Different / DK In Past (more/less/none) When change How long same Why
(g) Other 2 Yes / No / DK % of workers who attend How often	Same / Different / DK In Past (more/less/none) When change How long same Why

PROMPTS

FUTURE	IDEAL
Yes / No / DK	Same / Different / DK
Same / Different / DK In Future (more/less/none) When (Yr) Why Desirable Y / N	Same / Different / DK In 'Ideal' (more/less/none) Why
Same / Different / DK In Future (more/less/none) When (Yr) Why Desirable Y / N	Same / Different / DK In 'Ideal' (more/less/none) Why
Same / Different / DK In Future (more/less/none) When (Yr) Why Desirable Y / N	Same / Different / DK In 'Ideal' (more/less/none) Why
Same / Different / DK In Future (more/less/none) When (Yr) Why Desirable Y / N	Same / Different / DK In 'Ideal' (more/less/none) Why
Same / Different / DK In Future (more/less/none) When (Yr) Why Desirable Y / N	Same / Different / DK In 'Ideal' (more/less/none) Why
Same / Different / DK In Future (more/less/none) When (Yr) Why Desirable Y / N	Same / Different / DK In 'Ideal' (more/less/none) Why
Same / Different / DK In Future (more/less/none) When (Yr) Why Desirable Y / N	Same / Different / DK In 'Ideal' (more/less/none) Why

PROMPTS

PRESENT	PAST
<p>P2. <u>Help Other workers?</u></p> <p>(a) General Yes / No / DK % Who help When change</p>	<p>Same / Different / DK In Past (more/less/none) How long same Why</p>
<p>(b) Newcomers Yes / No / DK % Who help When change</p>	<p>Same / Different / DK In Past (more/less/none) How long same Why</p>
<p>(c) Apprentices Yes / No / DK % Who help When change</p>	<p>Same / Different / DK In Past (more/less/none) How long same Why</p>
<p>(d) Existing Workers Yes / No / DK % Who help When change</p>	<p>Same / Different / DK In Past (more/less/none) How long same Why</p>
<p>P3. <u>Record work-related information?</u></p> <p>Yes / No / DK % of worker who do this How often</p>	<p>Same / Different / DK In Past (more/less/none) When change How long same Why</p>
<p>P4. <u>Attend training?</u></p> <p>Yes / No / DK % of workers involved Hours per year</p>	<p>Same / Different / DK In Past (more/less/none) When change How long same Why</p>
<p>P5. <u>Social Activities?</u></p> <p>(a) Formal Yes / No / DK % of workers who participate How often Do staff attend? Yes / No / DK</p>	<p>Same / Different / DK In Past (more/less/none) When change How long same Why</p>

PROMPTS

FUTURE	IDEAL
<p>Same/ Different / DK In Future (more/less/none) When (Yr) Why Desirable Y/N</p>	<p>Same / Different / DK In 'Ideal' (more/less/none) Why</p>
<p>Same/ Different / DK In Future (more/less/none) When (Yr) Why Desirable Y/N</p>	<p>Same / Different / DK In 'Ideal' (more/less/none) Why</p>
<p>Same/ Different / DK In Future (more/less/none) When (Yr) Why Desirable Y/N</p>	<p>Same / Different / DK In 'Ideal' (more/less/none) Why</p>
<p>Same/ Different / DK In Future (more/less/none) When (Yr) Why Desirable Y/N</p>	<p>Same / Different / DK In 'Ideal' (more/less/none) Why</p>
<p>Same/ Different / DK In Future (more/less/none) When (Yr) Why Desirable Y/N</p>	<p>Same / Different / DK In 'Ideal' (more/less/none) Why</p>
<p>Same/ Different / DK In Future (more/less/none) When (Yr) Why Desirable Y/N</p>	<p>Same / Different / DK In 'Ideal' (more/less/none) Why</p>
<p>Same/ Different / DK In Future (more/less/none) When (Yr) Why Desirable Y/N</p>	<p>Same / Different / DK In 'Ideal' (more/less/none) Why</p>

PROMPTS

PRESENT	PAST
<p>P5. <u>Social Activities?</u> cont'd</p> <p>(b) Informal Yes / No / DK</p> <p> % of workers who participate</p> <p> How often</p> <p> Do staff attend? Yes / No / DK</p>	<p> Same / Different / DK</p> <p>In Past (more/less/none)</p> <p>When change How long same</p> <p>Why</p>
<p>P6. <u>Talk to Supervisors?</u></p> <p> Yes / No / DK</p> <p> % of workers who do this</p> <p> How often</p> <p> (% daily % weekly % monthly)</p> <p> % supervisor-initiated</p> <p> % worker-initiated</p> <p> % problems neutral</p> <p> % problems negative</p> <p> % positive</p> <p> % information</p> <p> % personal/social</p>	<p> Same / Different / DK</p> <p>In Past (more/less/none)</p> <p>When change How long same</p> <p>Why</p>

PROMPTS

FUTURE	IDEAL
<p style="text-align: center;">Same / Different / DK</p> <p>In Future (more/less/none) When (Yr)</p> <p>Why</p> <p>Desirable Y / N</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Same / Different / DK</p> <p>In 'Ideal' (more/less/none)</p> <p>Why</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Same / Different / DK</p> <p>In Future (more/less/none) When (Yr)</p> <p>Why</p> <p>Desirable Y / N</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Same / Different / DK</p> <p>In 'Ideal' (more/less/none)</p> <p>Why</p>

STUDY III INTERVIEW

THE ROLE OF WORKERS

PART B: CHARACTERISTICS OF 'GOOD' WORKERS

RESPONSE SUMMARY SHEET

PRESENT	PAST
<p>OQ. Think about the workers in your division at the present time who are generally regarded by those above them as 'good' workers. Why are these workers thought of by those above them as 'good' workers</p>	<p>OQ Same / Different / DK</p> <p><u>Different:</u> In the past</p>
<p>Ch.1.</p>	<p>Ch.1. Same / Different / DK</p> <p><u>Different:</u> In the past</p>
<p>Ch.2.</p>	<p>Ch.2. Same / Different / DK</p> <p><u>Different:</u> In the past</p>
<p>Ch.3.</p>	<p>Ch.3. Same / Different / DK</p> <p><u>Different:</u> In the past</p>
<p>P In order to be thought of as a 'good' worker by those above him/her, how important is it for a worker in this division at the present time to:</p>	<p>...how important was it for a worker in this division in the past to:</p>
<p>P1. Show initiative on the job?</p> <p>Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of</p>	<p>Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of</p>
<p>P2. Do as (s)he is told and follow instructions exactly?</p> <p>Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of</p>	<p>Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of</p>
<p>P3. Come up with ideas for how to improve things which are discussed with his/her supervisors</p> <p>Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of</p>	<p>Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of</p>
<p>P4. Plan out his/her own work and set his/her own goals</p> <p>Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of</p>	<p>Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of</p>

OQ Open Question; P Prompt

FUTURE

IDEAL

OQ.

Same / Different / DK

OQ

Same / Different / DK

Different:

In the past

Different:

In the past

P

Ch.1. Same / Different / DK

Different:

In the past

Ch.1. Same / Different / DK

Different:

In the past

Ch.2. Same / Different / DK

Different:

In the past

Ch.2. Same / Different / DK

Different:

In the past

Ch.3. Same / Different / DK

Different:

In the past

Ch.3. Same / Different / DK

Different:

In the past

...how important was it for a worker in this division in the past to:

If you were running a division like this one, how important would it be to you for a worker to:

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

PRESENT

PAST

P5. Consistently produce high quality work?

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

P6. Maintain a high output of work?

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

P7. Be prepared to question existing ways of doing things and suggest alternatives?

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

P8. Spend time helping other workers in their work?

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

P9. Actively seek to learn new skills (in own time or Company time)?

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

P10. Show that (s)he is committed to the organisation and its welfare

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

P11. Be able to work well in a team?

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

Very Impt Mod Impt Slightly Impt Not Impt Disapproved of

Different:

Year change How long same

Why

Same:

As long as I have been here

Like this before I started

For how long

FUTURE					IDEAL				
Very Impt	Mod Impt	Slightly Impt	Not Impt	Disapproved of	Very Impt	Mod Impt	Slightly Impt	Not Impt	Disapproved of
Very Impt	Mod Impt	Slightly Impt	Not Impt	Disapproved of	Very Impt	Mod Impt	Slightly Impt	Not Impt	Disapproved of
Very Impt	Mod Impt	Slightly Impt	Not Impt	Disapproved of	Very Impt	Mod Impt	Slightly Impt	Not Impt	Disapproved of
Very Impt	Mod Impt	Slightly Impt	Not Impt	Disapproved of	Very Impt	Mod Impt	Slightly Impt	Not Impt	Disapproved of
Very Impt	Mod Impt	Slightly Impt	Not Impt	Disapproved of	Very Impt	Mod Impt	Slightly Impt	Not Impt	Disapproved of
Very Impt	Mod Impt	Slightly Impt	Not Impt	Disapproved of	Very Impt	Mod Impt	Slightly Impt	Not Impt	Disapproved of
Very Impt	Mod Impt	Slightly Impt	Not Impt	Disapproved of	Very Impt	Mod Impt	Slightly Impt	Not Impt	Disapproved of
Very Impt	Mod Impt	Slightly Impt	Not Impt	Disapproved of	Very Impt	Mod Impt	Slightly Impt	Not Impt	Disapproved of
<u>Different:</u> When Why Desirable Yes / No / DK					Percentage of 'good' workers P1. What % 'good' workers at present time P2. How to make remaining % 'good' workers P3. What % 'good' workers in the past				
<u>Same:</u> For how long									

OTHER ORGANISATIONS

OQ1. Aware Y / N

Self

Other:

Media:

OQ2. Same / Different / DK

In Different:

In Other Organisation(s)

.....

.....

.....

APPENDIX D1

Study III: Analysis of prompt data for the past context

'Prompted' activity categories: Similarities between the two divisions

(i) Planning Meetings

Table 6.3 shows that, for the tooling division, there were only two respondents (17% of the sample) who reported a change, from the past to the present, in the involvement of the workers in this division in planning meetings. The figure was only marginally greater for the production division. As indicated in Table 6.4, there were six respondents from this division (32% of the sample) who made reference to some change over time in the involvement of the workers in this division in planning meetings. In fact, 'planning meetings' constituted one of the least well-represented 'prompted' activity categories (in terms of the total number of respondents reporting a change from the past to the present) for both divisions. Of the two respondents from the tooling division who reported a change, one indicated that there was less worker involvement in this activity in the past, and the other that there was more worker involvement in this activity in the past. For the production division, four respondents reported less worker involvement in the activity in the past, and two reported more.

Of course, the above findings are meaningful only when considered in the context of present time data. Again, it can be seen from the tables that a minority of respondents from both divisions (one from the tooling division and four from the production division) reported that, at the present time, workers in their respective divisions attended planning meetings. However, as indicated by additional data, estimates of the frequency with which these meetings were held as well as the numbers of workers typically in attendance at the meetings were, in all cases, very low. Moreover, data from the production division suggested that, to the extent that planning meetings were held at all, they were section-specific, involving a small number of the workers from one section of the division only. Taken as a whole, the findings on 'planning meetings' reported here point to the general conclusion that, in neither division, had there ever been much involvement of shop floor workers in meetings in which planning decisions were made.

(ii) Union Meetings

It can be seen from Tables 6.3 and 6.4, respectively, that four respondents from the tooling division (33%) and six respondents from the production division (32%) reported a change, from the past to the present, in the involvement of the workers in their division in union meetings. Two of the tooling division respondents reported that there was more worker involvement in this activity in the past and two that there was less. In comparison, production division respondents were somewhat more consistent with respect to the direction of the changes that they reported. Five of the six respondents from this division who reported a change indicated that, in the past, there was more involvement of the workers in their division in union meetings. The remaining one respondent indicated that, in the past, there was less worker involvement in this activity.

With respect to data pertaining to the present context, it can be seen from Tables 6.3 and 6.4 that a majority of respondents from both divisions (11/12 from the tooling division, or 92%, and 15/19 from the production division, or 79%) reported that, at the present time, workers in their respective divisions attended union meetings. Additional data indicated that most of these references were to 'stop work' meetings involving all shop floor employees, rather than to other forms of industrial relations activity (such as meetings of shop stewards, or meetings between management and shop stewards). These additional data also suggested that, with respect to respondents' experience of the current context, union or 'stop work' meetings appear to have been held somewhat more frequently in the tooling division than in the production division. For the majority of respondents from the tooling division, estimates of the frequency of occurrence of these meetings ranged from one meeting per month to one meeting every six months. In contrast, for the majority of respondents from the production division, these estimates ranged from one meeting annually to one meeting every two years. This difference between the two divisions most likely reflects the relative instability of the tooling division in the years immediately preceding the commencement of this research. As indicated, the division had been undergoing a major restructure which culminated in its substantial downsizing and eventual relocation to the site of the company's main manufacturing and assembly operations.

Overall, the findings on 'union meetings' reported here indicate that, while the two divisions are similar in that, for each division, a minority of respondents only reported a change over time in the involvement of workers in this activity, they are different

(although perhaps only marginally so) in that they do not share the same context of change. Compared with their counterparts in the production division, the context of change for tooling division respondents (with respect to this particular worker activity) has been one of greater industrial unrest in recent years reflected in, among other things, the more frequent involvement of the workers in this division in 'stop work' meetings.

(iii) Information Meetings

In contrast to the two activity categories above, for which changes from the past to the present were reported by a minority of respondents only from each division, changes over time in the activity category 'Information Meetings' were reported by half of the respondents from the tooling division and thirteen of the respondents from the production division (68% of this group). In fact, this activity category constituted one of the best-represented 'prompted' activity categories for each division (taking into account both prompted and unprompted responses). It can be seen from Tables 6.3 and 6.4 that, with one exception (for the production division), all of the references to a change, over time, in the involvement of workers in this activity were made in response to prompting, rather than in response to the open questions. It was also the case that, for both divisions, the majority of these references were to a change towards the increased involvement of workers in information meetings at the present time, from either no involvement of workers in this activity in the past or less involvement than that currently reported.

While the findings regarding respondents' current experience of worker involvement in information meetings have been reported previously (see Section 5.3.1 and Section 5.3.2), it is necessary, in the context of the present discussion, to remind the reader briefly of these findings. It will be recalled that, while respondents from both divisions indicated that all of the workers in their respective divisions typically attended information meetings, these meetings were reportedly held more frequently in the production division (every one to three months) than in the tooling division (once or twice annually). It will also be recalled that, while the meetings had reportedly been introduced into each division relatively recently (within the last five years), the divisions differed with respect to respondents' attributions about why the meetings had been introduced. In the tooling division, a common perception was that the meetings had been introduced to quash increasing rumours about the possible closure of the division. In the production division, respondents' attributions tended to be more positive, with

references by some to a link between the introduction of information meetings and the arrival of a new divisional manager who was perceived to be more committed than previous divisional managers to the involvement of shop floor workers in divisional activities.

The conclusion suggested by these findings is similar to that made above in relation to 'Union Meetings'. In other words, while the divisions appear to be fairly similar with respect to the change data reported (a majority of respondents from both divisions reported a change, from the past to the present, in worker involvement in information meetings and most of these respondents agreed on the direction of this change), the divisions can be seen to differ with respect to the context within which respondents' evaluations of change were made. For tooling division respondents the context was one in which information meetings were held relatively infrequently and perceived somewhat negatively, in the sense that their introduction was seen as a reactive measure by management to deal with rumours. For respondents from the production division, the context was one of more frequent involvement of workers in this activity, with somewhat more positive attributions regarding the introduction of information meetings.

(iv) Social Activities

As above for 'Information Meetings', a majority of respondents from both divisions (9/12, or 75%, of respondents from the tooling division and 12/19, or 63%, of respondents from the production division) reported changes over time in the involvement of divisional workers in social activities. In terms of the numbers of respondents reporting a change (either spontaneously or in response to prompting), it can be seen that this activity category was the best-represented 'prompted' activity category for the tooling division and was among the best-represented 'prompted' activity categories for the production division. Of the nine respondents from the tooling division who reported a change, it can be seen from Table 6.3 that three provided this information spontaneously, that is, in response to the open question, with the remaining six providing it in response to prompting. Table 6.4 shows that, for the production division, two of the twelve respondents who reported a change did so spontaneously, while the remaining ten required specific prompting to bring this information to the surface.

While the two divisions can be seen to be similar with respect to the numbers of respondents reporting a change, from the past to the present, in the involvement of

divisional workers in social activities, a consideration of the direction of the changes reported suggests that this is where the similarity between the two divisions may end. While there was good agreement among tooling division respondents about the direction of the changes reported, no such consistency emerged in the data from the production division. Specifically, of the nine respondents from the tooling division who reported a change, eight (89%) indicated that, in the past, there was more involvement of the workers in this division in social activities than there was at the present time. In contrast, of the twelve respondents from the production division who reported a change, six indicated that, in the past, there was more involvement of the workers in this division in social activities and six indicated that there was less.

It is worth pointing out that the findings for the tooling division were entirely consistent with qualitative data, from this study and from Study I, which suggested that, in the past, the division supported a strong 'family' culture, one manifestation of which was the active involvement of divisional members in a wide range of company and divisional social activities. In the present interview, respondents from the tooling division differed quite markedly from one another in their estimates of when they had first become aware of a decline in the involvement of divisional workers in social activities. Their estimates ranged from 1972 to 1987. All of these respondents reported that, up until the time when they first became aware of a change, the level of social activity in the division had remained the same for a period that extended back at least as far as their start date with the company. For two respondents this period reportedly extended back to when the division first commenced operations in the early 1940's, some twenty years before either respondent had started work with the division. This latter finding provides a nice illustration of the effects of socialisation whereby the way in which organisation members interpret their experience of organisational life can be influenced by knowledge (in this case about the past) which they have acquired indirectly through a process of social interaction (in this case with older employees who, in all likelihood, have long since retired). The significance of the 'time-line' data reported here is that they suggest that the positive social climate which had reportedly existed in the tooling division in the past appears to have had a relatively long history. It is interesting that two of the three respondents who reported no change in this activity category from the past to the present were the shortest-serving respondents in the sample (each having only six years' service at the time of the interview).

Of the eight respondents from the tooling division who reported that worker involvement in social activities had decreased over the years, six attributed the change to the general decline of the division (both financially and in terms of the size of the workforce). Other less common attributions regarding this change included: societal changes whereby people today were seen to be more self-interested and have more responsibilities outside of work than people in the past (two respondents); the increasing age of employees and their associated lack of interest in work-related social activities (one respondent); and a change in work shifts such that the tooling division no longer had the same shift arrangements as other divisions in the company, making it difficult for members of the tooling division to participate in some of the company-wide social activities (one respondent).

As indicated above, the experience of production division respondents with respect to changes in this activity category seemed to be more varied than that reported by their counterparts in the tooling division, with six respondents reporting more worker involvement in social activities in the past and six reporting less. It was also the case that, while their estimates of when the reported changes had occurred spanned a relatively narrow range, there was considerable variability among production division respondents in their attributions about why the changes had occurred. For those respondents who reported more worker involvement in social activities in the past, estimates of when the change towards less worker involvement in such activities had occurred ranged from 1987 to 1990. This change was variously attributed to: the impact of increased production demands in the division (two respondents); the financial decline of the company as a whole (one respondent); a management change (one respondent); a change in recruitment practices whereby older, 'more mature' workers were hired, who by implication were less inclined to engage in work-related social activities (one respondent); and declining worker interest (one respondent). For respondents who reported less worker involvement in social activities in the past, estimates of when the change toward an increased level of worker involvement in such activities had occurred ranged from 1986 to 1990. This change was variously attributed to: an individual worker initiative (three respondents); a management change (two respondents); a move on the part of management to 'boost worker morale' (one respondent); a decline in the pressure associated with the start-up of the division (one

respondent); and a change in nature of workers such that workers were now perceived to be more friendly and 'less bitchy' than they were in the past (one respondent).

As with the activity categories discussed previously, it is important to consider the above results in the context of respondents' accounts of their *present* experience with respect to the involvement of divisional workers in work-related social activities. As indicated in Tables 6.3 and 6.4, all of the respondents from each division reported (either spontaneously or in response to prompting) that, at the present time, there was some involvement of the workers in their division in work-related social activities. In this sense, then, the divisions can be seen to be roughly similar. Unfortunately, the data pertaining to the extent of worker involvement in social activities (specifically, how often social activities were held and what percentage of workers participated) proved to be too difficult to summarise for the purpose of the present analysis. This was because respondents from both divisions typically referred to a number of different types of social activities each, with some of these activities being specific to the respondent's particular section or work group and others being more general and involving the division or the company as a whole.

While a detailed comparison of the two divisions in terms of the extent of workers' current involvement in social activities was not attempted, an analysis of the types of social activities mentioned by respondents from each division was carried out. A major similarity that emerged between the two divisions was that a majority of respondents from both divisions made reference to the involvement of divisional workers in company-sponsored film evenings. In fact, for both divisions, this was the most commonly referred to social activity. It was mentioned by ten respondents from the tooling division (83% of the sample) and thirteen respondents from the production division (68% of the sample). There were also some important differences that emerged between the two divisions. For example, for the tooling division, the next most commonly mentioned social activities (after company-sponsored film evenings) were retirement functions and the annual company picnic, with each of these activities being mentioned by five respondents (42%). While a similar percentage of respondents from the production division made reference to the company annual picnic, references to retirement functions by respondents from this division were less common. Only two respondents from the production division (10%) made reference to the involvement of workers from this division in retirement functions. This difference between the

divisions can be explained by the higher average age of tooling division employees (with more employees from this division approaching retirement age) and also the changing circumstances of the division (with the downsizing of the division being achieved largely through the acceptance, particularly by older employees, of 'retrenchment packages').

For the production division the next most commonly mentioned social activities, after company-sponsored film evenings, were the company Christmas party (a family event attended primarily by employees with young children) and an annual barbeque which was a recent production division initiative. Twelve respondents from the production division (63%) mentioned the company Christmas party compared with only four (33%) from the tooling division. As above, this difference between the divisions is consistent with the younger average age of production division employees (with employees from this division therefore more likely than their counterparts in the tooling division to have young families). Almost half of the production division respondents (9/19 or 47%) made reference to the involvement of workers from this division in the annual divisional barbeque. This finding was somewhat surprising given that, at the time of the present study, this event had been running for two years only (ie. only two such barbeques had ever been held). That this event had some special significance for divisional employees was suggested by respondents' descriptions of the event in which they emphasised that, at the barbeque, divisional management were responsible for cooking the food and serving employees. The significance of the event, then, was that on this one day of the year, management gave up their traditional role and became 'servants of the workers'.

The results reported above suggest the following general conclusions. First, in terms of the current involvement of divisional workers in work-related social activities, it can be concluded that the divisions were roughly equivalent. Workers from each division reportedly participated in a range of different social activities (some of which were common to both divisions and others of which were more specific to one or other of the divisions, and which seemed to reflect particular organisational or member characteristics unique to the division). Second, the divisions also appeared to be similar in the sense that both had experienced some changes, over time, in the involvement of divisional workers in social activities. However, as indicated, an examination of these changes revealed some important differences between the divisions, which brings us to

the third and final concluding point. Compared with the production division, the tooling division appeared to have a much more definable history with respect to the involvement of divisional workers in social activities. There was evidence to suggest that, in its 'heyday', there was a very positive and active social climate in the division which, it appeared, constituted part of the division's overall identity. For the production division, no such coherent picture of the past (with respect to this activity category) emerged.

'Prompted' activity categories: (Major) Differences between the two divisions

(i) Group Problem-Solving

As can be seen from Table 6.4, 'Group Problem-Solving' constituted the best represented 'prompted' activity category for the production division, with sixteen respondents from this division (84%) reporting some change, from the past to the present, in the involvement of workers in this division in group problem-solving activities. Interestingly, six of these respondents provided this information spontaneously, with the remaining ten providing it in response to prompting. This finding contrasts markedly with that for the tooling division. 'Group Problem-Solving' was the least well-represented 'prompted' activity category for this division, with no respondent making reference to any changes over time in worker involvement in activities associated with this category. Furthermore, there were only two respondents from this division who reported any current involvement of the workers in this division in group problem-solving activities. In both cases the references were to problem-solving meetings which were held, on a fairly informal basis, in one section of the division only. Estimates of the frequency with which these meetings were held ranged from one per week to one per month. It was also indicated that the meetings were attended primarily by supervisory staff from the section, with one or two shop-floor workers occasionally being invited to attend. On the basis of these findings, it can be concluded that, in the tooling division, there has been little involvement over time of the workers in this division in group problem-solving activities.

Of those respondents from the production division who reported a change from the past to the present, all but one indicated that, in the past, there was more involvement of workers in the division in group problem-solving activities than there was at the present time. In fact, the present experience of respondents from the production division with respect to this activity category was not unlike that of their counterparts in the tooling

division. A minority of respondents only (5/19 or 26%) reported that workers in the division were currently involved in group problem-solving activities. Additional data from these respondents indicated the level of worker involvement in these activities was typically very low, with estimates of the percentage of workers involved ranging from 3% to 5%. It was also the case that there was little agreement among these respondents about the frequency of occurrence of these activities. Estimates of how often divisional members engaged in some form of formal group problem-solving ranged from six weekly to, in one case, the respondent recalling only one incidence of group problem-solving in the last eight years. The point can be made that this variability probably reflects both differences in respondents' definitions of what constituted group problem-solving activities and also sectional differences in both the occurrence and particular form which such activities took.

In their accounts of their past experiences of group problem-solving, respondents from the production division reported that, in the past, the workers in this division had had more involvement in both team meetings and AQAP [Automotive Quality Assurance Programme] meetings. The former constituted an integral part of a wider programme known as the 'Team Concept' which, as indicated previously, was a management innovation which was borrowed from Japan and which was adopted, more or less on a trial basis, by the production division when it first commenced operations in the early 1980's. Team meetings typically involved only shop floor workers and a team leader (usually a leading hand). In all, there were eleven respondents from the production division who made reference to the greater involvement of the workers in this division in the past in team meetings (representing 73% of the total number of respondents reporting more worker involvement in group problem-solving activities in the past). Estimates from these respondents of when the Team Concept ended ranged from 1984 to 1988, indicating that the life span of the innovation was somewhere between three and six years.

Various reasons were given for why the Team Concept was abandoned. Six respondents highlighted evidence which had accumulated over time to suggest that the innovation was simply not working. For example, it had become apparent that the objectives of the 'team concept' were not being achieved, there had been a marked decline in productivity and efficiency since the introduction of team practices, and there was a perception that the innovation was too radical given the interdependence of the

production division on other divisions within the company. There was also a perception, reported by five respondents, that workers lacked the skills, knowledge, and experience required for the successful implementation of team practices. Other less common attributions that were made concerning the decision to abandon the Team Concept included poor worker attitudes to the innovation (three respondents), the arrival of a new divisional manager who had different ideas about how the plant should operate (two respondents), and poor management attitudes to the innovation leading to a failure on the part of management to follow-up many of the ideas generated by work teams (one respondent). These attributions, along with other more general qualitative data on the Team Concept, give the overriding impression that, for members at all levels of the production division hierarchy, the experience of this innovation was a predominantly negative one.

With respect to AQAP meetings, there were nine respondents from the production division who reported more worker involvement in these meetings in the past (representing 60% of the total number of respondents from this division who reported more worker involvement in group problem-solving activities in the past). These meetings were clearly a more recent innovation than the team meetings described above, with estimates of when they were introduced ranging from 1987 to 1990. It can also be argued that, compared with team meetings, the influence of AQAP meetings was more localised. These meetings were section-specific and typically attended by a minority of workers only from each of the sections involved. Estimates of when these meetings ended ranged from 1990 to 1991. Production demands, associated with the introduction of a new model vehicle, was the most commonly cited reason for why the meetings were discontinued. This attribution was made by five respondents. Three respondents cited worker lack of interest in the meetings as an additional contributing factor. Other less common attributions included: inadequate leadership in the meetings (one respondent); a failure on the part of management to follow up on the ideas generated in the meetings (one respondent); the temporary secondment of the divisional manager to work on a senior management project (one respondent); the removal of overtime payment for attendance at these meetings (one respondent); and problems associated with the practical application of the knowledge and ideas generated in the meetings (one respondent).

Of the nine respondents who made reference to AQAP meetings, there were seven who made negative comments about the activity. AQAP was variously criticised on the grounds that: there was a lack of worker interest in, and participation in, the activity (three respondents); it was initiated to impress “the big boss” (one respondent); it was a “fad” (two respondents); it was a top down initiative, the implementation of which was handled poorly (one respondent); there was a failure to follow-up on participants’ ideas (one respondent); there was a lack of leadership in AQAP meetings (one respondent); ‘wages’ employees were not paid overtime to participate whereas engineers were (one respondent); the initiative conflicted with the existing ‘suggestion’ scheme (one respondent); and the meetings were too time consuming and interfered with one’s own job (two respondents). Interestingly, the AQAP initiative seemed to suffer from some of the same problems as the earlier Team Concept initiative. This suggests that AQAP may have been implemented with little reference to the ‘lessons of the past’. It may also be that respondents’ negative evaluations of AQAP were a kind of ‘carry over’ from their negative experiences of the past Team Concept (five of the seven respondents above had had past experience of the Team Concept).

In conclusion, the above results indicate that the production division and the tooling division differed markedly with respect to respondents’ experiences of changes over time in the involvement of divisional workers in group problem-solving activities. Whereas tooling division respondents reported that the workers in their division had never had much involvement in such activities, their counterparts in the production division pointed to the quite considerable past involvement of the workers in their division in group problem-solving (particularly in the form of team meetings). The point can be made that if one had had access to present-time data only, this difference between the two divisions would have remained obscured. As indicated, data pertaining to the present context showed the two divisions to be roughly equivalent, with workers in both divisions reportedly having only limited current involvement in group problem-solving activities.

(ii) Training

Since a detailed analysis of the data on training (pertaining to both the present and past contexts) has been provided previously (see Section 5.2.2, pp. 294-299), some of the information presented in this section will be in summary form only. It can be seen from Tables 6.3 and 6.4 that the two divisions differed with respect to the numbers of

respondents reporting a change (either spontaneously or in response to prompting), from the past to the present, in the involvement of the workers in their division in training activities. All respondents from the tooling division made reference to such a change, compared with only 42% (8/19) of respondents from the production division.

It will be recalled from the previous section that the overall picture that emerged from the tooling division data on training (specifically, data pertaining to changes over time in the involvement of divisional workers in training) was more uniform than it was for the production division. For example, there was more agreement among tooling division respondents than production division respondents about the direction of the changes reported. All of the tooling division respondents reported that, in the past, workers in their division had had either no access to training, or less than that which was currently made available. Of the eight respondents from the production division who reported a change from the past the present, there were six (four of whom were supervisory staff) who indicated a similar change to that reported by their counterparts in the tooling division (that is, that there was either less training for divisional workers in the past or none at all). One respondent from the production division reported more training for workers in the past and one respondent made reference to a qualitative change in training whereby there was more emphasis, in the past, on the provision of training externally rather than internally.

There was also evidence that, as a group, respondents from the tooling division had shared a relatively long history of little or no involvement of divisional workers in training and development activities (beyond those which constituted the initial apprenticeship training of workers who had gained their trade qualifications with the division). The reported change towards an increased emphasis on training for workers was a relatively recent event in the history of the division. Estimates of when the change had occurred ranged from two to eight years ago, with all respondents reporting that, prior to this change, workers in the division had had little or no involvement in training activities for a period which extended back to at least the respondent's start date with the division (which in all cases, either coincided with, or was very close to, the respondent's start date with the company). Two respondents reported that this period extended beyond their respective start dates with the company to the year in which the division was first set-up. The point was made previously that references such as this to a past that the respondents themselves could not have experienced (because they had not

yet joined the organisation) provides good evidence to support the view (expressed by Bate (1984), Schein (1985), and others) that cultural patterns of thinking can be socially transmitted, in this case, by older employees to newcomers.

It is interesting to note that all of the six production division respondents who reported that, in the past, there was either no involvement of the workers in their division in training or less than that which was currently available, were longer serving employees. In fact, there was a statistically significant difference between the average length of tenure of these respondents and the average length of tenure of the eleven respondents from the production division who reported no change, from the past to the present, in the involvement of divisional workers in training activities (for the former mean = 19.17 yrs, sd = 5.15; for the latter mean = 10.36 years, sd = 5.82; $t = 2.91$ significant at the .05 level). With respect to their length of tenure, then, these six respondents can be seen to be more similar to their counterparts in the tooling division (the average length of tenure of tooling division respondents was 25.7 years) than to other respondents from their own division. It is also interesting to note that estimates by these six respondents of when the change towards an increased emphasis on worker involvement in training had occurred ranged from one to four years ago. As for the tooling division, then, the change can be seen to have been a relatively recent one, and one that presumably could have been experienced by almost all of the respondents from the production division (there were only three respondents from this division who had four or less years of service with the division). This finding provides some support for the view that the way in which an individual (or group of individuals) interprets his/her experience will be influenced, at least in part, by the historical context of that experience. In other words, with respect to the above findings, it can be argued that an individual (or group of individuals) who has experienced a prolonged period in which there has been no significant change in what workers do (in this case, regarding their involvement in training activities) will be more likely to perceive a shift in the emphasis placed on certain worker activities than an individual (or group of individuals) whose history of no change is considerably shorter.

The above view is further supported by an analysis of the data pertaining to the *current* involvement of divisional workers in training. As indicated in Tables 6.3 and 6.4, all of the respondents from the tooling division, compared with two-thirds of the respondents from the production division, reported some current involvement of

divisional workers in training. This finding was contrary to what I had expected given my experience as a researcher in both divisions. My impression was that the production division was the more obviously committed of the two divisions to human resource development initiatives (including the provision of training). Hence, I had expected that, if the divisions were to differ, the difference would be in the direction of more respondents from the production division than the tooling division reporting some current involvement of the workers in their division in training. That the reverse of this was found possibly reflects differences between the divisions in the historical context of respondents' experiences with respect to this worker activity. As suggested above, given their relatively long history of no change in worker involvement in training, tooling division respondents may have been more sensitive to (and hence more likely to regard as a specific change) any shift in the emphasis placed upon worker involvement in this activity than their counterparts in the production division. In other words, it may have been that the yardstick against which respondents from each division were evaluating their current experience with respect to this worker activity was different.

That tooling division respondents appeared to have a more definable shared history than production division respondents with respect to their experience of worker involvement in training was also suggested by the results of an analysis of attributional data. As indicated previously, there was good agreement among tooling division respondents about why the change towards an increased emphasis on training for workers had occurred, with a majority of respondents from this division attributing the change to external factors, in particular, the recent initiative, by the unions and government, to multi-skill workers through Award Restructuring. Attributions by production division respondents were more varied and included references to the aforementioned Award Restructuring initiative, as well as references to more positive attitudes, on the part of management, to the development of the division's human resources.

Finally, the same point can be made here as above for group problem-solving, namely, that if the focus of questioning had been on the present context of respondents' experiences only, it would have been difficult to infer any differences between the two divisions. As indicated above, data pertaining to the present context showed that all of the tooling division respondents and a majority (two-thirds) of the production division respondents reported that the workers in their respective divisions were currently

involved in training. Furthermore, it was found that there was considerable variation, among respondents from both divisions, in their estimates of the extent and frequency of the current involvement of divisional workers in training¹¹⁷. On the basis of additional insights provided by the historical data, however, it can be concluded that the two divisions do differ with respect to this activity category. As indicated, compared with their counterparts in the production division, tooling division respondents constituted a more homogeneous group with respect to their experience of worker involvement in training. There was good agreement among respondents from this division that there had been a change, in recent years, towards an increased emphasis on training for workers and that this change had been motivated primarily by external factors, in particular, pressure from the unions and the government to multi-skill workers. It was also found that tooling division respondents shared a relatively long history of no change in the status of this worker activity, a factor which it can be argued may well have led to the development of the more consensual views that were found to exist among the members of this group.

'Prompted' activity categories: (Minor) Differences between the two divisions

There were four 'prompted' activity categories for which minor differences between the two divisions (in terms of the numbers of respondents from each who reported a change, from the past to the present, in the involvement of divisional workers in activities associated with each of these categories) were indicated. The four categories were: (i) Safety Meetings; (ii) Help Other Workers; (iii) Record Work-Related Information; and (iv) Worker-Supervisor Communication. The findings for each are discussed below.

(i) Safety Meetings

It can be seen from Tables 6.3 and 6.4 that just over one half (7/12 or 58%) of the respondents from the tooling division, compared with approximately one-third (6/19 or 32%) of the respondents from the production division, reported a change, from the past to the present, in the involvement of divisional workers in safety meetings. It can also be seen that, with respect to their present experience, a majority of respondents from both divisions (11/12 or 92% from the tooling division and 14/19 or 74% from the

¹¹⁷ The point was made previously that the variability in these estimates probably reflected (i) the non-uniform nature of training activities for individual workers (the type and duration of training activities differed for different workers) and (ii) the apparent status of training in both divisions as a peripheral, rather than a central, worker activity.

production division) reported some involvement of divisional workers in activities associated with this activity category.

Before these findings are discussed further, the point should be made that the present time data reported here are, in fact, corrected data. Interestingly, the two divisions appeared to differ with respect to respondents' definitions of what constituted a 'safety meeting'. For example, in response to the question 'At the present time, do the workers in your division attend safety meetings?' all but two of the respondents from the production division initially responded 'no'. However, a majority of these respondents subsequently made reference either to regular safety talks, presented by section supervisors, or to safety handouts which documented safety information and which were distributed to workers for them to read and sign. Estimates of the extent and frequency of worker involvement in each of these 'activities' indicated that almost all workers participated (with attendance at safety talks reportedly being mandatory) and that, on average, safety talks were given, or safety handouts distributed, every one to three months.

In contrast to the findings for the production division, all but three of the respondents from the tooling division responded 'yes' to the question 'At the present time, do the workers in your division attend safety meetings?' However, it became apparent from their subsequent elaborations that these respondents were referring to the involvement of the workers in their division in safety talks. In other words, in contrast to their counterparts in the production division, tooling division respondents appeared to have incorporated into their definition of 'safety meeting' the activity described as a safety talk. Moreover, of the three respondents from this division who initially responded 'no' to the question, two subsequently went on to refer to the involvement of divisional workers in safety talks.

The point should also be made here that, in addition to safety talks and safety handouts, reference was also made, by respondents from both divisions, to meetings of safety representatives. Reports indicated that there were only two to three workers elected as safety representatives from each division and that meetings of these workers were held every one to three months. Respondents who made reference to these meetings typically did so in addition to mentioning either safety talks or safety handouts. However, there was one respondent from each division whose response to the question included a single reference to this form of worker involvement in safety.

Given the differences, both between and within divisions, in respondents' definitions of 'Safety Meetings', it was decided to 'correct' the data so that any response to the question about the current involvement of divisional workers in safety meetings, which included a reference to one or more of the three 'safety activities' described above, was subsequently treated as a 'yes' response (even if the initial response had been a 'no' response). Apart from facilitating a comparison of the two divisions in terms of respondents' *actual* experiences of the involvement of divisional workers in safety, this decision to 'correct' the data served to make meaningful the intra-individual comparison of present-time data with data pertaining to the other contextual domains (that is, the past, the anticipated future, the 'other', and the 'ideal'). Questioning in relation to these other contextual domains was typically preceded by a summary of what the respondent had said in response to questions about his/her present experience. In other words, if the respondent had indicated that, at the present time, the workers in his/her division did not attend safety meetings but that they did attend safety talks, (s)he would subsequently be asked whether or not the involvement of divisional workers in safety in the past was any different from what it was at the present time. The respondent would not be asked 'Did the workers in your division attend safety meetings in the past?'

It is interesting to speculate briefly on the methodological as well as the cultural implications of the above finding. With respect to the former, the existence of considerable variation in how respondents defined the subject of interest (in this case, 'safety meetings') raises questions about an important assumption underlying the use of questionnaire measures in social research, namely, that all respondents will interpret any given questionnaire item in the same way and, furthermore, that respondents' interpretations will be consistent with the interpretation intended by the researcher. The value of qualitative probing is that, by encouraging respondents to elaborate on, or clarify the meaning of their responses, interpretive differences of the kind highlighted above can be revealed and, as illustrated, this knowledge can significantly enhance one's understanding of the situation and the subjects under investigation. With respect to the latter, it might be argued that the apparently stricter criteria used by respondents from the production division in their definitions of what constituted a 'safety meeting' (as indicated, in contrast to their counterparts in the tooling division, production division respondents typically did not classify safety talks or safety handouts as 'safety meetings') may reflect a cultural difference between the two divisions. As noted

elsewhere, there was good evidence (from observational data and informal conversations with divisional personnel, as well as from the findings of these interviews) to indicate a growing trend in the production division towards the support of a more active role for divisional workers (indicated in the increasing involvement of the workers in this division in activities over and above those associated with direct production). One possible outcome of a transition of this kind, however gradual, may be to change the 'yardstick' against which organisation members evaluate various aspects of their experience so that, with respect to the present example, a 'meeting' for workers comes to be defined as an event in which workers are active participants (rather than simply passive recipients of information, as was reportedly the case with respect to safety talks and safety handouts). In the tooling division, there was little evidence to suggest that the role of workers was undergoing a transition of any significance. The finding that respondents from this division had a more inclusive definition of 'safety meetings' (which incorporated activities such as safety talks) is consistent with the idea that, compared with their counterparts in the production division, these respondents were evaluating their experience against a somewhat different 'yardstick'.

On the basis of the 'corrected' data pertaining to the present, it can be concluded that, in terms of respondents' *actual* experience of worker involvement in safety, the two divisions can be seen to be roughly equivalent. As indicated, it was also the case that the difference between the divisions, in terms of the numbers of respondents reporting a change, from the past to the present, in worker involvement in safety, was relatively minor, with just over one half of the respondents from the tooling division and approximately one third of the production division respondents reporting a change. Four of the seven tooling division respondents who reported a change indicated that, in the past, there was more involvement of the workers in this division in safety activities than there was at the present time. The remaining three respondents reported either less worker involvement in safety activities in the past or none at all. For the former, the decline in worker involvement in safety activities was reported to have occurred around 1989 and was attributed to the general decline of the division as well as, in the case of one respondent, to a perception that "management were getting slack on the job". For the latter, the increase in worker involvement in safety (in the form of safety talks and meetings of health and safety representatives) was reported to have occurred around 1985/86 and was attributed to the introduction, by the unions and the government, of

more stringent health and safety regulations with which the organisation was expected to comply.

Production division respondents were somewhat more consistent than their counterparts in the tooling division with respect to the direction of the change reported. Five of the six respondents from this division who reported a change indicated that, in the past, there was either no involvement of the workers in this division in safety activities or less than that which workers were experiencing at the present time. The change towards greater worker involvement in safety at the present time was reported to have occurred around 1988/89 and was associated with the introduction, by the government, of health and safety legislation as well as to the rising cost of compensation for work-related injuries. One respondent from the production division reported that there was more involvement of divisional workers in safety activities in the past. The recent decline, which was estimated to have occurred around 1988, was attributed to increasing production demands in the division.

On the basis of the above findings, the following general conclusions are suggested. First, in terms of respondents' present experience of worker involvement in safety activities, the two divisions appeared to be roughly equivalent. Second, while the divisions did differ with respect to the numbers of respondents reporting a change, from the past to the present, in the involvement of divisional workers in safety activities, as indicated, the difference was relatively minor with 58% of tooling division respondents reporting a change compared with 34% of production division respondents. Third, there was some evidence to suggest that, as a group, the production division respondents who reported a change were more consistent than their counterparts in the tooling division regarding the nature of the change reported (in terms of the direction of the change and the factors thought to precipitate it). And finally, an analysis of the present time data pertaining to this activity category highlighted an important interpretive difference between the two divisions whereby tooling division respondents could be seen to have a different and more inclusive definition of what constituted a 'safety meeting' than did their counterparts in the production division.

(ii) Help Other Workers

As shown in Tables 6.3 and 6.4 respectively, in response to prompting seventeen percent (2/12) of respondents from the tooling division compared with forty two percent of respondents (8/19) from the production division reported a change, from the past to

the present, in worker involvement in relation to the activity category 'Help Other Workers'. In this sense, then, the two divisions can be seen to differ although, as above for 'safety meetings', the difference is of a relatively small magnitude.

Again, these findings need to be considered in the context of findings pertaining to respondents' present experience. From data pertaining to the present which are summarised in Tables 6.3 and 6.4, it can be seen that a majority of respondents from both divisions (11/12 or 92% of tooling division respondents and 16/19 or 84% of production division respondents) answered 'yes' in response to the question 'At the *present* time, do the workers in your division help other workers if and when they need help?'. Additional data indicated that, for both divisions, there was considerable variability in respondents' estimates of the percentage of divisional workers perceived to give help to co-workers. For the tooling division, these estimates ranged from 5% to 100% (mean=64.82%; sd=35.87%; median=80%; 8/11 equal to or over 50%) and for the production division they ranged from 18% to 100% (mean=52.5%; sd=29.75%; median=50%; 9/16 equal to or over 50%). It is possible that this variability may reflect sectional and/or work task differences among respondents. For example, some respondents worked in, or were responsible for, sections in which the organisation of work constrained the extent to which workers could help one another (one such section was the moulding section in the production division where the majority of workers worked as individual machine operators). Hence, even though respondents were asked to provide a general estimate, that is, for their division as a whole, it is not inconceivable that, in some cases, the estimate given might have been influenced significantly by the respondent's personal (including section-specific) experience of the helpfulness of workers toward one another. It is also possible that individual differences in the meaning that respondents attached to the activity 'helping other workers' might account for the variability in respondents' estimates of the percentage of workers who engaged in this activity. For example, based on her elaborations on the subject, it was clear that one respondent from the production division defined the activity in such a way as to attribute to it a kind of formal status, whereby 'helping other workers' involved experienced operators providing guidance and assistance to workers who were relative newcomers to the division. In contrast, there was evidence to suggest that other respondents from this division were referring to help of a more informal kind, whereby workers would simply 'lend a hand' to one another.

While the present time data summarised in Tables 6.3 and 6.4 support the conclusion that the two divisions were roughly equivalent in terms of respondents' experience of the current involvement of workers in 'helping other workers', some interesting differences between the divisions did emerge in an analysis of the thematic content of respondents' elaborations on the subject. Briefly, a common qualification of tooling division respondents was that there were situational/structural contingencies (of the kind described above) which influenced the extent to which workers could help one another in their work. A second common theme related to the perception, by some respondents, that it was inappropriate for workers (specifically qualified tradesmen) to provide one another with help (even though they could be observed to do so). Such behaviour, it was suggested, was legitimate only in the context of the superior-subordinate relationships defined by the chain of command. Thus, while it was appropriate for a tradesmen to help an apprentice, if the tradesmen himself needed help, he should consult his leading hand or immediate supervisor, and not a fellow tradesman. Finally, a number of respondents from this division made reference to individual worker characteristics which they believed influenced the helpfulness of workers towards one another. For example, it was noted that some workers (in the case of the tooling division, it will be recalled that the majority of workers were qualified tradesmen) seemed more intent than others on 'protecting their turf', in the sense of being reluctant to share their skills and knowledge with co-workers. Similarly, it was noted that some workers were reluctant to seek help from co-workers on the grounds that such behaviour could serve to undermine the image of competence which these individuals wished to project, or which they believed they were expected to project.

In contrast to the above, respondents from the production division emphasised the importance of interpersonal relationships in determining the helpfulness of the workers in this division towards one another. Thus, it was suggested that a worker would be unlikely to give help to a co-worker whom (s)he disliked or perceived as being lazy and seeking to avoid work (described by respondents as being a 'bludger'). Like their counterparts in the tooling division, production division respondents also made reference to the influence of individual worker characteristics. However, the most frequent reference in these data was to an attitude, reportedly not uncommon among the workers in this division (the majority of whom were production operators), that 'giving help' did not constitute a formal requirement of the job that one was paid to do. Thus,

workers with this attitude reportedly felt little obligation to help their peers, maintaining the view that they were “not paid to do someone else’s job as well as their own”.

The above finding that there existed a qualitative difference between the two divisions, in terms of how respondents talked about the activity of workers helping one another, lends further support to the argument in Section 5.3 that an analysis of qualitative data (in the form of respondents’ elaborations on, and qualifications of, their responses) can provide important insights into the meaning of quantitative data and that these insights can, in turn, be critical in informing one’s understanding of the culture being investigated.

As noted previously, the data pertaining to the past context suggested a difference between the two divisions, albeit one of a relatively small magnitude, in respondents’ experience of change, from the past to the present, in the involvement of divisional workers in the activity ‘Help Other Workers’. In fact, from Table 6.3, it can be seen that this activity category constituted one of the least well-represented activity categories for the tooling division (along with ‘Planning Meetings’ and ‘Record Work-Related Information’) in terms of the numbers of respondents reporting a change. Of the two respondents from this division who reported a change, one indicated that, in the past, workers were more helpful towards one another than they were at the present time. This respondent, a supervisor with twenty five years’ service with the company, reminisced about a “golden” past in which workers were closely united by what he called a “mateship bond”. He attributed the decline in worker helpfulness, which he estimated first became evident around 1978, to broad social changes resulting in, among other things, the tendency for people today to be more self-interested and more relentless in the pursuit of their own individual goals. The other respondent, a qualified tradesman with only six years’ service with the company, reflected on his own personal experience of being ostracised by his co-workers when he first commenced work with the organisation (he reported being treated as an “outsider” because he had gained his trade qualifications elsewhere) and not gaining their acceptance (and willingness to give him help) until several years later when he was promoted to the position of leading hand.

The experience of change with respect to this activity category appears to have been somewhat more pronounced for the production division. As indicated, forty two percent of the respondents from this division (8/19) reported a change, from the past to the present, in the helpfulness of divisional workers towards one another. Six of these

respondents indicated that, in the past, workers were more helpful towards one another than they were at the present time, and two indicated that, in the past, workers were less helpful. With respect to the former, estimates of when the change towards workers being less helpful towards one another had occurred ranged from 1987 to 1990. The main reasons given for the change included the increasing pressure of production in the division over recent years and a perception, by some respondents, that workers today were more self-interested than workers in the past. With respect to the latter, both respondents shared the view that the development of a more positive climate in the division, following on from a period of relative instability and uncertainty during the division's early 'start-up' years, had resulted in workers becoming more helpful towards one another in recent years. Both respondents also estimated that they first became aware of this change in 1988.

In summary, the above findings suggest the following general conclusions. First, with respect to respondents' experience of the present context, the two divisions were similar in that a majority of respondents from each reported that, at the present time, the workers in their division provided one another with help if and when they needed it. As noted, however, there was considerable variability among respondents from both divisions in their estimates of the percentage of workers who engaged in this activity. Furthermore, an analysis of the qualitative data highlighted some important differences between the divisions in terms of how respondents talked about this aspect of what workers did. Second, there was some evidence to suggest that the experience of change from the past to the present in relation to this worker activity was somewhat more pronounced for respondents from the production division. As indicated, the majority of respondents from this division who reported a change shared the view that increasing production pressures in the division and/or a change in the nature of workers towards more self-interested attitudes had led to a decrease, in recent years, in the willingness of workers to help one another.

(iii) Record Work-Related Information

Data pertaining to the past context which are summarised in Tables 6.3 and 6.4 show that the two divisions differed in terms of the numbers of respondents who reported a change, from the past to the present, in the involvement of divisional workers in recording work-related information. Seventeen percent of the respondents from the tooling division (2/12) reported a change compared with forty seven percent, almost

half, of the respondents from the production division (9/19). While this difference has been classified as a 'minor' difference for the purpose of the present discussion, attention is drawn to the fact that, in terms of percentage points, the difference exceeds that reported for each of the two previously discussed activity categories (ie. 'Safety Meetings' and 'Help Other Workers').

Data pertaining to the present context suggest quite a marked difference between the divisions in terms of respondents perceptions of the current involvement of divisional workers in this activity. One quarter of the respondents from the tooling division (3/12), compared with just over three quarters of the respondents from the production division (15/19 or 79%) reported that, at the present time, the workers in their division recorded work-related information. An analysis of additional data associated with these responses (including quantitative data in the form of respondents' estimates of the extent and frequency of worker involvement in this activity as well as qualitative data, in the form of elaborations on the topic and qualifications of the responses given) offers some interesting insights into the specific nature of this difference between the divisions.

In the tooling division, there was clearly very little current involvement of divisional workers in recording work-related information. A number of respondents pointed out that, to the extent that there was any requirement for recording, this was the responsibility either of the leading hand or the section supervisor. All three respondents from this division who reported some current involvement of workers in this activity were supervisory staff. In all cases, their responses reflected their personal and/or section specific experience with respect to this activity. One respondent indicated that, on occasions (perhaps once a month), he would ask the workers in his section to record information about a particular job that they were working on; a second respondent, the supervisor of a section which specialised in experimental/prototype work, indicated that some of the more conscientious workers in his area would, of their own initiative, sometimes record information about the particular method they had adopted for doing a job; and the third respondent indicated that in his section, namely, quality control the daily recording of conformance information constituted an integral part of the job function of his subordinates.

While a majority of production division respondents indicated that there was some current involvement of the workers in their division in recording work-related

information, estimates of *how many* workers engaged in this activity varied widely, ranging from 3% to 100% of workers (mean=35%, sd=35.77%, median=30%). The most likely explanation for this variation is that it reflects sectional differences in the involvement of workers in record-keeping activities (for example, all of the machine operators in the moulding section were required to keep daily records of production outcomes, such as scrap rates and machine downtime). As above for the activity category 'Help Other Workers', it seems that the estimates of some respondents were either biased by, or based directly upon, their section-specific experience and that, contrary to what was intended by the question, they were not indicative of the situation for the division as a whole. In contrast with these estimates, estimates of *how often* workers engaged in record-keeping activities were far less variable. Of the fifteen respondents from the production division who reported some current worker involvement in this activity, twelve provided frequency estimates ranging from "daily" to "twice weekly".

An analysis of the qualitative data associated with the above responses provided evidence to suggest that, for many of the workers in the production division, the recording of work-related information constituted an integral part of their job function. Furthermore, on the basis of these data, it appeared that the primary function served by this activity was a production control function and that any human relations gains, for example, in the form of enhanced worker motivation, were largely incidental, if realised at all. The conclusion that record-keeping served primarily a control function was supported first of all by data pertaining to the kinds of information that workers were required to record. Apart from the production outcomes mentioned above (that is, scrap rates and machine downtime), records were reportedly kept on production levels (such as, the number of units of a particular component that were produced), rework rates, the details of specific quality problems and the vital properties of various production materials (such as the viscosity of the paint used for spray painting car bumpers). The focus of recording was, therefore, very much on problems associated with production. There was no reference, by any respondent, to more positively focussed record-keeping activities (one example of which would be the recording of suggestions by workers for how various production outcomes might be improved). It was also the case that some recording was reportedly introduced as a temporary measure only, typically during the

initial 'problem' phase of the introduction of a new model vehicle, and with the aim of resolving a particular production problem that had arisen.

Attributional data provided a second source of evidence to support the conclusion that record-keeping activities primarily served a control function. As indicated above, there were nine respondents from the production division who reported a change, from the past to the present, in the involvement of divisional workers in the recording of work-related information. Of these, eight indicated that, in the past, divisional workers were either not involved in record-keeping at all, or that they were involved to a lesser extent than they were at the present time. Some of these respondents made reference to the fact that, in the past, the main responsibility for recording work-related information lay with a small group of clerical workers, hired specifically for this purpose. Estimates of when the change towards more record-keeping for workers had occurred ranged from 1987 to 1990 (with most of these respondents also reporting that their experience of less or no involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping extended back to 1982, the year in which the division commenced operations). Of particular significance in the context of the present discussion was the finding that respondents were unanimous in their perception that this change had been introduced primarily as a performance monitoring measure, the main aim of which was to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the division. These attributional data contained no reference, by any respondent, to the potential motivational function that could be served by making workers themselves responsible for recording data pertaining to their own (and, by association, their section's) work performance.

Qualitative data pertaining to what was actually done with the information that workers were required to record provided a third source of evidence to support the conclusion that record-keeping activities functioned primarily as a production control mechanism. First, the task of collating and analysing performance data, and then preparing graphic displays of the results, was assigned to supervisory staff rather than to the shop floor workers who were responsible for initially recording the data. One of the respondents, a supervisor, offered an explanation for why this was the case, first of all suggesting that there were no workers in his section who were capable of performing such a job, and then revising this opinion to acknowledge that some workers were, in fact, highly competent ("outside they run small businesses") and that the real problem

was the pressure of production which made it difficult for him to “spare [workers] off the line” in order that they could work on tasks of a less routine nature.

Interestingly, the view that production workers lacked ability was one that I had encountered previously in this division. A young computer programmer had been seconded to the division (from another organisation) to assist in the upgrading of the division’s information system. I asked this young man about the feasibility of installing a personal computer in each of the major sections of the division and making the workers in these sections responsible for the management of their own performance data. His response indicated that he was clearly against the idea. He cited excessive costs (including the cost of computers, training costs, and costs associated with lost production time), the limited ability of workers to learn to use computers, and the lack of interest of workers in engaging in activities of this kind as the main reasons for why such a change to existing work arrangements could not be successful¹¹⁸.

A second point, related to the above, is that there was some evidence (provided by both the interview and the diary data) to suggest that many workers paid little attention to the performance feedback which was displayed in their work area (in the form of graphs), and that formal discussions pertaining to this information (including its practical implications for production operators) were rare. A third and final point is that this performance feedback did not appear to be used, by supervisors or managers, as a source of potential rewards for workers. In other words, there was no evidence to suggest that, where positive production outcomes were indicated, workers were praised by their supervisors for their efforts and achievements. The interview data pertaining to this activity category contained only one reference to the human relations consequences of positive production outcomes being achieved. This respondent indicated that, in the event that high efficiencies were achieved in his area, the most that would happen would be that the supervisor of the section might get “a pat on the back”.

From the findings reported above, it is clear that there were marked differences between the divisions in terms of respondents’ current experience of the involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping activities. As indicated, the divisions were also found to differ in terms of respondents’ reported experience of changes, over time, with respect to this activity category. By way of a summary of the findings already reported for the production division: (i) almost half of the respondents from this division reported

¹¹⁸ This information was recorded as diary data.

a change, from the past to the present, in the involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping activities; (ii) all but one of these respondents indicated that the change was towards more worker involvement in record-keeping activities at the present time; (iii) this change had reportedly occurred relatively recently (with estimates ranging from 1987 to 1990) and; (iv) it was attributed to a recognition, on the part of divisional management, of the need to increase the production efficiency of the division. In contrast, the findings for the tooling division suggested that the experience of change for respondents from this division had been less pronounced. As indicated, there were only two respondents from this division who reported a change, from the past to the present, in the involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping activities. Both of these respondents were supervisory staff and both indicated that the change was towards more involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping activities at the present time. One respondent attributed the change, which he estimated to have occurred around 1986, to an increase in the amount of experimental/prototype work that his section had become engaged in, in recent years; the other attributed the change, estimated to have occurred around 1987, to a change in the attitude of supervisors towards workers, whereby supervisors today were perceived to show more respect for the opinions of workers than they did in the past (this response raised some questions about the respondent's understanding of the question that preceded it, namely, 'Why do you think that there has been a change [in the involvement of workers in recording work-related information]?')

When considered in the context of present-time data, the above findings concerning divisional differences in respondents' experience of changes over time in worker involvement in record-keeping activities, suggest the following general conclusions. First, there was evidence to suggest that the tooling division had had a relatively long history, persisting up until the present time, of little or no worker involvement in record-keeping activities. Second, in marked contrast to the findings for the tooling division, there was much more involvement of the workers in the production division in record keeping activities (although the actual level of involvement appeared to differ for different work sections). As indicated, however, this was a relatively recent phenomenon, with evidence to suggest that the past role of the workers in this division with respect to this activity category was not dissimilar from that of their counterparts in the tooling division (that is, minimal involvement only in recording work-related information). The third and final conclusion relates specifically to the change reported

by respondents from the production division. In the absence of qualitative data, one might be tempted to interpret this change (that is, towards more involvement of workers in record-keeping activities) as evidence of a transition towards a more 'active' role for the workers in this division. As indicated, however, there was good evidence to suggest that a common perception of the change was that it served the primary purpose of providing divisional management with more control over production outcomes in the division. One important implication of this finding for management is that, if the change was intended to serve a motivational, as well as a production control, function (through an increase in worker responsibility and accountability and, hence, a more 'active' role for workers), then it would appear that more effort needs to be directed towards ensuring the achievement of this objective.

(iv) Worker-Supervisor Communication

Before the findings associated with the activity category 'worker-supervisor communication' are discussed, the reader will perhaps benefit from a brief description of the specific 'prompt' questions which served to generate the data upon which these findings were based. The purpose of prompting in relation to this activity category was twofold, firstly to find out about the *amount* of 'informal' (in the sense of occurring outside of formal venues such as regular meetings) communication between divisional workers and their immediate supervision, and secondly, to find out about the *nature* of this communication. Given the format of questioning which was followed in this interview, the initial focus of prompting in relation to this activity category was on respondents' present experience. Specifically, respondents were first of all asked: 'When they are at work, do the workers [in your division at the present time] talk to their supervisors, either about work or about social things?' If the respondent answered 'yes' to this question, (s)he was then asked to estimate what percentage of divisional workers talked to their supervisors and how often, on average, these communication interactions took place. Clearly, these latter questions were designed to provide information about the *amount* of communication that took place between divisional workers and their immediate supervision. Respondents were then asked a series of questions designed to provide insights into the *nature* of worker-supervisor communications. Specifically, they were asked to estimate what proportion (as a percentage) of worker-supervisor communication was initiated by the supervisor and what proportion was initiated by the worker. Following this, they were asked to focus

exclusively on those communication interactions that were initiated by the supervisor and to estimate what proportion (again, as a percentage) of these interactions were concerned with (i) work-related problems; (ii) information dissemination and/or gathering; (iii) providing workers with praise for their achievements; and (iv) personal and/or social issues (for example, the supervisor greeting workers at the beginning of a work shift).

Questioning in relation to each of the other contextual domains of interest (namely, the past, the anticipated future, and the ideal) took the form of, first of all, presenting each respondent with a brief summary of the account (s)he had given of his/her experience of worker-supervisor communication at the present time (as reflected in the responses to the questions above), and then asking the respondent whether or not worker-supervisor communication had been different from this in the past, whether or not it was likely to be different in the anticipated future, and whether or not, in the respondent's opinion, it should be different. While it became evident, during the course of conducting the interview, that there were some methodological problems associated with the particular format of questioning adopted in relation to this activity category (an account of these problems is provided later in this section), some interesting data about worker-supervisor communications were nevertheless generated. As with the previous sections, the main focus of the discussion which follows is on those data pertaining to the historical context of respondents' experience, in this case, in relation to communications between workers and their immediate supervision.

From Tables 6.3 and 6.4, it can be seen that the two divisions differed in terms of the numbers of respondents reporting a change, from the past to the present, in some aspect of worker-supervisor communication. One-third of the respondents from the tooling division, compared with just over two-thirds of the respondents from the production division (13/19 or 68%), reported a change. While the magnitude of this difference between the divisions is such that, for the purpose of the present discussion, it has been classified as a relatively 'minor' difference, the same point can be made here as was made in relation to the activity category, 'Record Work-Related Information', namely, that the difference should not be regarded as a trivial one. In fact, in terms of percentage points, it represents the largest difference between the divisions reported for the four activity categories discussed in this section. Attention is also drawn to the finding that, of the thirteen respondents from the production division who reported a change, three

did so spontaneously, that is, in response to the initial open question rather than in response to specific prompting.

Before considering the specific changes described by respondents from each division, the point can be made that, in general, the references were to qualitative rather than to quantitative changes. In other words, rather than say that there was 'less' (or 'more') communication between workers and supervisors in the past, the respondents who reported a change typically described differences, between the past and the present, in some aspect of the nature of the relationship, and hence communications, between workers and supervisors (for example, supervisors in the past were perceived to be more authoritarian than they were at the present time, with workers holding them more in awe). This distinction between qualitative and quantitative changes will become more apparent in the findings reported below.

All four of the respondents from the tooling division who reported a change indicated that, in the past, the communication between workers and their immediate supervision was more distant than it was at the present time. Specifically, two respondents (one a supervisor and the other a 'wages' employee) made reference to the tougher and more dictatorial style of supervision in the past, along with the existence of clearly delineated status differences between supervisors and workers, such that workers would not dare to question their supervisors "for fear of dismissal"; another respondent (a supervisor) reported that workers in the past had more respect for their supervisors and held them more in awe than they did at the present time (interestingly, this respondent saw the change towards a smaller power distance between workers and supervisors as a negative thing); and a fourth respondent (also a supervisor) indicated that, in the past, there was less personal/social contact between workers and supervisors, such that a supervisor in the past would have been less likely than he would be at the present time to visit a sick worker in his home (the main reason being that such behaviour would reportedly have been interpreted, by the worker, as the supervisor "checking up" on the worker, rather than showing concern for him). The remaining eight respondents from this division (two-thirds of the sample) reported that there was no change from the past to the present in worker-supervisor communication.

Responses to subsequent questions which sought to establish a time frame for the difference data reported above provided some interesting insights into the effects of socialisation in this division. All four respondents who reported a change from the past

to the present (from more distant to less distant communication between workers and supervisors) indicated that they had first become aware of this change at some time during the 1970's. While three of these respondents were longer-serving employees (with tenure ranging from 25 to 40 years' service with the company), one respondent was a relative newcomer, with only six years' service with the company. The significance of this latter finding is that the change reported by this respondent had occurred prior to the respondent starting work with the company. Hence, the respondent was describing an aspect of the division's history which he had not experienced directly, but which he had heard about through socialisation with his longer-serving peers. These same socialisation effects were also indicated in estimates of how far back the history of the more distant worker-supervisor communication that was reported had extended. Two respondents made reference to a history that extended back to the year in which the division first commenced operations which, for one respondent, was some ten years prior to his own start date with the company and, for the other, was some fifteen years prior to his start date with the company.

Of the four respondents from the tooling division who reported a change, three shared the view that the trend towards what might be described as a reduction in the 'power-distance' (Hofstede, 1980) between workers and supervisors was the consequence of broader social changes (for example, an increased emphasis on individual rights institutionalised through government legislation such as equal opportunity legislation) which had influenced workers' expectations about how they should be managed at work. One of these respondents also suggested that, following on from the major retrenchments which took place in the division in the early 1970's (in which supervisory staff as well as shopfloor employees were made redundant), supervisors today had become more uncertain about the security of their positions and less confident about exercising the kind of authoritarian control that had characterised the supervisory role in the past. Attributional data were not available for the remaining respondent (who had indicated that, in the past, there was less personal/social contact between workers and supervisors).

As suggested above, compared with their counterparts in the tooling division, production division respondents, as a group, appeared to have had a somewhat more pronounced experience of change with respect to the activity category 'Worker-Supervisor Communication'. It was also the case that there was more variability among

production division respondents in their perceptions of the nature of the changes that were reported. Of the thirteen respondents from this division who reported a change, there were nine who indicated that worker-supervisor communication had been more distant in the past than it was at the present time. Specific references were made to supervisors being “stricter” and more “authoritarian” in the past; supervisors having had more of a “policing” role in the past; divisional communication following a rigid chain of command in the past; and workers in the past being “wary of” and “intimidated by” their supervisors. The remaining four respondents pointed to a trend, in recent years, towards more strained communication between workers and supervisors, whereby supervisors were seen to have become “tougher”, “more abrupt with workers”, and under more pressure “to get the [worker] that isn’t performing”.

It is interesting to speculate briefly on the possible reasons for the finding that, in the production division, there emerged these two quite different experiences of change with respect to this activity category. Contrary to what might be expected, the two groups of respondents reporting these different experiences did not differ markedly in terms of either their current position with the division, or their length of service with the organisation. Of the nine respondents who reported that worker-supervisor communication was more distant in the past, four were supervisory staff and five were ‘wages’ employees. Six of these nine respondents were longer serving employees, with fourteen or more years of service with the company, and the remaining three were shorter-serving employee with eight, five and four years of service with the company respectively. Of the four respondents who reported a change from more “easy-going” communication between workers and supervisors in the past towards a growing tension in worker-supervisor communication at the present time, three were shopfloor employees and one was a supervisor. Two of these respondents were longer-serving employees, with seventeen and nineteen years of service with the company respectively, and two were shorter-serving employees, with five and nine years of service with the company respectively.

Sectional differences between these two groups of respondents may account, in part, for the different change experiences that were reported. The former comprised respondents from a range of different sections in the division (specifically, the moulding, assembly, paint, and quality assurance sections), whereas the latter included three respondents (out of four) who were responsible for some aspect of materials

management in the division. It might be argued that the materials handling function (which, among other things, involved maintaining the supply of parts to operatives responsible for direct production) was more acutely affected, than other areas of divisional operations, by fluctuating production demands (an increase in production pressure being cited as the main reason for the change reported by these respondents).

Some further clues are provided by an analysis of the data pertaining to the history, in time, of these different change experiences. For respondents in the former group, estimates of when the change (that is, towards more open communication between workers and supervisors) had occurred ranged from 1980 to 1988. For the latter, the change reported (that is, towards a growing tension in worker-supervisor communication) appears to have been more recent, with estimates of when it had occurred ranging from 1987 to 1990. It was also the case that respondents in the former group tended to use their experience with the company as a whole as the yardstick against which to evaluate changes in worker-supervisor communication, whereas respondents in the latter group tended to use their experience with the division only. In other words, when asked to estimate how far back the 'past' (as described in relation to worker-supervisor communication) had extended, respondents in the former group tended to cite their start date with the company (which for the longer serving employees did not coincide with, and was well before, their start date with the division), whereas respondents in the latter group (two of whom were longer-serving employees) tended to cite their start date with the division.

The finding that what constitutes the 'significant past' for one organisation member may be different from what constitutes the 'significant past' for another organisation member, has important implications for studies of organisational culture which seek an understanding of the role of the historical context in shaping cultural beliefs and values. As indicated in the introduction to this study, existing approaches which offer an historical perspective (see, for example, Martin, Sitkin, & Boehm, 1985; Pettigrew, 1979) typically take the form of interviews in which respondents are asked about critical events which have occurred in the history of their organisation. One criticism of these approaches is that, while they offer insights into events of potentially major cultural significance (the labelling of an event as a 'critical event' at least anticipates the possibility that the culture of the organisation may have been changed as a consequence of the event's impact), they may well be too crude to pick up on the more subtle, micro-

historical influences on an organisation's culture. A further criticism of the 'critical incident' method is that its usefulness may be limited to a relatively small number of organisations which have the distinction of having had a very long history during which a period (or periods) of significant change or upheaval has been experienced. In other words, depending on their age and history, some organisations may be more likely than others to constitute productive sites for 'critical incident' research¹¹⁹.

One advantage of the present method, which seeks specific information about what constitutes the 'significant past' for individual organisation members, is that it may be more sensitive than existing approaches to differences in individual histories, and this information may, in turn, help to explain some of the seemingly irreconcilable differences which may emerge in organisation member accounts, and evaluations, of their experience. It may also be that information about what constitutes the 'significant past' for individual organisation members could be used to facilitate the identification of sub-cultural groupings within the organisation (the argument being that the members of a sub-culture will share the same 'significant past').

A somewhat more subtle point which is suggested by the above finding is that what constitutes the 'psychologically significant' past for an individual may not be the same as his/her chronological past. In other words, as shown above, while a respondent may be a relatively long-serving employee (that is, have a relatively long history with the organisation), the period of history which constitutes the respondent's 'psychologically significant' past (in the sense that it provides the context within which the respondent evaluates his/her experience and which informs his/her answers to questions about the organisation) may be relatively short. This argument also has implications for the study of sub-cultures in organisations. Specifically, while the traditional delineation of groups in terms of demographic variables (such as length of service) may provide a useful starting point from which to seek to identify possible sub-cultural groupings within an organisation, an emphasis on these variables alone may be inadequate, and may lead one to overlook the possibly more subtle influence of variables such as the one above (which

¹¹⁹ My own research provides some support for this view. In the initial qualitative interviews conducted with employees from the tooling division, there were many references to the major retrenchments which took place in the division in the early 1970's. Participants in these interviews spoke about the impact of this event, on the division as a whole as well as on them personally, in highly emotive terms. Clearly, this was a 'critical event' in the history of the tooling division, the impact of which was felt by employees throughout the division, and one consequence of which was to challenge employees' long and deeply held belief about 'a job for life'. In contrast, there was no evidence in any of the production division data to suggest that the history of this division had been punctuated by an event of such major significance.

shift the focus to individuals who share the same 'psychologically significant past'), on the formation of organisational sub-cultures.

With regard to the attributional data associated with the changes reported above, the most common reason given for the reported trend towards more open communication between workers and supervisors at the present time was personnel changes (at managerial and supervisory level and including, in particular, the arrival in the late 1980's of the current divisional manager). Associated with this change, a number of respondents also made reference to an improvement, in recent years, in the training available for managers and supervisors. A third, less commonly cited reason, was a change in management attitudes such that managers today were reportedly more aware of the benefits of participative styles of supervision/management. Taken together, these attributions provide an interesting contrast with the attributions made by tooling division respondents in relation to a similar change. It will be recalled that, for the latter, broader social changes constituted the most commonly cited reason for the change towards less distant worker-supervisor communication at the present time. This difference between the divisions in terms of specific attributions, may suggest a broader distinction in terms of attributional 'style', with the production division being more internally focussed (more inclined to attribute outcomes to circumstances within its control) and the tooling division being more externally focussed (more inclined to attribute outcomes to circumstances outside of its control).

With respect to the four production division respondents who reported a change towards a growing tension in the communication between workers and supervisors, the most commonly cited reason for this change was, as indicated above, an increase in production pressures associated with the introduction, in recent years, of a new model vehicle. Interestingly, one respondent from this group saw the change as part of a reaction, by management, against the laissez-faire approach to supervision which predominated during the years of the Team Concept.

In order to gain a more complete understanding of the above findings concerning respondents' experience of change with respect to the activity category 'Worker-Supervisor Communication', we turn now to a consideration of the present time data associated with this activity category. As indicated in Tables 6.3 and 6.4 respectively, there were ten respondents from the tooling division (83% of this group) and nineteen respondents from the production division (100% of this group) who answered 'yes' to

the initial prompt question 'When they are at work, do the workers [in your division at the present time] talk to their supervisors, either about work or about social things?'. For the tooling division, estimates of the percentage of divisional workers who engaged in these communication interactions ranged from 30% to 100% of workers, with seven of these estimates (out of ten) being in the range 75% to 100% (mean=76.8%, sd=24.6%). Estimates provided by respondents from the production division spanned a similarly wide range, with 3% to 100% of the workers in this division reportedly engaging in some form of communication with their supervision. However, compared with the findings for the tooling division, these latter estimates were fairly evenly distributed over the range of estimates reported (mean=58%, sd=41%) suggesting that, as a group, production division respondents were somewhat more variable than their counterparts in the tooling division with respect to their perceptions of the extent of worker involvement in 'worker-supervisor communication'. It remains the case, however, that within each division, the level of variability in these estimates was such that any conclusion about a difference between the divisions with respect to this variable should be regarded as entirely tentative.

While this variability could not easily be explained in terms of differences in respondent demographics, an analysis of the qualitative data associated with the above estimates did provide some clues. It appeared that, in both divisions, there were a number of contingencies which operated to influence the amount of communication that took place between workers and their supervisors. For example, there were references by some respondents to sectional differences (not easily detectable in the demographic data) in the extent of worker-supervisor communication (one argument being that the work performed in some sections was more complex, and hence required closer monitoring and control by supervisors, than the work performed in other sections). There was also a recognition that individual supervisors differed in their style of supervision, such that some supervisors favoured a large 'power distance' between themselves and their subordinates and would not "talk with their blokes from one week to another", whilst other supervisors were more people-oriented in their approach (in the sense of making more effort to converse with their subordinates on a regular basis). In a similar vein, the extent of worker-supervisor communication was seen, by some respondents, to be partly contingent upon the nature of workers (their attitudes and personalities). For example, some workers were reportedly less responsive than others

to efforts by their supervisors to engage them in conversation. One explanation for this was that there existed an attitude among some workers that they were obliged to do no more for the company than to simply meet the minimum requirements of their job. Since they were not paid to communicate with their supervisors, such workers were reportedly "not interested" in doing so.

Given these various influences on the extent of worker-supervisor communication, it is perhaps not surprising that the respondent estimates reported above varied so widely. It seemed that, even where respondents may have tried to provide more general estimates (that is, estimates which were more indicative of the extent of worker-supervisor communication in their division as a whole), it was simply not possible for them to make these evaluations outside of the context of their own personal experience (influenced, as inevitably it would have been, by characteristics of the particular section in which they worked, the type of work they performed, the characteristics and personal qualities of their particular supervisor(s) and workgroup etc.). The reader will recall that this same problem has been encountered previously. Estimates provided in response to analogous questions associated with some of the other activity categories (for example, 'Help Other Workers' and 'Record Work-Related Information') showed the same variability and appeared to be similarly influenced by the individual respondent's highly context-specific experience. It would appear, therefore, that there is a strong argument for the removal from the present method of the particular set of questions which required respondents to make these estimates. Whether or not the problem encountered here has more general methodological implications (for example, for methods such as those used in organisational climate questionnaires, in which respondents are typically asked to rate the organisation, as a whole, on a number of characteristics) is a question requiring some further reflection.

One final point that can be made in relation to the estimates reported above is that interpretive differences may also have accounted for some of the variability that was observed. For example, there was some evidence to suggest that, despite being asked to comment on worker-supervisor communication in general (whether it be 'about work or about social things'), some respondents considered only the personal/social dimension of worker-supervisor communication (one example of which would be a supervisor simply "having a chat" with a worker) in answering this question. Again, the reader will recall that interpretive inconsistencies of this kind have also been noted previously, and

in the same context of attempting to explain respondent estimates (associated with other activity categories) that were found to be highly variable.

Compared with the above, there was far less variability among respondents from both divisions in their estimates of *how often* workers and supervisors communicated with one another. For the tooling division, nine (out of ten) respondents reported that communication between workers and supervisors occurred on a daily basis, and one respondent reported that it occurred on a monthly basis. Estimates provided by production division respondents ranged from daily to weekly, with one respondent reporting that communication between workers and supervisors occurred with variable frequency.

No particular pattern of responding emerged in respondents' estimates of the percentage of communication interactions that were initiated by supervisors compared with the percentage of communication interactions that were initiated by workers. In other words, in both divisions, there were some respondents who saw supervisors as being primarily responsible for initiating these interactions and some respondents who saw workers as being primarily responsible. Also, in some cases a 50/50 split was reported, whereby supervisors and workers were seen to be equally likely to initiate some form of communication with one another. In neither division could the differences that were observed be explained in terms of differences in respondent demographics.

With respect to the findings pertaining to questions about the content of supervisor-initiated communication interactions, the divisions appeared to be roughly equivalent. It will be recalled that respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of these interactions that were concerned with (i) work-related problems; (ii) information dissemination and/or gathering; (iii) providing workers with praise for their achievements; and (iv) personal/social issues. For each division, mean scores (percentages) were calculated for each of these content categories. The rank order of these means was the same for both divisions and, in order from the 'most' to the 'least well-represented' category, was as follows: (i) work-related problems; (ii) information dissemination and/or gathering; (iii) personal/social issues; and (iv) providing workers with praise for their achievements. The point should be made that the same problem of response variability, referred to above, was encountered in relation to the present set of questions. Interestingly, however, the most consistent observations, for both divisions,

were those made in relation to the content category 'providing workers with praise for their achievements'. In other words, for both divisions, the standard deviation of the responses associated with this category was lower than it was for any of the other three categories (for the tooling division, mean=11.2%, sd=10.5%; for the production division, mean=10.3%, sd=14.4%).

The finding that there was good agreement among respondents from both divisions that communication initiated by supervisors for the purpose of praising workers was relatively uncommon, was strongly supported by the associated qualitative data. The question 'What percentage of these interactions are positive and concerned with praising workers for their achievements?' often triggered initial reactions of cynicism and disbelief. Some respondents simply laughed while others made comments such as "[it would be] like finding a jewel", "I would faint", "[you would] have to perform a miracle". Two respondents from the production division (both 'wages' employees, one with fifteen years' service with the company and the other with nineteen years' service) made the point that, in their entire time with the company, they had never been praised by a supervisor. One of these respondents indicated that she presumed she was performing well since her level of responsibility in the division had increased steadily over the years. Of interest also were the comments by a supervisor from the production division who indicated that, while he believed that workers should be praised more for their achievements, the pressure of production in the division was such that there was limited time available for communication of this kind. When I asked this respondent how often he received praise from his own superiors, he replied "I can't remember, [it was] a long time ago."

A possible change in method that was suggested by the administration of the above set of questions was that, rather than present respondents with a set of *à priori* content categories (and require them to estimate the proportion of supervisor-initiated interactions concerned with each), it might have been better, at least initially, to have asked a simple open question, such as, 'What are some of the main reasons for supervisors going to talk with workers on the shop floor?' One argument in favour of this change is that respondents clearly found it difficult, first of all to think about the communication between supervisors and their subordinates as constituting some kind of sum total of interactions between these two groups, and secondly, to dissect this total neatly into the four content categories described. In retrospect, it is not surprising that

the estimates provided by individual respondents for each of the content categories about which they were asked rarely added up to 100%. A more general argument in favour of the suggested change (and one that has informed the broad design of the present interview) is that it allows respondents to describe worker-supervisor communication in terms of content categories that are of relevance to them (and which may or may not be similar to the content categories deemed by the researcher to be important). Of course, time permitting, respondents could subsequently also be prompted about the researcher-derived categories. Finally, to complete the picture, it might also have been useful to have asked an initial open question about the content of those communication interactions between workers and supervisors which were initiated by workers. Corresponding to the question above, this question might have read 'What are some of the main reasons for workers going to talk with their supervisors?'

While it is beyond the scope of this discussion to present the full analysis of the qualitative data associated with the above findings, it is worth making brief reference to some of the more recurrent themes and issues that emerged in the data for each division. As already mentioned, there was evidence to suggest that, in both divisions, there existed somewhat negative attitudes towards that aspect of divisional communications concerned with supervisors praising their subordinates. Interestingly, the cynicism noted in relation to this finding was also evident in respondents' comments about the personal/social communication that took place between workers and supervisors. For example, in the production division, it was suggested by some respondents that the standard practice of supervisors greeting their subordinates at the beginning of the work shift was not genuine, in the sense that it lacked sincerity ("...there's no sincerity in it, I think it's a drill [the supervisor's] got himself into.") and was motivated by supervisor boredom ("Probably they are bored [with] sitting here in the office."). In describing his own role with respect to this practice, one respondent (a supervisor) from this division made the comment:

So first thing in the morning, I go around and say 'How are you, this bright, sunny, cheerful morning?', you know, this sort of thing, come rain or shine, just to see if they are all there. (first-line supervisor)

There was also some evidence, in the production division data, to suggest that there existed certain attitudes in the division which served to maintain the current 'power-distance' between workers and supervisors. One such attitude (personally adhered to by two respondents and noted by two other respondents) was that if the relationship

between these two groups were to become too close, the ability of supervisors to discipline their subordinates would somehow be compromised. Another respondent alluded to the existence of a work group norm whereby workers risked the disapproval of their peers if they sought a closer relationship with their supervisor, this behaviour being seen, by the group, as a form of ingratiation. In the respondent's own words:

...the thing I think that a lot of them would fear is if I sat on the same table as the supervisor, I'm a suck-hole. ('wages' employee)

In addition to the above specific themes, there were a number of isolated comments (typically made by one or two respondents from each division) which, when taken together, provided further evidence to suggest that, in neither division, was there complete satisfaction with the existing communication climate. For example, references were variously made to (i) the continued existence of the 'us/them' attitudes that reportedly predominated in the past; (ii) the tendency of some supervisors to adopt superior attitudes, whereby they "put themselves on a pedestal" and "[didn't] want to know about problems on the shop floor"; (iii) the perception (in both divisions) that there were more supervisors than required (with one respondent commenting further that "supervisors run around and do nothing all day"); (iv) the perception that some supervisors avoided their subordinates because of the additional work they feared this could create for them; and finally (v) the view that being "left alone" by one's supervisors constituted a "good" worker-supervisor relationship. Not surprisingly, perhaps, respondents from both divisions, who were themselves supervisors, tended to present themselves as more committed than their peers to the development and maintenance of a positive communication relationship with their subordinates. In other words, while these supervisors acknowledged that the communication climate in their respective divisions could be improved upon, they were more inclined to attribute the problems that existed to flaws in the supervisory behaviour/style of their peers than to flaws in their own behaviour/style.

One final feature of the qualitative data on 'Worker-Supervisor Communication' that is worth mentioning here (and which is not unrelated to the above) concerns the finding that respondents from the production division who were shop floor workers tended to make more positive evaluations of their own personal situation than of the situation in their division generally. In other words, while these respondents made comments which suggested a fairly negative perception of the overall communication climate in the division as a whole, they often spoke about their own particular supervisor(s) in quite

positive terms. The following verbatim comments (all be 'wages' employees) serve to illustrate:

On the whole you can chat to them any time of the day about anything.

...talking about [name of section], we would have a joke and a laugh with our foreman, even the superintendent.

...[our supervisor] always comes up and says 'You've done a good job tonight guys', but he would be the only one that I know of.

...my personal supervisors are quite good.

Tell you what, [getting praise from a supervisor] doesn't happen. It only happens now, in our section now. ...[My supervisor] always gives me a pat on the back.

This finding, which as indicated was specific to the production division, suggests the interesting possibility that there might be some kind of time lag between a change occurring and the point at which the contents of that change become fully assimilated into the thinking of organisation members (such that they begin to perceive and interpret their experience of organisational life differently). To put it another way, it might be that the past experience of organisation members (in this case, involving more distant worker-supervisor communication) continues to influence their perceptions of the present, even after a change (in this case, towards more open worker-supervisor communication) has occurred which challenges past practice and raises questions about the validity of the past as a context within which to evaluate the present. Furthermore, the perceptions that organisation members have of their organisation (division) as a whole may, at least for a period of time after such a change, continue to be more influenced by their past experience than by present experience which is consistent with, and reinforces, the change.

What, then, can be concluded from the above comparison of the tooling division and the production division in terms of respondents' experience of changes, over time, in the communication relationship that existed between workers and their supervisors? First, with respect to respondents' experience of the current context, it can be concluded that the two divisions were roughly equivalent. All respondents from the production division and all but one respondent from the tooling division reported that, at the present time, the workers in their respective divisions engaged in some form of communication with their supervisors, on a fairly regular basis. In both divisions, respondent estimates of the numbers of workers, overall, who communicated with their supervisors varied considerably, no doubt to some extent because of the bias introduced by aspects of the

respondent's own personal experience or situation (whether this reflected exposure to a particular style of supervision, inclusion in a work group with particular characteristics etc.). Similar inconsistencies were observed, for both divisions, in respondent perceptions of who was primarily responsible (whether workers or supervisors) for initiating these communication interactions. Respondents from both divisions had similar perceptions of what constituted the main content of those communication interactions between workers and supervisors which were initiated by supervisors. The bulk of these interactions were reportedly concerned with discussing work-related problems and engaging in some form of information exchange. To a lesser extent, they were concerned with interactions of a personal/social nature and, least common of all, were interactions concerned with praising workers for their achievements. Finally, the overriding impression created by the qualitative data associated with these findings was that was that the overall communication climate which prevailed in each division was seen to be predominantly negative. One interesting difference to emerge between the two divisions was that, for respondents from the production division, their negative evaluations of the situation in general could be contrasted with the more positive evaluations that they tended to make of their own personal situation.

While the two divisions appeared to be roughly equivalent in terms of respondents' perceptions of worker-supervisor communication at the present time, the analysis of the historical context of respondents' experience with respect to this activity category highlighted some differences between the divisions. For the tooling division, a minority of respondents only (all but one of whom were supervisors) reported a change, from the past to the present, in worker-supervisor communication. This compared with a majority of respondents from the production division reporting a change. The former shared the view that the change, which was estimated to have occurred at some time during the 1970's, had been from more distant worker-supervisor communication in the past towards more open worker-supervisor communication at the present time. Interestingly, one of these respondents regarded the change as undesirable in the sense that it presented a challenge to the traditional authority of supervisors. Finally, these respondents also shared the view that the change reported had been precipitated primarily by changes in the broader social context (which, among other things, had influenced workers' expectations about how they should be managed). These findings aside, the important point remains that a majority of the respondents from the tooling

division reported 'no change' in worker-supervisor communication from the past to the present.

The findings for the production division suggested that, not only was the experience of change somewhat more pronounced for this division than for the tooling division (a majority of respondents from the production division reported a change), but also it was more varied. Some respondents from the production division reported a change similar to that noted by their counterparts in the tooling division (that is, towards more open worker-supervisor communication at the present time), whereas others suggested a growing tension, in recent years, in the communication relationship between workers and supervisors. There was some evidence to suggest that these different perceptions of change reflected differences in the 'yardstick' against which respondents evaluated their experience (whether it was the more distant past, as in the former case, or the more recent past, as in the latter case). The change towards more open communications at the present time was perceived to have occurred at some time during the 1980's, and was attributed mainly to divisional changes in management and supervisory staff. The change towards more difficult (in the sense of more strained) worker-supervisor communication at the present time was perceived to have occurred at some time during the late eighties and was attributed to the increasing production pressure associated with the introduction, at that time, of a new model vehicle. Finally, differences in the attributions made by respondents from each division suggested the possibility of a further distinction between the divisions in terms of attributional style, with the tooling division tending to support a more external attributional style, and the production division a more internal attributional style.

An understanding of the historical context of respondents' experience with respect to worker-supervisor communication offered some insights into the finding that production division respondents tended to make positive evaluations of their own personal experience of worker-supervisor communication, while at the same time holding fairly negative views about the communication climate that prevailed in their division as a whole. It was suggested that, even though some effort may have been directed towards effecting 'positive' change in the communication climate in the division (in the sense of fostering more open channels of communication between workers and their supervisors), and even though this change may have been reinforced by the specific experiences of individual respondents, it may still have been the case that respondents'

historical experience was continuing to influence the way in which they perceived and thought about organisational life in general. In other words, despite present challenges to past practice, the effects of history may be neither easily, nor quickly, diminished. Of course, to the extent that there existed any inconsistencies in the change effort (such as that suggested by the finding that, in response to increased production pressures, supervisors had become more authoritarian in their approach), one might predict that progress towards effecting a change in the communication culture of the division would be impeded further.

In addition to the above specific findings, reference was made to a number of methodological problems and issues that were identified during the course of analysing the data for this part of the interview. In particular, attention was drawn to the difficulty that respondents had in making quantitative evaluations of some aspect of the situation in their division as a whole (for example, estimating the percentage of all divisional workers who engaged in communication interactions with their supervisors). Attention was also drawn to some of the problems associated with closed questions in which responding is limited to a finite number of researcher-derived categories. To overcome these problems, a specific change in the method used in the present interview was recommended. And finally, the present approach of seeking specific 'time-line' information about respondent histories was advocated on the grounds that, unlike alternative approaches which typically ask about a more 'general' past, the present approach accounts for the possibility that an individual's psychologically significant past may be different from his/her chronological past.

APPENDIX D2

Study III: Analysis of prompt data for the future context

Prompted activity categories: Similarities between the two divisions

(i) Union Meetings

As indicated in Table 6.5 (see Section 6.3.2, p. 400), for each division, a minority of respondents only anticipated that the involvement of divisional workers in union meetings would change in the future. Specifically, there were two respondents from the tooling division (20% of the available sample) and three respondents from the production division (also 20% of the available sample) who anticipated a change. Both of the respondents from the tooling division who anticipated a change were supervisory staff. In one case, it was anticipated that the involvement of divisional workers in union activity would increase in the future and, in the other, a decrease was anticipated. Both respondents indicated that the change was 'already happening', and both saw the change as being associated with the relocation of the division to the site of the company's main manufacturing and assembly operations. In the former case, the relocation was seen as coinciding with the downsizing of the division and the subsequent need for fewer shop stewards to support the smaller workforce that would be employed at the new site. The implication was that with fewer shop stewards, there would be less union activity overall in the division. In the latter case, the respondent made reference to the stronger union culture which he believed existed at the site of the company's main assembly and manufacturing operations and which he argued would inevitably influence the industrial relations climate in the tooling division, once it had relocated there.

Both respondents expressed somewhat negative views about the role of unions. The first was critical of the extent to which union activity interfered with the primary task of the worker, as well as the extent to which it was concerned with issues of a relatively trivial nature. In the respondent's own words:

...we had people, important people, like a welder that was a shop steward. You could never find him because he was running in to sit on [the boss's] knee and cry to him about something that's happened, or the tea was cold today... (first-line supervisor)

The second respondent (a senior supervisor) argued that, while unions were “a necessary evil”, there was a possibility of some union officials abusing their power and attempting to be “little Hitler’s that are trying to create their own empire”. This was a particular problem where union officials represented large numbers of employees (as was the case at the company’s main plant).

One respondent from the tooling division indicated that, while the current programme to restructure the award would inevitably have some industrial relations implications, it was, at this stage, not clear what these might be. The remaining seven respondents who were prompted about the likely future involvement of divisional workers in union activity anticipated that there would be no change from the present situation. The reader is reminded that estimates of how often workers from the tooling division currently attended union (ie. stop work) meetings ranged from once every month to once every six months. Typically, these ‘no change’ respondents did not elaborate upon their response. In one case, however, the respondent pointed to the considerable involvement at the present time of the unions in activities associated with the Award Restructuring programme. As he saw it, this prevented the unions from doing as much as they could with respect to other (unspecified) issues. Not surprisingly given his own position as a shop steward, this respondent also expressed his support for the union movement in general:

It is something that is there and it is a good negotiating thing, isn’t it? We [would] hate to get back to individual negotiating... at least you have got a body that you can negotiate with. (‘wages’ employee, shop steward)

A second respondent qualified his ‘no change’ response by saying that, while he himself was currently less involved with the union than he had been previously (due primarily to the decision of the shop steward in his section to accept “the golden handshake”), he nevertheless felt that the level of union activity of workers in the division as a whole would be unlikely to change in the future.

As indicated, there were three respondents from the production division who anticipated a change in the future in the involvement of divisional workers in union (ie. ‘stop-work’) meetings. Two of these respondents were supervisory staff and one was a ‘wages’ employee. All three respondents predicted a change towards more harmonious industrial relations in the division in the future (and, by implication, less involvement of divisional worker in union meetings). In two cases, the anticipated change was reportedly ‘already happening’ and in one case it was estimated to be some two to three

years away. Attributions about why the change would occur included (i) a perception by one respondent that, over the years, industrial relations in the division had been improving steadily; (ii) a perception by a second respondent that the current trend towards more open dialogue between management and unions (manifested, in particular, in negotiations regarding the restructuring of the award) would continue into the future, so that “we’ll spend a lot more time nutting things out long before it becomes an industrial issue”; and (iii) a perception by a third respondent that past conflict over inequalities with respect to pay (for example) would be removed with the restructuring of the award and the greater clarification of pay-performance linkages that would result. One of the respondents above (a senior supervisor) also made some additional comments which betrayed a degree of cynicism in his attitudes toward the union movement. He argued that the trend towards more harmonious industrial relations, while it was still “in its infancy”, would be likely to continue “unless, of course, someone within the union movement decides that they want to further their careers [because] they tend to use the members as a vehicle to push their causes”.

Of the remaining twelve respondents from the production division who were asked about the likelihood of a future change in the involvement of divisional workers in union meetings, eleven predicted that there would be no change from the present situation. Again, the reader is reminded that estimates of how often workers from the production division currently attended union meetings ranged from once to twice annually. Finally, there was one respondent who indicated that he did not know whether or not there would be a change. In elaborating on his response, the latter respondent indicated that there was some uncertainty (presumably among union members) about where the loyalties of the union lay – whether with the membership or with management. In the respondent’s own words:

...it’s hard to say with the union how they think. I don’t really know. I mean they are pushing for this ten years’ long service leave, and I thought if they were fairly genuine about it, why not hit the company. I’m not saying I’m for or against it, but why not hit the company when we were right in the middle of [gives name of most recent model], when it was important for the company to keep those cars going out. Why not say ‘Right, everyone’s earning lots of overtime so they can afford to have a day off in support of the claim’. Why not say ‘Okay, it’s a 24-hour stop work meeting for the ten year long service leave’, but they always bring the issue up when it’s quiet and no-one wants to take time off because they can’t afford to. ...I think a lot of people up there have got the impression that the union somehow work with the company on certain issues. (‘wages’ employee)

Four of the 'no change' respondents elaborated on their responses. The following verbatim comments by three of these respondents imply somewhat negative attitudes toward the union:

I think union involvement would be a lot less if it wasn't compulsory. ('wages' employee)

...in [this company] we don't have a real lot of union meetings. ...Actually, that's a pretty good thing. ('wages employee, acting leading hand')

I hope [that the involvement of workers in union activity does not increase]. I'm not a great union lover. ('wages' employee)

The fourth respondent (a 'wages' employee) implied that the union membership was somewhat fickle in that active involvement with the union was sought only when the issue was perceived to be "a big enough thing".

In conclusion, there was no evidence in either division of a widespread perception that the level of worker involvement in union activities would be likely to change in the future. It must be remembered, however, that the context in which the above evaluations were being made was somewhat different for each division. It will be recalled that the previous analysis provided some evidence to suggest that the current level of worker involvement in union activities was somewhat higher in the tooling division than in the production division. There was also some evidence that, compared with the production division, the tooling division had experienced more sustained periods of industrial unrest in the past.

Given the small number of respondents from each division who anticipated a change, it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions about differences between these two groups. At the same time, however, it can be seen that the responses of production division respondents were qualitatively different from those of tooling division respondents. All three respondents from the production division shared the view that industrial relations in the division would be likely to become more harmonious in the future. It was suggested that this would be an outcome of, on the one hand, the increasingly open dialogue that existed between management, the unions, and workers and, on the other, the establishment of a more equitable system under Award Restructuring. The impression created by these data, namely, that the anticipated change was seen as positive for the division as a whole and supported, if not directly initiated by, the division, was not at all evident in the associated data from the tooling division. Rather, as previously, these data suggested a perception that change, if it did

occur, would be largely externally imposed (in this case, by the relocation of the division to the site of the company's main manufacturing and assembly plant). There was no sense in the tooling division data of change being supported internally, let alone driven from within.

Finally, in both divisions (although to a somewhat greater degree in the production division) there was evidence of the existence of somewhat negative attitudes towards the union. It was variously implied that the union was self-serving, pre-occupied with power, at times more supportive of the interests of management than the interests of workers, concerned with issues of a relatively trivial nature, and involved in activities that were seen as time-wasting. Across both divisions, there was one respondent only (a shop steward from the tooling division) who spontaneously made comments which indicated a favourable attitude towards the union.

(ii) Worker-Supervisor Communication

As indicated in Table 6.5, approximately one third of the respondents from each division who were presented with this prompt (missing data included four respondents from the tooling division and three respondents from the production division) anticipated that there would be some change in the future in the involvement of divisional workers in communicating with their supervisors. Specifically, there were three respondents from the tooling division (38% of the available sample) and five respondents from the production division (31% of the available sample) who anticipated a change.

Of the three respondents from the tooling division who anticipated a change, one (a 'wages' employee and union shop steward) predicted that, in the future, there would be less worker-supervisor communication simply because of the declining numbers of supervisors in the division. The latter was seen by the respondent as an outcome of the current downsizing strategy and, in his opinion, it represented a change for the better:

I think all these people running around doing nothing, it doesn't help, it doesn't help. ('wages' employee, shop steward)

The two other 'change' respondents from this division each made reference to the changing role of supervisors in the division, and the implications that this would have for worker-supervisor communication. Specifically, one respondent (a 'wages' employee with leading hand status) anticipated that the communication style of supervisors would become more participative. He attributed this to efforts by senior management to train supervisors "to get more involved and to encourage more

involvement from the shop floor". The other respondent (a senior supervisor) expressed his concern that supervisors no longer had the respect and high regard of workers (and indeed the company in general) that they had enjoyed in the past. This change was attributed to a change in the role of the supervisor whereby "the supervisor is gradually losing power... [and] being reduced down to a super-worker". The respondent was very critical of this change arguing that "...eventually the supervisor himself loses interest because he knows what's happening, and once his power base starts to be eroded then he loses his drive". Each of these latter two respondents estimated that the change which they had anticipated was already underway and would continue into the future.

All of the remaining five respondents from the tooling division who were presented with this prompt indicated that they did not anticipate that there would be any change in the future in worker-supervisor communication in this division. Of these, three spontaneously elaborated on their responses. In two cases (both respondents being 'wages' employees with leading hand status), it was argued that a change towards more open communication between workers and supervisors (with supervisors adopting a more participative approach) was unlikely on the grounds that it was "not the Holden's way" and that it had been "bred into" supervisors to maintain a considerable power distance between themselves and their subordinates. A third respondent (a senior supervisor) related the question specifically to his own efforts, as a supervisor, to improve the quality of the worker-supervisor communication in his area. From the following excerpt, it can be seen that the respondent had judged his efforts in this regard to have been quite successful:

I don't think I can do much more than I am now to make it work as good as I can. I've got a work group of people that if you appeal to them, they lift their game. If they know that we're in the shit or if they know that we have to get a job out on time, they'll stay back, they'll come in early, they'll give a little bit more effort.
(senior supervisor)

As indicated in the previous section, the tooling division had had a relatively long and stable history in which traditional communication practices (eg. communication via a strict chain of command, autocratic rather than consultative or participative approaches on the part of managers and supervisors) had dominated. Associated with this there was evidence of support for a relatively high power distance in the relationship between supervisors/managers and their subordinates. Despite the relatively stable history of the division with respect to this activity category, the analysis reported previously did provide some evidence to suggest that the extent and quality of

the communication interactions between workers and their supervisors could vary depending on, for example: (i) the task at hand (with some tasks requiring more worker-supervisor interaction than others, although still with a predominantly passive role for workers); (ii) the individual supervisor (with some supervisors reportedly conforming more with traditional communication practices than others); and (iii) the individual worker (with some workers being less responsive than others to attempts by their supervisors to communicate with them).

As indicated, there were five respondents from the production division, including three 'wages' employees (one of whom was currently also an acting leading hand) and two supervisors, who anticipated a change, in the future, in worker-supervisor communication in this division. Of these, one respondent (a 'wages' employee) predicted that in the future (time unspecified) there would be less communication between divisional workers and their supervisors. According to the respondent this was because, in recent years, supervisors had become over-burdened with administrative responsibilities leaving them very little time for interaction (either of a work-related or social nature) with their subordinates.

The remaining four respondents all predicted that, in the future, the communication between workers and supervisors would become closer (in the sense of supervisors listening more to workers' opinions and workers feeling more comfortable about approaching their supervisors, whether for advice or to make suggestions). Estimates of when this change would occur varied and included (i) within the next year; (ii) within the next five to ten years; and (iii) already underway and likely to be ongoing. There was also some variability in respondent attributions about why the anticipated change would occur. Two respondents made reference to the emergence, in the division over recent years, of a new breed of supervisors who were more supportive of an open style of communication than their predecessors had been. As indicated in the following excerpts, personnel changes and supervisor training were cited as the key factors influencing this change:

...when I first started here, I wouldn't even walk past the foreman's office unless I had to... As I said, staff changes made a difference because all of a sudden we had the sort of foremen that would come out on the shop floor and say 'Hello. How are you?' instead of just walking past you. ('wages' employee)

...I suppose at one time your supervisor was put up on a bit of a pedestal. He was the man that gave all the directions and everything else. Now I feel that is changing slowly. Supervisors are being training in a lot of different styles of

management and that is bringing out people's.... it's much more easy for people to approach supervisors, and I reckon that will increase. (first-line supervisor)

A third respondent argued that, given a smaller and more highly skilled workforce in the future (an anticipated consequence of technological change in the industry), the relationship between workers and supervisors would be likely to become closer. And finally, a fourth respondent argued that the anticipated change was inevitable if the organisation was to survive. He suggested that, in the future, supervisors would have to give up their rigid adherence to autocratic methods and be prepared to be more flexible in their style of supervision.

Of the remaining eleven respondents who were presented with this prompt (as indicated in Table 6.5, data were missing for three respondents from this division), two respondents indicated that they did not know whether or not the communication between workers and supervisors in the division would change in the future, and nine indicated that they anticipated no future change. In terms of elaborations on these responses, one of the 'don't know' respondents went on to express his strong opinion that there should be fewer supervisors in the division and that some of the administrative work currently done by supervisors could more appropriately be completed by clerical personnel; the other 'don't know' respondent indicated that, while he anticipated no future change with respect to his own specific situation (he indicated that he was happy with the communication relationship that he currently had with his supervisor), he was unable to comment on the likelihood of future change in worker-supervisor communication for the division as a whole.

Four of the nine 'no change' respondents elaborated on their responses. Of these, two argued that the nature of worker-supervisor communication in the division at the present time was influenced very much by individual differences, both among supervisors (in their style of communication) and among workers (in the extent to which they initiated communication interactions with their supervisors). The implication was that, without some changes in divisional personnel or, alternatively, without a conscious effort on the part of divisional management to put the development of communication skills on the agenda, the communication climate in the division was unlikely to change in the future. In the words of one of these respondents:

It really gets down to the individual... the individual supervisor or the individual employee. Some employees will come and talk more than others, and initiate a conversation or interaction more than others, and some supervisors are the same. I don't really see that changing a lot unless the organisation goes out to choose

people with those specific skills... Organisationally, I wouldn't see a massive change because I don't think anyone's really considered that... I don't think anyone's considered yet that a particular management style is necessarily a good or a bad way to go, in other words, whether they want to have really good communicators, or whether they want to have people that just beat up operators, and make them do what's needed. (senior supervisor)

A third respondent who anticipated 'no change' went on to comment on the positive relationship that existed between workers and their supervisors in this division. And finally, a fourth 'no change' respondent suggested that the type of worker-supervisor relationship in which a supervisor could exercise his authority, at the same time as developing a more personal/social relationship with subordinates, was very difficult to achieve and was not one which could commonly be observed in the production division.

It is useful to comment briefly on the context in which the above evaluations by production division respondents were formulated. As indicated previously, the extent and nature of worker-supervisor communication in this division at the present time was reportedly influenced by a number of factors including; (i) the nature of the task (with some tasks requiring closer monitoring and control of work performance by supervisors); (ii) the communication 'style' of individual supervisors (with some supervisors being autocratic in their approach and others being more democratic); and (iii) the personality and attitudes of individual workers (with some workers holding the view that, since they were not paid to communicate with their supervisors (ie. this did not constitute a formal job requirement), they felt no obligation, or interest, in doing so). It was also the case that, at the present time, supervisors reportedly communicated with workers primarily for the purpose of discussing work-related problems with them or providing them with work-related information. Communication interactions initiated for the purpose of discussing personal/social issues were reportedly less common, and it was on the rare occasion only that supervisors communicated with workers for the purpose of giving them praise for a job well done. From the previous analysis, there was also some evidence that the communication relationship between workers and supervisors in this division had fluctuated somewhat over time – with more closed communication being the norm in the division's early years of operation, followed by a change towards more open democratic approaches in recent years, followed by, in the very recent past, a growing tension in the relationship between workers and their supervisors which was attributed to an increase in production demands in the division. Finally, there was also some evidence to suggest that, despite a perception among

respondents that the communication climate in the division as a whole was rather negative, the specific experience of certain individual respondents (ie. with regard to their communication relationship with their supervisor(s)) was reportedly positive.

On the basis of the above analysis and given the problem of an incomplete data set for both the tooling division and the production division, it is possible to offer only the most tentative of conclusions regarding similarities and differences between the divisions in respondent evaluations of the future context with respect to the activity category 'Worker-Supervisor Communication'. First of all, as noted above, the divisions were similar in that approximately one third of the available respondents from each division anticipated some future change in the extent and/or the nature of communication between divisional workers and their supervisors. Secondly, it is interesting to note that all of these respondents shared a perception that the role of divisional supervisors was somehow changing – with specific references to the likelihood of there being fewer supervisory positions in the future, an increase in the administrative responsibilities of supervisors, and a likely change away from traditional autocratic styles of supervision towards more participative styles. As indicated, the latter change was variously attributed to: (i) downsizing, one effect of which would be to force workers and their supervisors to work together more closely (one respondent from the tooling division); (ii) supervisor training in more participative styles (one respondent from each division); (iii) changing recruitment practices (one respondent from the production division); and (iv) technological change which would demand an increase in the skill level of workers which, in turn, would lead to a closer working relationship between workers and their supervisors (one respondent from the production division).

Thirdly, as indicated, there was one respondent from the tooling division (a senior supervisor) whose comments suggested that he strongly disapproved of the change towards more participative styles of supervision. This trend, he argued, was associated with the erosion of the supervisor's power base, one inevitable consequence of which would be a growing lack of interest and motivation on the part of supervisors towards their work. It was also the case that two of the 'no change' respondents from this division (both 'wages' employees with leading hand status) suggested that it was attitudes such as this, which had been "bred into" supervisory staff in the division, which would serve to impede any future change in the nature of the communication

relationship that existed between divisional workers and their supervisors. It is worth making the point that, in the production division data, there were no specific examples of individual supervisor resistance to the anticipated change towards more participative styles of supervision; neither were there direct references to the likelihood that traditional supervisory attitudes would serve to impede such change. Rather, there was simply a perception that, in the absence of a division-wide approach to the development of more open communication between workers and their supervisors, the communication climate in the division at the present time (whereby some supervisors were autocratic in their approach whilst others were more participative) would remain the same.

A fourth and final concluding point concerns the finding that, in the production division, there were two respondents (both 'wages' employees) who expressed their satisfaction with the communication relationship that they currently had with their supervisor(s). No such expressions of individual worker satisfaction emerged in the tooling division data. There was, however, one supervisor from the tooling division who indicated that he was satisfied with his own efforts to develop more open communication with his subordinates.

(iii) Social activities

As indicated in Table 6.5, the percentage of respondents from each division who anticipated a change, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in social activities was similar. Specifically, 45% of the available respondents from the tooling division (five out of eleven) and 53% of the available respondents from the production division (nine out of seventeen) anticipated a change.

Of those respondents from the tooling division who anticipated a change, there were three who predicted more future involvement of divisional workers in social activities and two who predicted less. The former group comprised two 'wages' employees (one a shop steward and the other a leading hand) and one senior supervisor. Estimates of when this change would be likely to occur were provided by two of these respondents, both of whom indicated that the change was 'already underway'. With regard to perceptions about why this change would occur, two respondents made reference to the relocation of the division (currently in progress) to the site of the company's main manufacturing and assembly operations where, it was perceived, there was more 'company' support for social activities for workers. This support was manifested, for

example, in the perception by one of these respondents, that the company intended to build “a sports and social clubhouse” at this site. One of these respondents also pointed to the influence of more personal (as opposed to environmental) factors in bringing about the anticipated change. This respondent talked about the renewed sense of job security being experienced by members of the tooling division who had decided to remain with the company and who had already made the transfer to the company’s main site:

...they have moved into what is now regarded as a job for life, a permanent job [and] there’s now no sense of losing the job hanging over their head. (‘wages’ employee)

This factor, it was argued, would improve the morale of divisional members and restore their interest in getting involved in company social activities. A third respondent (the senior supervisor) attributed the anticipated change to the development of more friendly and “closer knit” relations between workers which he saw as a consequence both of the reduced size of the division and of the efforts of supervisors to encourage such relations.

The two respondents from the tooling division who predicted that, in the future, there would be less involvement for divisional workers in social activities, included one supervisors and one ‘wages’ employee (with leading hand status). One of these respondents indicated that he thought that the change was ‘already underway’. Both respondents attributed the anticipated change to the reduced size of the division (a factor, which it will be recalled, was cited by one of the respondent’s above as likely support, rather than constrain, the involvement of divisional workers in social activities). In the words of each of these respondents:

Just the size of it... To drop down to fifty two people from what it used to be, it’s pretty hard to start getting involved in any sort of social stuff, other than a game of darts lunchtime and stuff like that. (first-line supervisor)

...in the early days, the machine shop used to have a big social club and all that sort of thing, because you had enough people to support it, but now you haven’t and I think it’s the demise of the numbers in the areas that eventually let all that sort of thing fold down. (‘wages’ employee, leading hand)

Of the remaining six respondents from the tooling division who were presented with this prompt, five indicated that they anticipated no future change in the level of worker involvement in social activities, and one indicated that he did not know whether or not there would be a change. This group comprised three ‘wages’ employees (two of whom were also leading hands), one senior supervisor, and two first-line supervisors. Two of

these respondents only elaborated spontaneously on their responses. In one case, the respondent made the point that the involvement of divisional workers in social activities was largely self-initiated, rather than company-initiated. As such, if workers wanted more involvement in social activities in the future, then a change in this direction would be likely to occur; however, "if it was left to [the company]" then such a change would be unlikely to occur. In the other case, the respondent argued that a future change towards more involvement of divisional workers in social activities was unlikely because of changes in the society in general – including, for example, increased mobility (with more people owning cars) and more disposable income per person – which had resulted in people today placing less emphasis on the importance of developing strong social bonds with the members of their local community (including the people with whom they worked).

At this point the reader is reminded briefly of the historical context in which the above evaluations by tooling division respondents were made. As indicated previously, there was evidence to suggest that the tooling division had had a long history of active involvement of divisional workers in a wide range of social activities (both formally organised and informal). For some respondents, the major retrenchment of divisional personnel which occurred in the early 1970's marked the beginning of a decline in the level of worker involvement in social activities in this division; for others, the decline did not become apparent until more recently (as late as 1987). Despite the fact that divisional workers were reportedly still involved in a range of social activities (the most commonly cited of these being attendance at film evenings, retirement functions, and the annual company picnic), it was clear that the social climate which prevailed in the division at the present time was perceived by respondents to be considerably less positive than it had been in the past.

Of the nine respondents from the production division who anticipated that there would be a change, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in social activities, eight predicted that there would be an increase, and one predicted a decrease. With respect, first of all, to the findings for the former group, it should be noted that one of these eight respondents provided this information spontaneously, in response to the initial open-ended question. The remaining seven respondents provided the information in response to prompting. Included in this group of eight were five 'wages' employees, one senior supervisor, and two first-line supervisors. Estimates of when the change

towards more involvement of divisional workers in social activities would be likely to occur were provided by five of these respondents. Their estimates ranged from: (i) 'already underway and ongoing' (one respondent); (ii) 'within the next two years' (two respondents); (iii) 'within the next five years' (one respondent); and (iv) 'between five and ten years away' (one respondent).

An analysis of the attributional data revealed considerable variability among these respondents in their attributions about why the anticipated change would occur. Nevertheless, it was possible to detect some underlying commonalities in these data. For example, in the case of four respondents, reference was made to some aspect of the respondent's current experience which had provided the respondent with grounds for believing that, in the future, there would be an increase in the involvement of divisional workers in social activities. Specifically, one respondent made reference to his understanding that the company had set aside some land, within company grounds, specifically for the purpose of building a clubhouse for use by the Sports and Social Club. A second respondent indicated that "There is talk at the moment about barbecue areas being set up". A third respondent made reference to the success of the annual barbecue which had recently been introduced into the division, noting both the considerable effort of those responsible for organising the event, as well as how well the event was attended. And finally, a fourth respondent commented on his observation that relations between management and workers in general appeared to be becoming more relaxed and more open (the implication presumably being that this would contribute to the development of a more positive social climate in the division).

A second commonality to emerge in these data was a perception by three respondents that a positive social climate in the division was essential to the success and well-being of the organisation as a whole. As indicated in the following excerpts, all of these respondents shared the view that 'happy workers are productive workers':

Interviewer: Why do you think workers will become more involved in social activities? *Respondent:* To keep our jobs, to keep our car company here... Well, if people get more concerned in what's going on with one another... maybe they do their jobs better. ('wages' employee)

I think the company will try to keep on moving down the workers' line, with better activities for workers and things like this to try and keep them happy... so that way the worker will be happy with the company. And by doing that, the company is going to end up getting [out] the product they want... to try to get the sales up... if they don't go down the right road, and the right road is to keep the worker happy... if they don't go down that road, they won't have their operations in Australia. It's as simple as that. ('wages' employee)

I think [the social climate] will get better... There'll be more cooperation, put it that way. If they can pull these barriers down and the arrogance that comes with them, there'll be more cooperation and the job will be a lot easier. ('wages' employee')

A further three respondents made attributions which could not easily be linked to any particular theme. One respondent attributed the anticipated change (that is, towards more involvement in the future of divisional workers in social activities) to a general increase in the interest that divisional workers showed in "playing sport or socialising with other people that work there". A second respondent attributed the change to an anticipated change in how divisional management managed workers. Specifically, there would be more emphasis in the future (it was predicted that this change would occur gradually over the next five to ten years) on fostering a climate in which there was more collaboration between workers on the job and more involvement of workers in social activities off the job. And finally, a third respondent suggested that the change would be a consequence of an anticipated downsizing of the division, the idea being that the smaller the work group, the more social activity it is likely to support.

As indicated, there was one respondent (a 'wages' employee) from the production division who indicated that, in the future, the involvement of divisional workers in social activities would be likely to decrease. This respondent was referring specifically to activities, such as film evenings and live entertainment shows, which were sponsored by the company. The respondent argued that, given the financial constraints under which the company was currently operating, there was unlikely to be the same level of company sponsorship for these activities in the future as there had been in the past.

The remaining eight respondents who were presented with this prompt all indicated that they thought it was unlikely that there would be any change, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in social activities. All of these respondents were 'wages' employees. While five respondents spontaneously elaborated on their responses, there was no obvious common thematic content in these elaborations. Specifically, one respondent made reference to the annual divisional barbecue, suggesting that the key organiser of this event would not "let his barbecue go"; two respondents indicated that, in the absence of a specific stimulus for change – in one case it was suggested that the results of the present study might constitute such a stimulus, helping management to realise that "you're not doing what you should be for the workers and that's why the workers are not doing what they should do for you" – the

current level of social activity in the division would be likely to prevail; one respondent expressed his opinion that “most people just come to work for their pay, not to be sociable”; and one respondent, who worked on afternoon shift, made the point that “the people we’ve got on afternoon shift now are all fairly set in their ways”.

With respect to the context within which the above evaluations by production division respondents were made, the reader is reminded briefly of the results of the previous analysis of data pertaining to the past and present contexts. First of all, there was evidence to suggest that, at the present time, the workers in this division engaged, to a greater or less extent, in a range of social activities, the most commonly cited of which were company sponsored film evenings, the company Christmas party, and the annual divisional barbecue. Secondly, respondents’ accounts of the history of worker involvement in social activities in this division varied considerably. Where changes with respect to this activity category were reported, there was little consensus among respondents about either the nature of these changes or the factors thought to precipitate them. Hence, there was little evidence in the historical data from this division of the existence of a clearly defined, and shared, history pertaining to the involvement of divisional workers in social activities.

Overall, the results of the above analysis of evaluations, by respondents from both divisions, of the likelihood of future change in the involvement of divisional workers in social activities suggest the following general conclusions. First of all, as indicated, the divisions were similar in that a similar percentage of the respondents from each (45% from the tooling division and 53% from the production division) anticipated a change. Tooling division respondents were perhaps somewhat less consistent than their counterparts in the production division in their perceptions of the direction of this change. Of the five respondents from the tooling division who anticipated a change, three predicted an increase, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in social activities and two predicted a decrease. Of the nine respondents from the production division who anticipated a change, eight predicted an increase, and one predicted a decrease. In neither division did there appear to be any consistent seniority differences between the ‘change’ and ‘no change’ respondents.

A second general conclusion is that the findings for the tooling division can be interpreted fairly readily within the context of respondent accounts of the division’s history with respect to this activity category. In other words, the finding that only three

out of eleven respondents from this division (27% of the available sample) anticipated an increase in the future involvement of divisional workers in social activities (with the remaining eight predicting no change or a decrease) is not inconsistent with what one might expect given the division's history in this regard (namely, a long past in which divisional workers enjoyed a very active social life followed by, over more recent years, the gradual erosion of the division's social climate which was regarded by many as an inevitable consequence of the more general decline of the division). Support for this conclusion comes not just from the quantitative data (that is, the numbers of 'no change' and 'change' respondents) but also from the qualitative data. For example, among those respondents who anticipated 'no change' or, alternatively, 'a decrease', there were references to (i) the downsizing of the division and its consequent inability to support the range of social clubs and social activities that it had supported in the past; (ii) a lack of divisional (management?) support for initiatives to increase the level of worker involvement in social activities; and (iii) changes in the society in general whereby people today were perceived to care less about a sense of community than they had in the past. It was also the case that two of the three respondents who anticipated an increase, regarded this change as being associated with the relocation of the division to the company's main site, which was perceived to support a relatively positive social climate at the present time. In other words, the anticipated change was regarded as being largely imposed, rather than an outcome of internal divisional initiatives.

Compared with the above findings for the tooling division, there was more evidence in the production division data of a perceived positive future with respect to the involvement of divisional workers in social activities. Again, support for this conclusion comes from both the quantitative data and the qualitative data. With respect to the former, it will be recalled that approximately half of the available sample for this division (eight out of seventeen respondents or 47%) anticipated an increase, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in social activities. Moreover, attributions about why this change would occur provide evidence of more internal divisional support (among both workers and supervisors/managers) for such a change. In other words, rather than seeing the anticipated change as being externally imposed, it was attributed to factors such as (i) evidence that positive developments with respect to the division's social climate were either already underway or, at least, on the agenda; (ii) a recognition that a positive social climate would somehow contribute to the overall

success and well-being of the organisation; and (iii) a perception that divisional members, on the whole, were become more interested in participation in divisional social activities.

Despite these positive views, however, it must be remembered that the number of respondents from this division who anticipated an increase was matched by an equal number of respondents anticipating no change. While some of these latter respondents gave no reason to suggest that they were dissatisfied with the current level of social activity in the division (for example, the reference to the likely continuation of the annual divisional barbecue can be seen as rather neutral in this regard), other respondents made comments which implied a degree of dissatisfaction. For example, reference was variously made to (i) the absence of active divisional initiatives with respect to the social climate in the division (the perception being that change would require some kind of external stimulus); (ii) an attitude among workers that 'I come to work for money, not to socialise'; and (iii) a tendency for workers (specifically those on afternoon shift) to be set in their ways and, therefore, unlikely to want to pursue a more active social life within the division.

It seems, therefore, that was a degree of polarisation in the views of production division respondents regarding the likelihood of future change in the involvement of divisional workers in social activities. As above for the tooling division, this finding is perhaps also not inconsistent with accounts by production division respondents of their division's history with respect to this activity category. As indicated, there was considerable variability in these accounts, which would seem to indicate a lack of shared experience, in this division, of the involvement of divisional workers in social activities. That this same variability also emerged in respondents' subsequent evaluations of the future context is, therefore, perhaps not surprising.

(iv) Help Other Workers

Table 6.5 shows that the divisions were similar with respect to the numbers of respondents who anticipated a future change in the involvement of divisional workers in giving help to one another. As indicated, there were only three respondents from each division (representing, respectively, 27% of the available sample for the tooling division, and 19% of the available sample for the production division) who anticipated a change with respect to this activity category. In all cases, the direction of the anticipated

change was towards more involvement of divisional workers in giving help to one another in the future.

Of the three respondents from the tooling division who anticipated a change, one was a senior supervisor and two were 'wages' employees with leading hand status. Estimates of when the change towards more involvement of divisional workers in giving help to one another would occur were provided by two respondents, both of whom suggested that the change was already underway. Two respondents attributed the anticipated change to the reduction, over recent years, in the size of the tooling division, one consequence of which was the need for workers to "operate closer and friendlier than what they ever did before" (senior supervisor). The third respondent argued that, due to Award Restructuring, jobs were now more interrelated and hence required workers to work together more closely (and, by implication, to be more helpful towards one another).

Of the remaining eight respondents from this division who were presented with this prompt, seven anticipated no future change in the involvement of divisional workers in giving help to one another, and one indicated that he did not know whether or not there would be a change. Three of these respondents spontaneously elaborated upon their responses. In one case it was argued that the reduced size of the division, instead of bringing workers closer together and making them more helpful towards one another (as above), would make it increasingly difficult for less competent workers (ie. workers needing help) to continue to be accommodated in the division. In the respondent's own words:

...the less people there are, they can't afford to have people that need help. If you need help, 'Goodbye' ('wages' employee, leading hand)

A second respondent argued that divisional workers would continue to provide one another with help as they always had done, since it was simply "human nature" for them to do so. And a third respondent, while he indicated that he did not know whether or not there would be a change with respect to this activity category, expressed his concern that with the restructuring and downsizing of the division, there would be fewer workers in the division in the future who would have the necessary maturity and experience to provide less competent co-workers with help.

The reader is reminded that the above data for the tooling division can be interpreted in the context of a divisional history in which the extent to which workers have provided one another with help on the job appears to have been quite variable. As indicated

previously, the various influences (and constraints) on this behaviour reportedly included: (i) the nature of the task (with some tasks providing more opportunity than others for co-worker interaction); (ii) an attitude, among some divisional members, that workers should seek help from their superiors only (ie. leading hands and immediate supervisors), and not from their co-workers; (iii) the tendency for some workers to be more intent than others on 'protecting their turf' in the sense of being unwilling to share their skills and knowledge with others at the same level; and (iv) an attitude that, to seek help from one's co-workers would be to put at risk one's own reputation and status as a qualified (and hence, highly skilled) tradesman.

The three respondents from the production division who anticipated an increase in the future in the involvement of divisional workers in giving help to one another included one supervisor, one senior supervisor and one 'wages' employee. Estimates of when this change would occur were provided by two of these respondents. The senior supervisor predicted that the change would occur within the next five to ten years and the supervisor predicted that it would occur within the next two to three years. In the case of the former, it was argued that the anticipated change would result from a predicted improvement, over time, in the human resource management skills (including teambuilding skills) of divisional supervisors and managers. In the case of the latter, the anticipated change was attributed to a predicted "happier" work climate in the future, along with a change towards jobs being easier to complete in the future. The 'wages' employee argued that the change towards workers being more helpful towards one another in the future was essential for the survival of the company. In his own words:

Things are getting heavier, things are getting more precise, they've [workers] got to work together. It's like a marriage. There's two of you, if you don't work at it, it's not going to last. It's like anything you do, business or whatever it is. If everybody can't get together... it's just going to collapse. ('wages' employee)

All of the remaining thirteen respondents from this division who were presented with this prompt (data were missing for three respondents) indicated that there would be no change in the future in the involvement of divisional workers in giving help to one another. Again, the reader is reminded that, as above for the tooling division, respondents from the production division were highly variable in their estimates of the current involvement of divisional workers in giving help to one another. It was also the case that the extent to which workers provided one another with help at the present time appeared to be contingent upon a number of factors including the nature of the task

being performed (with some tasks providing more opportunities than others for co-workers interaction) and the nature of the relationship (whether amicable or hostile) between a worker and a co-worker in need of help. There were also reports of the existence, at the present time, of an attitude among some divisional workers that 'I am not paid to help others'. And finally, there was some evidence to suggest that, in recent years, the extent to which the workers in this division provided one another with help may have declined. This was attributed to an increase in production pressure in the division as well as to a perception that workers today were more self-interested than their counterparts in the past.

Interestingly, in respondents' evaluations of the likelihood of future change with respect to this activity category, worker attitudes emerged as being a perceived constraining factor. Seven of the thirteen 'no change' respondents referred to above spontaneously elaborated on their responses and, of these, five made direct or indirect reference to worker attitudes likely to impede change (eg. "...basically people are selfish anyway" ('wages' employee); "...it's the attitude of some people" ('wages' employee); "I don't expect anybody to come and help me, so why should I go and help them" ('wages' employee)). The remaining two respondents who elaborated on their 'no change' response offered somewhat different perspectives. In one case, it was suggested that there was little that an organisation could do to encourage workers to be helpful towards one another, since this was a personality trait which individuals possessed to a greater or lesser extent. In the other, change was seen as unlikely because "if someone's got time to help somebody else, then obviously they haven't got enough work to do" ('wages' employee).

On the basis of the above analysis, a number of concluding comments can be made. First, the divisions were similar in that a majority of respondents from each anticipated no change in the future involvement of divisional workers in providing one another with help on the job. Moreover, where change was anticipated, it was in all cases in the direction of an increase in the helpfulness of workers toward one another in the future. Second, while the 'change' respondents from each division agreed on the direction of the anticipated change, there was some evidence (albeit based on very small numbers) that these respondents differed in terms of their attributions about why the change would occur. Data from the tooling division suggested a perception that the anticipated change was one over which the division had little control – downsizing and Award

Restructuring would make it imperative that divisional workers operate more as a team (and hence, be more helpful towards one another). In contrast, in the production division, there was evidence of a perception that the anticipated change, while it would be more gradual, would be the result of positive initiatives taken within the division (such as efforts to improve the human resource management skills of divisional supervisors and managers and efforts to develop a more positive work climate in the division). Third, and finally, an analysis of respondent elaborations on their 'no change' responses, highlighted some consensus among production division respondents that future change with respect to this activity category was unlikely given the continuing existence in this division of worker attitudes that were not conducive to the development of more cooperative and helpful worker behaviours.

(v) Group problem-solving

As indicated in Table 6.5, there were five respondents from the tooling division and six respondents from the production division (representing 45% and 35% of the available sample for each division respectively) who anticipated some future change in the involvement of divisional workers in group problem-solving activities. In all cases but one the anticipated change was in the direction of an increase in worker involvement in group problem-solving activities in the future. One respondent from the production division predicted a decrease, with specific reference to the likelihood that the current AQAP (Automotive Quality Assurance Process) meetings would not continue in the future.

Three of the five respondents from the tooling division who anticipated a change were supervisory staff (specifically, two first-line supervisors and one senior supervisor), and two were 'wages' employees (one who was a shop steward and the other a leading hand). Estimates of when the anticipated change would occur were provided by four of these respondents. Two indicated that the change was already underway and would be ongoing; one predicted that it would occur within the next year; and one predicted that it would occur within the next five to ten years. In three cases, the anticipated change was perceived to be associated with the relocation (which was currently underway) of the tooling division to the site of the company's main manufacturing and assembly operations where, it was perceived, there existed considerable, and growing, support for group/team approaches to getting work done. In the words of one of these respondents:

I think that [group problem-solving] is happening all over. Last time I went around Elizabeth... they have got photographs of the teams with the blokes' names, or the women's names, haven't they? ...Yes, so it's happening. It is the 'in thing' isn't it at Elizabeth?' ('wages' employee, shop steward).

One of these respondents (a supervisor) made reference also to recent efforts by the union to secure a more active role for divisional workers whereby "workers will become more and more involved in running the place" with the inevitable consequence that, in the future, "my job won't be there". This respondent went on to express his opposition to the anticipated change arguing that, in his opinion, it was essential to have a single individual (presumably someone with some authority) responsible for work outcomes in any given area. In the respondent's own words:

...I don't think you can take away the responsibility of a particular person for an area. Like the fitting area for instance. I'm responsible for it, I've got to keep the records, I've got to answer anything that comes up. If they get back to building tools with a group of people, then you've got too many people to answer for if the job runs over. If they run out of money, who [is] really going to answer [for it]? To go up and ask ten people 'Why did a job go over?'? (first-line supervisor)

A second respondent from this same group (a senior supervisor) also expressed negative views about the anticipated change. This respondent indicated that, in his opinion, team approaches were better suited for use in a production environment than in a tool-making environment because in the former problems were of a more routine nature than they were in the latter. In the respondent's own words:

I don't think [work groups] would work in a toolroom environment. You've got a different problem every day – not a problem that will recur every day, like you may get in the production area for example. Where you're producing the same part, you may get a problem that crops up every day. This can be solved by a number of heads getting together on it. But in the toolroom the same problem may not recur every day. It will be a different problem. (senior supervisor)

Of the remaining two 'change' respondents, one argued that the anticipated change would be a consequence of the current downsizing of the division (with a smaller workforce offering more opportunities for group/teamwork), in addition to reflecting more general changes in workforce demographics (with people entering the workforce today being, on average, better educated than their counterparts in the past, and having expectations of a more active and involved role as 'workers'). The other respondent suggested that the anticipated change would be a consequence of the restructuring of the award, one outcome of which would be the break down of trade barriers which, in the past, had served to maintain individualistic, as opposed to group, approaches to getting work done in the division.

The remaining six respondents from this division who were presented with this prompt all indicated that they did not anticipate any change in the future in the involvement of divisional workers in group problem-solving activities. Four of these respondents elaborated on their responses. In one case (the respondent was a 'wages' employee with leading hand status), it was argued that it was "not the Holden's way of doing things" to institute work practices that entailed a more active and involved role for workers. A second respondent (a supervisor) noted that, while the team approach was unlikely to be implemented in the tooling division, it was "becoming more prevalent on the production side of things". A third respondent (a senior supervisor) presented a similar argument to that of the 'change' respondent above, namely, that given the supervisor's ultimate responsibility for the outcomes of decisions made in his area, it was not appropriate for workers to become too involved in the decision-making process.

In the respondent's own words:

I guess that when the engineers, or the planners, or the estimators, come down and talk about a job, they don't want to get a decision from a worker who's not responsible for that decision... I mean if I'm having a talk to a bloke about a job, we'll talk about it and then I'll make the decision that we go that way, or we'll go that way. It's up to me because if that job falls flat on its face, I'm responsible for it. I've got to account for it, I've got to pay for it, I've got to answer to it... So the bloke on the shopfloor, he really can't make any decisions like that... (senior supervisor)

And finally, a fourth respondent (a 'wages' employee) was emphatic in his view that the current situation whereby, as he perceived it, divisional workers had no involvement in group problem-solving, would remain unchanged in the future. In response to prompting about the future context, the respondent replied simply "No. Never".

The above evaluations, by tooling division respondents, of the likelihood of future change with respect to the activity category 'Group Problem-Solving' have meaning only when considered in the context within which they were formulated. The reader is reminded, therefore, that in this division, there had been a long and stable history of little or no worker involvement in group problem-solving activities. Traditionally, such activities had been the domain of more senior personnel in the division (including supervisory and technical staff and management).

Before discussing the findings of the analysis of future context data for the production division, the reader is reminded that, compared with their counterparts in the tooling division, the respondents from the production division, as a group, had had more exposure over time to group problem-solving activities. These activities took the form

of worker involvement in semi-autonomous teams, set up under the banner of the Team Concept in the early years of the division's operations, as well as worker involvement in AQAP meetings, a more recent initiative in which select workers, along with supervisory and technical staff, worked together in small groups to solve specific work-related problems. Of course, individual respondents from the division varied with respect to their experience of these two initiatives. Some respondents had had direct experience of both the Team Concept and AQAP meetings; some had had direct experience of one of these initiatives only; and some had had no direct experience of either initiative.

The reader will recall that the format of questioning in this part of the interview was such that each respondent was first of all presented with a brief summary of his/her own account of the history of the role of divisional workers with respect to a given activity category (in this case 'Group Problem-Solving'), as provided previously in the context of questioning about the present and the past. The respondent was then asked to indicate whether or not (s)he thought that, in the future, the role of divisional workers with respect to this activity category would be likely to be any different. In this sense, the yardstick against which each respondent was asked to evaluate the likelihood of future change was the respondent's own experience. Naturally, individual differences in experience (of the role of workers with respect to the activity category in question) were reflected in the responses given to prompting about the likelihood of future change. For example, in the case of 'Group Problem-Solving', some of the shorter serving employees from the production division who had had recent experience of AQAP meetings commented on the likelihood of future change with respect specifically to worker involvement in these meetings. Conversely, some of the longer serving respondents who had had significant past experience of the Team Concept commented on the likelihood of a reintroduction of semi-autonomous work teams. This feature of the present data set (namely, that the changes anticipated by individual respondents referred to different types of group problem-solving activities) clearly presents some problems for the current approach of aggregating data. In particular, the extent to which meaningful conclusions can be drawn from the results of such an exercise is questionable. Clearly, any subsequent attempt to refine the current method will need to address this problem.

However, without wishing to negate the above arguments, it has been necessary for the purpose of the present analysis, to work within the constraints of the existing data set. As such, the approach that I have adopted is simply to highlight inconsistencies in the future context data, where these emerge. I have also attempted to describe some commonalities in the production division data and to draw some tentative conclusions about similarities and differences between the two divisions in terms of anticipated future changes in the role of divisional workers with respect to group problem-solving.

As indicated, there were six respondents in all from the production division who anticipated a change, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in group problem-solving activities. For five of these respondents – including three ‘wages employees (two females and one male) and two first-line supervisors – the anticipated change was in the direction of an increase in worker involvement in group problem-solving in the future, and for one respondent – a senior supervisor – it was in the direction of a decrease. With respect to the former, it is worth noting that none of the three ‘wages’ employees (all of whom were shorter-serving employees) had had past experience of the Team Concept, but that both of the supervisors had been present during this phase of the division’s operations.

In terms of the specific changes to which these respondents referred, all three ‘wages’ employees predicted an increase, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in AQAP meetings. Two of these respondents argued that this change would be a direct consequence of the forthcoming introduction of a new model vehicle which, as past experience had shown, would be likely to give rise to an increase in the number of production problems which had to be resolved. The following excerpts, quoted verbatim from these respondents, serve to illustrate:

I think it will [change] with the new model coming out, and that’s when we had so many AQAP groups. When the VN was first [introduced] we had a lot of problems with a lot of parts and that’s when we started all our different groups then. (‘wages’ employee)

...when we have the next model change, which will be a major change, there will be headaches galore and then there will be problems. There will be accidents with dies smashing, there will be problems with parts, and they’ll start all over again. And they will put these... probably get these sheets out of the bottom draw, blow the dust off them and say, ‘Right, we’ve got to get back to basics again’ whereas they really should be doing it ongoing. (‘wages’ employee)

The third 'wages' employee attributed the anticipated increase in worker involvement in AQAP meetings to a commitment, on the part of management, to "get workers more involved with what's going on".

In contrast to the 'wages' employees, both of the supervisors made reference to future changes which they saw as being part of a general trend in industry at the present time towards more participative human resource management practices. Specifically, one of these supervisors predicted the emergence, in the future, of semi-autonomous work groups and the other made reference to the likely introduction of quality circles, which he argued were the "real thing in the industry at the moment right across the board, from us, to Telecom, to BHP." It is also worth mentioning that the elaborations of the former contained references to his own, and divisional management's support for the anticipated change. In this respondent's own words:

I think management has realised that the individuals [ie. workers] have got a lot more talent than what they first thought they had. There's a lot of resources out there which haven't been tapped and I think, given a little bit of extra responsibility, given a lot of support, people will perform a lot better. They'll be happier in their work in general. (first-line supervisor)

Estimates of when the anticipated change would occur were obtained from all of the above respondents and, in all cases, the perception was that the change would occur in the near, rather than the distant, future. Specifically, these estimates included: (i) already underway and ongoing (one respondent); (ii) within the next year (two respondents); (iii) within the next two to three years (one respondent); and (iv) more than two years away.

As indicated, there was one respondent – a senior supervisor – who predicted a decrease in the future in the involvement of divisional workers in group problem solving activities. In this case, the respondent was referring specifically to the likely future demise of AQAP meetings. It was suggested that these meetings, at least in their current form, were too much under the control of divisional management. They offered insufficient opportunity for active involvement on the part of workers, and as a result, workers showed little support for the initiative. In the respondents own words:

My opinion about AQAP as it is... [it] will die a slow and painful death because it's not getting the support of the shop floor. It's being pushed from the top down, so it's got to be come at from a different angle. What the angle is, I don't know. But I don't think you'll see it again in the form that is it in now, or if you do it will be very limited and it will be run by staff... The shop floor see it as the thing that followed on from TQC [the reference here is to a Total Quality Control programme] which was a flop. (senior supervisor)

Of the remaining eleven respondents from the production division who were presented with this prompt, four indicated that they did not know whether or not there would be a change in the future in the involvement of divisional workers in group problem-solving and seven indicated that there would be no change.

All of the 'don't know' respondents were 'wages' employees (including one female and three males). In two cases, the evaluation of the future was in relation, specifically, to AQAP meetings (one of these respondents was a shorter-serving employee and the other a longer-serving employee); in the other two cases (both respondents being longer-serving employees) the reference was general (ie. the type of group problem-solving activity was not specified). Three of the 'don't know' respondents spontaneously elaborated on their responses. These elaborations included: (i) a comment on the part of one respondent that there was "really nothing to indicate 'yes' or 'no' at the moment"; (ii) one respondent expressing the view that "there should be more of it"; and (iii) one respondent arguing that, whether or not workers became more involved in group problem-solving in the future, would depend entirely upon management. As the following excerpt illustrates, this latter respondent was somewhat cynical about the attitude of divisional management towards the role of workers in group problem-solving. Specifically, it was suggested that management used problem-solving meetings as an opportunity to allocate blame for production problems. There was a perception also that management were not interested in workers' ideas for resolving problems. And finally, the respondent implied that management were quite changeable with respect to their support for initiatives such as group problem-solving:

[It is] up to management again. If they want to start pointing the finger, they'll call you in. If they want to point the finger, that's the only way they're going to do it. They'll say 'Right, we've got a problem here. We reckon it's this, this, this and this.' We'll say 'No, it's not.' And they'll go 'Yeh, yeh, yeh. We've worked it out and it works out this way.' We'll say 'No, it's not.'Management have got to change their way of thinking. They used to have what they called an open door policy – you can go through and discuss anything [that is] wrong. Now they've closed the door in your face, they don't want to know anything about it.' ('wages' employee)

All of the 'no change' respondents were also 'wages' employees (including five males and two females). In three cases, the reference was specifically to AQAP meetings and, in one case, it was to the Team Concept. The remaining three respondents did not specify what their 'no change' responses referred to. These data could not easily be explained in terms of respondent length of service. In other words, it

was not the case that all of the 'no change' respondents who referred specifically to AQAP meetings were shorter-serving employees (with no experience of the earlier Team Concept initiative). Five of the 'no change' respondents elaborated spontaneously on their responses. Specifically, one respondent indicated that, while he did not anticipate a future change towards involving divisional workers in group problem-solving activities, in his opinion, the current 'State of the Nation' meetings (essentially meetings for information dissemination) functioned very much like team meetings. Two respondents expressed the view that, while it was unlikely, future change towards more worker involvement in group problem-solving was desirable. A fourth respondent commented on the failure of team meetings – "...technically, they were a waste of time" – that had been held in the past as part of the Team Concept initiative. According to this respondent, the attitudes and behaviours of divisional workers continued to be such that team meetings would be unlikely to be reintroduced. In the respondent's own words:

You've got a group of young ones sitting around a table... well, you've walked around the factory long enough I think to see what some of them look like, and the way some of them behave. You can imagine what some of them could be like if you did have meetings just within a group of themselves. ('wages' employee)

And finally, a fifth respondent argued that change towards more involvement of shop floor workers in group problem-solving meetings was unlikely because management "can't afford to have the people off the shop floor".

On the basis of the analysis reported above, a number of concluding comments can be made regarding similarities and differences between the two divisions in respondent evaluations of the future context with respect to the activity category 'Group Problem-Solving'. As indicated, the divisions were similar in that a similar percentage of respondents from each (45% from the tooling division, and 35% from the production division) anticipated a change, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in group problem-solving activities. Furthermore, in all cases but one, the direction of the anticipated change was towards more involvement of workers in such activities in the future. In both divisions, there was some evidence of a perception that this change would be likely to occur in the near, rather than the distant future (specifically, three out of four respondents from the tooling division provided estimates in the range 'already underway' to 'within the next year' and four out of five respondents from the production division provided estimates in the range 'already underway' to 'within the next three years').

In addition to these similarities, a number of differences between the divisions were suggested by the above analysis. In particular, there was some evidence to suggest that the divisions might differ in terms of the attributional 'style' characteristic of each. Specifically, all of the respondents from the tooling division who anticipated a change attributed the change to circumstances which, it could be argued, were largely outside of the division's control (including, the relocation and downsizing of the division, societal changes, the restructuring of the award, and pressure from the unions). In this sense (and as observed previously in relation to findings reported for some of the other activity categories), respondents from the tooling division appeared to see the change as reactive, rather than proactive (implying a degree of individual/group control over, in this case, what might happen in the future). In contrast, there was much more variability in the types of attributions that were made by respondents from the production division who anticipated a change. While there was some evidence of a perception that the change would be reactive – a response to both internal circumstances (specifically, the introduction of a new model vehicle with its attendant problems) as well as external circumstances (specifically, a general trend in industry towards more participative human resource management practices) – the attributional data from the production division also contained references to the active role that divisional management would take in initiating and supporting the change.

The above analysis also provided some evidence to suggest that the two divisions might differ in terms of prevailing attitudes (held by the respondent him/herself, or perceived by the respondent to be held by others) towards the involvement of divisional workers in group problem-solving activities. As above for the attributional data, there was more consistency in the evaluative data provided by tooling division respondents than in the evaluative data provided by production division respondents. For the former, all of these data were negative. Specifically, there were three respondents from the tooling division (one first-line supervisor and two senior supervisors) who indicated their clear opposition to the involvement of divisional workers in group problem-solving activities. Two of these respondents argued that, given a supervisor's ultimate responsibility for work outcomes in his area, it was inappropriate to involve workers in problem-solving activities. The third respondent argued that complex problems, such as those which were typically encountered in the tooling division, could not be solved using team approaches (the implication being that significant problems could only be

solved by an 'expert' supervisor). One of these respondents was a 'no change' respondent while the other two were 'change' respondents. In addition there were a further two respondents from this division (both 'wages' employees and both 'no change' respondents) who held the view (expressed explicitly in one case and implicitly in the other) that work practices such as group problem-solving, which entailed a more active role for workers, were simply not 'the way things were done' in this division. There were no evaluative data from the tooling division which provided evidence of positive attitudes towards worker involvement in group problem-solving.

In contrast, the evaluative data from the production division provided evidence of both positive and negative attitudes towards worker involvement in group problem-solving. One respondent only from this division (a 'wages' employee who anticipated 'no change') expressed his personal opposition to the practice. This respondent reflected on past problems with the Team Concept and suggested that future initiatives of this kind would be bound to fail because of the poor attitudes and behaviours of some of the workers in the division. Two respondents (a senior supervisor who predicted the phasing out of AQAP meetings in the future and a 'wages' employee who indicated that he did not know whether or not the role of workers with respect to group problem-solving would change in the future), expressed their concerns about the approach to group problem-solving (in the form, specifically, of AQAP meetings) in the division at the present time. In both cases, it was suggested that divisional management had too much control over these meetings (in terms of agenda setting) and that they did not listen to, or implement, the ideas put forward by the workers who participated in the meetings. This perception that existing management attitudes constituted an obstacle to the development of a more active role for divisional workers in group problem-solving can be contrasted with references, by a further two respondents from this division, to more favourable management attitudes towards worker involvement in group problem-solving. One of these respondents (a 'wages' employee) indicated that she thought that there would be more worker involvement in AQAP meetings in the future, and attributed this to a management commitment to "get workers more involved with what's going on". The second respondent (a first-line supervisor) predicted the emergence of semi-autonomous work groups in the future and indicated his own, and divisional management's, support for such a development. Finally, there were three respondents from this division (all 'wages' employees, two being 'no change' respondents and the

third a 'don't know' respondent) who made spontaneous reference to the desirability of there being more involvement for divisional workers in group problem-solving activities in the future.

One possible explanation for the above finding (that attitudes towards worker involvement in group problem-solving (whether those reportedly held by the respondent him/herself or those which the respondent perceived to be held by others) appeared to be more consistent in the tooling division than in the production) is simply that it is an artefact of the nature and size of the sample drawn from each division. While this explanation cannot be discounted, the point should be made that this finding is not inconsistent with qualitative experience (acquired by the author over a number of years of collecting data in both divisions) suggesting that the culture of the tooling division was such that initiatives, such as group problem-solving for workers, would be likely to encounter more widespread resistance in that division than in the production division. It is also the case that the above finding is not inconsistent with findings reported previously, in relation to other aspects of the interview data for this study. For example, in the analysis of data pertaining to respondents' past and present experience of worker involvement in training (see Section 5.2.2, pp. 294-299), evidence was cited to suggest that, as a group, respondents from the tooling division were more homogeneous than their counterparts in the production division. Specifically, they were more consistent in their accounts of the history of worker involvement in training in this division (with respect to both the nature of the changes that had occurred and the reasons for these changes). Finally, the reader is reminded that the tooling division appears to have had a long and relatively stable history of little or no worker involvement in group problem-solving activities. Given this historical context, the above finding that reported attitudes towards this practice were consistently negative, would appear to be reasonably consistent with what one might expect.

(vi) Information Meetings

Table 6.5 shows that, for each division, a minority of respondents only anticipated some change in the future in the involvement of divisional workers in information meetings. Specifically, there were four respondents from the tooling division (36% of the available sample) and four respondents from the production division (25% of the available sample) who anticipated a change. Two of the tooling division respondents were supervisory staff and two were 'wages' employees (with the additional status of

shop steward in one case and leading hand in the other). All four of these respondents anticipated that, in the future, there would be more involvement of divisional workers in information meetings. Estimates of when this change would occur ranged from 'already happening',¹²⁰ (two respondents) to 'within the next twelve months' (one respondent). Attributions about why the anticipated change would occur varied and included: (i) as previously, the relocation of the division to the site of the company's main manufacturing and assembly operations and the belief that teamwork and associated practices were integral to the way in which work was done at this site (one respondent); (ii) as previously, changes in the broader social context which were influencing the role expectations of employees (one respondent); (iii) a personal commitment on the part of the respondent (a supervisor) to ensuring that his subordinates were well-informed (this respondent emphasised that not all supervisors shared this commitment); and (iv) the move towards multi-skilling and the "breaking down of the trade barriers" which made it imperative that there was good two-way information flow (ie. from management to workers and vice versa), as well as a perception by the respondent that divisional management wanted "to try and have a better running unit, a happier unit" (one respondent).

Of the respondents from the tooling division who indicated 'no change', there were three who elaborated on their responses. One suggested that it was not "the Holden's way of doing things" to seek to keep workers well-informed; one expressed his desire that 'State of the Nation' meetings, as they were currently being experienced, should continue into the future; and one implied that, while future change was unlikely, if it were to occur it could not be regarded as anything more than a manifestation of the particular management style of whoever happened to be in charge at the time.

Of the four respondents from the production division who anticipated a future change with respect to this activity category, three were 'wages' employees (specifically, two production operators and one die-setter) and one was a supervisor. As for the tooling division, all four of these respondents anticipated that the change would be towards more involvement of divisional workers in information meetings in the future. Estimates of when the anticipated change would be likely to occur were provided by three respondents. Of these, one indicated that he saw the change as the continuation of an existing trend; one estimated that the change would occur within the next six months;

¹²⁰ This was introduced as a sixth response category after interviewing had already begun.

and one that it would occur within the next year. Three respondents indicated that they saw the anticipated change as an explicit attempt, presumably by management, to make workers better informed. For example:

On average in the future there will be more [information meetings] and, on the average, they're pretty good. [The aim will be] to try to keep the people knowledgeable of what the company's plans are... And after all, if the people on the floor know what's going on, I think they might be a little bit happier. ('wages' employee)

I think we'll try and get people together as a group more and more, whether it would be just the State of the Nation... I think there's more value in getting the group together and discussing with them as much information as you possibly can share... [Management] is the driving force behind it, I reckon. They will support those ideas. (first-line supervisor).

One respondent associated the change with the forthcoming release, by the company, of a new model vehicle. Whereas there was "nothing happening" at present and, hence, "not really much to report", an event such as the introduction of a new model vehicle was highly significant and was, therefore, monitored closely by the company. Because of the increase in the amount of "newsworthy" information available at such times it was, therefore, usual for there to be an associated increase in the frequency of information meetings for workers.

Of remaining twelve respondents from the production division who were asked about the likelihood of future change with respect to the involvement of divisional workers in information meetings, two indicated that they did not know and ten anticipated that there would be no change. While some of the latter respondents elaborated on their responses, it was difficult to detect any common thematic content in these elaborations. For example, one respondent expressed his support for an increase in the involvement of divisional workers in information meetings. One respondent argued that, while the information component of these meetings was no doubt of interest to some, there was a tendency for the workers in these meetings to always ask the same questions of management (concerning problems for which there was no easy resolution) and for management, in turn, to always give the same answers. This respondent was pessimistic about the likelihood of this aspect of information meetings changing in the future. A third respondent expressed the view that worker involvement in information meetings would remain unchanged "unless something happens, and they close the place down". A fourth respondent suggested that, in view of the recent transfer of the divisional manager to another department (temporarily, and for the purpose of working on a

special project), it was unlikely that, at least in the short-term, the involvement of divisional workers in information meetings would increase. Finally, a fifth respondent indicated that, while he thought it unlikely, it was ultimately the prerogative of management to decide to change the involvement of divisional workers in information meetings (in this case, to dispense with the meetings altogether). As the respondent said: 'It's up to management. If management says 'No', we don't have them'. It is perhaps worth making the point that this respondent, and the third respondent above, both seem to have equated 'change' in this case with a decrease, rather than an increase, in the involvement of divisional workers in information meetings. This interpretation would appear to signify at least some degree of satisfaction, on the part of these respondents, with the current experience of worker involvement in information meetings.

In conclusion, the above results point to at least some degree of similarity between the two divisions in terms of anticipated future changes in the involvement of divisional workers in information meetings. As indicated, in each division, there was a minority of respondents only who anticipated any future change with respect to this activity category. In all cases, the anticipated change was towards more involvement of divisional workers in information meetings in the future. In both divisions the change was estimated to be no more than one year away, with some respondents suggesting that it was already underway. The divisions did not differ with respect to the seniority of respondents who anticipated a change (ie. in both divisions, workers and supervisors were represented in the 'change' group). In view of the small numbers of respondents anticipating a change, it is difficult to make any conclusive comments about the nature of the attributions made by respondents from each division. However, as previously for planning meetings, there was some evidence that respondents from the tooling division saw future change with respect to this activity category as likely to be imposed upon them by circumstances largely outside of their control (eg. the relocation of the division, changes in the wider society, the introduction of Award Restructuring). In contrast, in the production division, there was more evidence of a perception among respondents that management would at least support, if not directly instigate, the anticipated change. As indicated, in neither division were the 'no change' data particularly revealing. It may be, however, that the specification of 'no change' as 'no decrease', rather than 'no increase' (as was the case for two respondents from the production division), may

provide clues as to respondents' underlying satisfaction with the current situation. In other words, if, when contemplating the possibility of future change, respondents automatically assume that this would mean the deterioration, rather than the improvement, of present circumstances, then one might reasonably conclude that respondents feel some satisfaction with present circumstances.

Finally, it is important to consider the above findings for each division in the context of each division's history with respect to this activity category. As reported previously, the tooling division had had a long history of little or no involvement of divisional workers in information meetings. The current information ('State of the Nation') meetings had been introduced only recently, reportedly in an attempt by management to curb increasing rumours about the decline of the division. Furthermore, these meetings were held relatively infrequently (once or twice annually). This, then, is the context in which the above finding that a majority of the respondents from the tooling division anticipated no future change in the involvement of divisional workers in information meetings must be interpreted. In contrast, while formal information meetings were also a relatively 'new' phenomenon in the production division, they occurred with greater frequency than in the tooling division (every one to three months). Moreover, attributions about why they had been introduced tended to be more positive, with references to the recognition, by divisional management, of the human relations value of keeping workers well-informed. Again, the above finding that a majority of the respondents from the production division anticipated no future change in the involvement of divisional workers in information meetings has meaning only when interpreted in the context of this information.

(vii) Planning Meetings

As indicated in Table 6.5, there were four respondents from the tooling division (36% of the available sample) and three respondents from the production division (17% of the available sample) who anticipated some future change in the involvement of divisional workers in planning meetings. Three of the four respondents from the tooling division were supervisory staff and one was a 'wages' employee who was also a shop steward. All four respondents anticipated that, in the future, the involvement of divisional workers in planning meetings would increase. The kind of planning in which workers would be likely to be involved included policy making (cited by one respondent) and operational planning such as that involved in carrying out time studies

for specific jobs (cited by one respondent). Three respondents were asked to provide estimates of when the change towards more worker involvement in planning would be likely to occur. Of these, two indicated that the change was already in progress and one indicated that he did not know. Interestingly, all four respondents indicated that the anticipated change would be a response to circumstances which were largely outside of the division's control including (i) the reduced size of the divisional workforce which would necessitate an increase in the responsibilities of those employees who remained (cited by two respondents); (ii) changes in the broader social context (eg. increased educational opportunities) which were influencing the role expectations of employees (cited by one respondent); (iii) union pressure; and (iv) the relocation of the division to the company's main manufacturing and assembly operations at Elizabeth where, it was believed, there was more emphasis on teamwork and employee involvement in activities such as planning and decision-making (cited by one respondent).

Of the seven respondents from the tooling division who anticipated 'no change', three elaborated on their responses. Interestingly, all three made reference to some aspect of the traditional role of supervisors in the division which, if it remained unchanged, would – rightly or wrongly – make it unlikely that the extent of worker involvement in activities such as planning would ever increase substantially. The following excerpts serve to illustrate:

...I presume the supervisor is still going to be held responsible like he is, and he's got to make the decisions. (first-line supervisor)

I can't see it changing to a big, large amount at this point in time. ...Because I think probably underneath it all, and I put this down to our foremen, they really want to be in control of everything all the time, so by them trying to be in control, they keep people doing exactly what they want, rather than give the people the innovativeness to go on and do their own... but I suppose in some way, you've got to do that too, otherwise you could have all sorts of run-away jobs. ('wages' employee, leading hand)

As indicated, there were three respondents from the production division who anticipated a change in the future in the involvement of divisional workers in planning activities. All three respondents were supervisory staff and all three anticipated that the change would be towards more involvement of divisional workers in planning. The type of planning in which workers would be likely to be involved would be planning in relation to shop floor issues such as the layout of work areas (cited by two respondents). One respondent estimated that the change would be likely to occur within the next year and another that it was 'more than two years away'. The anticipated change was

attributed by one respondent to the impact of technology which would result in, among other things, a substantially reduced but technically more skilled workforce in the future. A smaller workforce, it was argued, would be easier to manage in terms of its involvement in planning activities, and a more skilled workforce would be better able to contribute to such activities. The other two respondents saw the anticipated change as part of a more general shift in the industry towards decentralisation and the redesign of work around self-governing groups and quality circles. In both cases, this change was seen as positive (eg. in terms of increased worker interest in the job) and examples were given of major Australian corporations which had embarked upon such change.

Of the remaining fifteen respondents from the production division who were prompted about worker involvement in planning, three indicated that they did not know whether this would change in the future and twelve anticipated that there would be no change. Of those anticipating no change, five indicated spontaneously that, while the level of worker involvement in planning was unlikely to increase in the future, they nevertheless thought that such a change was desirable. These responses were represented by comments such as:

No, I can't see it changing. I think it's a move for the better, but I can't see it changing. ('wages' employee)

A further two respondents made reference to the existence of attitudes that would be likely to impede efforts to increase the involvement of divisional workers in planning activities. In one case, these attitudes were attributed to company design staff:

[It won't change] mainly because of the way the product is basically built [and] designed... you've got your design staff, who conceive the vehicle, and then all the bits that go into that are drawn up and pre-built and pre-ordained, so there's very little input that [supervisory staff or workers] can have except on maybe minor product changes... In fact, we've had some inherent design problems with the current bumper facia which were raised before the injection moulding tools were made, and design staff said 'No, that's the way it's going to be'. And we're having monumental problems with it now, and they have deemed that it will be the same on the next model... Design staff are very hard to change. And they have a major influence on the way we build the product. (senior supervisor)

In the other case, these attitudes were attributed to management:

They won't involve you in planning. They won't involve the average worker in planning. They think we haven't got the intelligence to do it. They think we're all stupid. ('wages' employee)

Finally, one respondent argued that the current situation in which, as he indicated, leading hands, rather than workers, attended planning meetings was entirely appropriate:

...at the moment there's no need for every worker to go to those meetings, because that's what you've got a leading hand for, and a leading hand can always feedback that information to the people on the floor in any case. ('wages' employee)

No reference was made by this respondent to either the nature of the involvement of leading hands in planning meetings (whether active contributors to the planning process, or passive recipients of planning information), or to the extent to which leading hands subsequently disseminated planning information to workers on the shop floor.

Overall, the results above, pertaining to questioning about anticipated future changes in the involvement of divisional workers in planning, suggest the following general conclusions. First, in each division, there was a minority of respondents only who anticipated a change with respect to this activity category. In all cases but one these respondents were supervisory staff (including first-line and senior supervisors) and not shop floor workers. Furthermore, all of these respondents anticipated that the change would be towards more involvement of divisional workers in planning in the future. A second concluding point is that, in neither division was it possible to detect any particular pattern in respondent estimates of when the anticipated change would occur; neither was there any obvious consistency in respondent attributions about why the change would occur (although a tendency for tooling division respondents to attribute the change to factors outside of the division's control was noted). Third, there was evidence in both divisions of the existence of attitudes (which respondents perceived in others – notably, those in more senior positions – or which the respondent himself held) which would be likely to be the source of some resistance to any attempt to increase the involvement of divisional workers in planning activities. At the same time, in the production division, there were some expressions (by respondents from both the 'change' and 'no change' groups) of support for such a change.

The fourth and final point is that the findings reported above are consistent with those reported previously for the past and present contexts. Specifically, both divisions were shown to have had a history of little or no involvement of divisional workers in planning activities. There was, however, some evidence that the workers in the production division had had more exposure than their counterparts in the tooling division to other activities consistent with a more 'active' role for workers (eg. group problem-solving and information meetings). This aspect of their past and present experience (ie. the degree of exposure to such activities, rather than necessarily the quality of the experience, whether positive or negative) may help to explain the above

finding that some respondents expressed their support for a future change towards more involvement of divisional workers in planning.

Prompted activity categories: Differences between the two divisions

It can be seen from Table 6.5 that there were three prompted activity categories, out of ten, for which the difference between the divisions (in terms of the percentage of respondents anticipating a change in the future) was more than 20% (the nominated criterion for the classification of 'differences'). These categories, in order from 'most different' to 'least different', were: (i) 'Record Work-Related Information' (a difference score of -33%); (ii) 'Attend Training' (23% difference); and (iii) 'Safety Meetings' (21% difference). The specific findings for each of these activity categories are discussed below.

(i) Record Work-Related Information

As indicated, this activity category produced the most marked difference between the divisions in terms of the percentage of respondents who anticipated a change in the future, in this case with respect to the involvement of divisional workers in recording work-related information. Specifically, there were two respondents from the tooling division (20% of the available sample for this division) who anticipated a change, compared with 10 respondents from the production division (53% of the total sample for this division).

With respect to the findings for the tooling division, both of the respondents who anticipated a change (including one senior supervisor and one 'wages' employee who was also a shop steward) indicated that, in the future, they thought that there would be more involvement of the workers in this division in recording work-related information. The former respondent indicated that the change, which was already underway, was the result of his own personal initiative to encourage the workers in his area to maintain records of various work procedures. In this respondent's own words:

I'm encouraging that... Yes, I think there'll be a change in that. I dish out file notes and updates on chemicals and different procedures that we come across, and to give the message to the blokes, I call them all together, explain that there's a difference in procedures of such and such a material or there's been a change of name, we talk about it, I get it printed up and then I give them all a copy each... Now, a couple of them have asked for manilla folders so they can stick them in their tool boxes... So they are starting to, through my encouragement, trying to get their records together. (senior supervisor)

The latter respondent, who did not provide an estimate of when the anticipated change would likely to occur, attributed the change to a drive (by divisional management?) to

increase the efficiency of the division as well as to “create a bit more interest [through] more participation of the bloke on the shop floor”.

All of the remaining eight respondents from this division who were presented with this prompt indicated that they anticipated no change, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in recording work-related information. Of these, five spontaneously elaborated on their responses. It is useful to comment briefly on these elaborations since they provide additional insights into respondent views about the involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping activities. Specifically, two of these respondents expressed their firm conviction that there would be no change, with the response of one being “I’d be very surprised if it does [change]” and the response of the other being “I don’t see that changing at all”. A third respondent made the point that, in the future, he thought that record-keeping would “still be the job of the foreman and the leading hand”. A fourth respondent argued that, because it was such a “time-consuming” activity, it was unlikely that workers would ever have much involvement in it. And finally, a fifth respondent indicated that, while it was his own opinion that worker involvement in record-keeping would not change “a great deal” in the future, it was possible that there might be some change “subject to Award Restructuring”.

The above evaluations by tooling division respondents of the likelihood of future change in the involvement of divisional workers in record keeping activities can be interpreted fairly readily within the historical context of respondent experience with respect to this activity category. As indicated, the findings of the previous analysis of data pertaining to the past and present contexts provided good evidence to suggest that the workers in the tooling division had had a long and stable history of little or no involvement in record-keeping activities, these activities being seen to be the domain primarily of divisional personnel in more senior positions (that is, supervisory and technical staff, and management).

Of the ten respondents from the production division who anticipated a change, nine predicted that, in the future, there would be an increase in the involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping activities. These respondents included five ‘wages’ employees (three males and two females), two senior supervisors, and two first-line supervisors. Estimates of when the anticipated change would be likely to occur were provided by seven respondents and ranged from (i) ‘already underway and likely to be ongoing’ (three respondents); (ii) ‘within the next six months’ (one respondent); (iii)

'within the next year' (two respondents); and (iv) 'within the next two years' (one respondent). A common theme which emerged in the attributions of these respondents was that record-keeping served an important control function – it helped to maintain and enhance the efficiency of divisional operations (in relation to both productivity and product quality) and this, in turn, contributed to the long-term survival of the division. The reader may recall that this same theme also emerged in attributions made by these respondents concerning changes which they had already experienced (as opposed to changes which they anticipated) in the involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping activities. With regard to the present analysis, there were six respondents in all whose attributions contained a more or less explicit reference to this theme. A sample of these attributions is provided below.

[There will be] more, much more... I think it's a way of trying to run the plant more efficiently and they'll do it to try and sort of work out where they're losing and where they can gain.' ('wages' employee)

I think there's got to be changes within the next year. The way, you know, the way things are... we've just got to do it to stay in business. ('wages' employee)

...I've seen a gradual change from '88 through to now, and the emphasis is to go further and further with it, because it's to do with getting quality bits and stuff like that. So it's all a package of making sure our product is okay. (senior supervisor)

And that's going to become even more a standard work practice very, very shortly. In fact, I'm encouraging it all the time now... So what I would like to see would be 100% contribution – that anyone who has got a function to play, keeps the data on that function, so we've got total control... It's the only way to go – the only way you can ever control anything is by recording it. (first-line supervisor)

In addition to the above emphasis on the need for improved control over production processes, there were a number of other attributions about why the anticipated change towards more involvement of divisional workers in record keeping would be likely to occur. One respondent saw the change as being largely imposed in the sense that, in order for the division to become accredited as a quality supplier, it was formally required to maintain records pertaining to key performance indicators. In the respondent's own words:

...we will be doing more of it. We will be required to do more of it anyway, purely by the fact that we're now being legislated, in as much as we have to, if we want to become quality suppliers... (senior supervisor)

A second respondent linked the anticipated change to the forthcoming introduction of a new model vehicle, suggesting that "...they'll have problems and they'll want to try and get some data on it'. A third respondent made reference to the impact of "modern

technology”, in particular the increased complexity of parts and machinery, which would make it necessary for the individual operator “to learn [more] and to log down more things”. And finally, there was one respondent (a supervisor) who pointed to the role of record-keeping in enriching the job of production operators. In his own words: “That’s my aim, to get, to give them [ie. workers] more value in the work environment”. It is perhaps somewhat surprising, given previously reported evidence suggesting that the production division supported more progressive human resource management practices than the tooling division, that these attributional data contained this single reference only to the value of record-keeping for the development of the division’s human resources.

The point should also be made that, while a number of the above respondents clearly regarded the anticipated change as desirable, there were others who were more ambivalent in their attitudes towards it. For example, one respondent acknowledged the desirability of record-keeping in the long term while at the same time complaining that “It’s a pain in the butt to do it.” Another respondent argued that while workers were being required to do more record-keeping, they were not being allocated sufficient time in which to do it. And a third respondent expressed his view that, while record-keeping could be “beneficial to the organisation and the individual”, there was also a risk that it could “turn into a paper exercise, in which case it’s counterproductive”.

As indicated, there was one respondent (a supervisor) from the production division who anticipated that, in the future (time unspecified), there would be less involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping activities. The respondent attributed the anticipated change to a technological change whereby “there will be more electronic recording, and the only thing that will be required then will be the analysis of the data that you collect from that electronic recording”.

Of the remaining nine respondents from this division who were presented with this prompt, eight anticipated no change, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping activities and one indicated that he did not know whether or not there would be a change. These nine respondents were all ‘wages’ employees (including six males and three females). Four spontaneously elaborated on their responses. In one case, the respondent (who had previously indicated ‘don’t know’) emphasised the important of achieving a balance between record-keeping and direct production. In his own words:

To record things you have to stop people actually producing and there has to be a balance with what the company will actually allow you to record because it interferes with what you are producing. And the more you record the [more] paper work you have got, the less you actually make, so there is going to have to be a balance. ('wages' employee)

A second respondent pointed out that record-keeping was the job of the leading hand who "records what's being made in the area, what's being rejected...". And in two cases, reference was made to characteristics of the respondent's own section which would be likely to preclude any future change in the involvement of the workers in each section in record-keeping activities. The specific responses of these two respondents were as follows:

No, it'll be the same because there's only like the one line that's got [to] be recorded how many times it goes off. ('wages' employee)

There's not usually a lot that needs to be recorded in assembly and so that would probably stay as it is. ('wages' employee)

Finally, the above evaluations by production division respondents of the likelihood of a change, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping activities are not inconsistent with what one might expect given the historical context in which these evaluations were made. As indicated previously, the results of the analysis of data pertaining to the past and present contexts provided evidence to suggest that, for a significant proportion of the workers in the production division, the recording of work-related information constituted an integral part of their job function. There was also evidence that this aspect of the role of divisional workers had been increasingly emphasised over recent years (from the late 1980's onwards) as part of an attempt, by divisional management, to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of production operations in the division.

Overall, the following general conclusions are suggested by the above analysis of future context data pertaining to the prompted activity category 'Record Work-Related Information'. First of all, there was a clear difference between the two divisions in respondent evaluations of the likelihood of a change, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping activities. As indicated, for the tooling division, there were two respondents only (20% of the available sample) who anticipated a change. While both respondents predicted more involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping activities in the future, in one case the reference was to an individual initiative, by the respondent (a supervisor) himself, to encourage his subordinates to take

a more active role in this regard. In other words, the anticipated change was, in this case, a highly localised change, rather than a more general division-wide change. In contrast, just over half of the respondents from the production division (ten out of nineteen or 53% of the sample for this division) anticipated a change in the future. In all cases but one, the direction of the anticipated change was towards more involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping activities in the future.

The second general conclusion that can be drawn is that the findings for both divisions were not inconsistent with what one might expect, given each division's respective history of the involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping activities. For the tooling division, it appeared that there had been little or no involvement of divisional workers in such activities over an extended period of time. Moreover, the future context data contained no evidence of a widely shared perception that this would change significantly in the future. The observation might even be made that respondents from this division expressed neither positive nor negative attitudes towards the involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping activities, suggesting perhaps that such activities did not constitute a salient feature of the role of divisional workers, as defined by these respondents.

In contrast, the role of workers from the production division with respect to record-keeping activities appears to have been much more firmly established. As indicated, there was evidence that over recent years divisional workers had become even more involved in record-keeping activities (as part of an efficiency drive in this division) and, as suggested by the findings of the above analysis of future context data, there was evidence of a perception (shared by almost half of the respondents from this division) that this development would gain increased momentum in the future. Finally, compared with the tooling division, the future context data for the production division did contain explicit references to respondent attitudes towards the involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping activities. As indicated, however, there was a degree of inconsistency in these attitudes. Some respondents held positive attitudes, whilst others were more ambivalent and expressed their concerns about the time consuming nature of record-keeping and the potential risk of it becoming merely a 'paper exercise' which would result, inevitably, in inefficiencies with respect to direct production activities in the division.

(ii) Attend Training

Compared with the activity category 'Record Work-Related Information', this activity category produced a more marginal difference between the two divisions. As shown in Table 6.5, there was a 23% difference between the divisions in terms of the percentage of respondents who anticipated a change, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in training. This difference was three percentage points only above the nominated criterion for the classification of 'differences' (namely, a difference score of more than 20%). What is of more interest (and perhaps significance) about the findings for this activity category is that it was the only 'prompted' activity category (out of the ten listed in Table 6.5) for which a majority of respondents from both divisions anticipated a change in the future. As indicated, 90% of the available sample for the tooling division (specifically nine out of ten respondents) anticipated a change in the future in the involvement of divisional workers in training, compared with 67% of the available sample for the production division (specifically twelve out of eighteen respondents). It is interesting to note that, for each division, one of these respondents provided this information spontaneously, that is, in response to the initial open-ended question. The remaining 'change' respondents for each division provided this information in response to prompting. The results of the complete analysis of future context data pertaining to the activity category 'Attend Training' are now presented, separately for each division.

With respect first of all to the findings for the tooling division, all nine of the respondents from this division who anticipated a change indicated that, in the future, they thought that there would be more involvement of divisional workers in training. This group included two senior supervisors, two first-line supervisors and five 'wages' employees (four with leading hand status). Estimates of when this change would occur were provided by seven of these respondents and included: (i) 'already happening and likely to be ongoing' (four respondents); (ii) 'within the next two years' (two respondents); and (iii) 'more than ten years away' (one respondent). An eighth respondent indicated that he did not know when the change would be likely to occur. A common perception among these respondents was that the anticipated change was associated with the current industry-wide reform to restructure the award and develop a more flexible and multi-skilled workforce. This perception was shared by seven respondents and is illustrated in the sample of excerpts provided below:

But that is the new plan right around the country isn't it, that they want people to be more skilled? So they have to get to sort of give people courses they can do... [It's] all this multi-skilling business... ('wages' employee, leading hand)

Interviewer: Why is that going to happen? *Respondent:* Award Restructuring.the only way a person can get anywhere from now on is to go back to school. (first-line supervisor)

I'd say probably the next two years will see a lot of things happening through restructuring. And I think that's probably what's going to be the underlying cause of why everybody's going to be involved in [training]. (senior supervisor)

Yes, I think that's got to change... more workers have got to become involved in these retraining exercises. ...Well, it's government policy for a start, this restructuring, and union policy, and I think even the companies go along with it. (senior supervisor)

Apart from Award Restructuring, two other reasons for the anticipated change were given. One respondent argued, simply, that the change was necessary in order "for the company to survive". Another respondent attributed the anticipated change to efforts, at a company level, to develop a more active role for workers, whereby workers would be more involved and interested in their work, and more responsible for the outcomes of it. In this respondent's own words:

...I think because the company is trying to get the worker to feel as though he is responsible for what he's doing. Like at one stage, when you go into work the expected thing is you are there for 8 hours, because of the fact that you've got a clock there. You clock on, you clock off. So the attitude of the worker is that 'Well, I'm here for 8 hours work, I'll do the work and that's it'. But what the company is trying to get into people is that not only are they doing 8 hours work, but they're doing 8 hours of interesting work, and they're trying to get them more involved in that work. ('wages' employee, leading hand)

In addition to the above attributions, the qualitative data from the tooling division contained good evidence to suggest a degree of ambivalence among respondents in their attitudes towards the anticipated change. For example, there were four respondents who shared the view that the change was desirable for the younger members of the division, but that it lacked relevance for and/or would be likely to be resisted by the older members of the division. This view is illustrated in the following excerpts:

...it's not going to have a great effect on a person like me. I'm sort of getting too old to learn new tricks. (first line supervisor)

Well, I believe that any knowledge is good knowledge as long as you are a young kid. [But] when you get over 50 years of age, and they turn around and say [that] the only way you can get to Grade 7 is to go back to school and get your intermediate and then go and get this certificate, who's going to remember how to two times two. (first line supervisor)

...particularly the boys are going to have to do a lot more [training]. They tell me that there's supposed to be a grandfather clause in it for us older guys. ('wages' employee, leading hand)

I'd say for a large percentage I'd say [the change is] reasonably desirable, I'd say probably 60-70%. *Interviewer:* What about the others? *Respondent:* Either they're still in the old school where they don't really want to, or they've done it all their life and their father done it, and they don't really care. Basically they don't want to look to the future, that sort of thing. ('wages' employee)

Three other respondents were similarly ambivalent about the anticipated change, but in each case for a different reason. Specifically, one respondent questioned the value of formal schooling as opposed to practical on the job experience, as a means by which to acquire relevant trade skills. In the respondent's own words:

I mean to me personally, I don't think schooling is the big advantage to a tradesman. I went to trade school, I learnt nothing there. I learned all my skills from work. ('wages' employee, leading hand)

A second respondent argued that formal training was of value only if the skills acquired during training were subsequently reinforced through practical on the job experience. In this respondent's words:

To a certain degree [it's a good idea]. Well, you can retrain yourself to do lots of things, but these things are useless to you unless you carry on working in that capacity. I mean, I could go to a course and be retrained as a computer operator. After a couple of months, that would be totally useless to me because I would have forgotten everything I had learned. (senior supervisor)

A third respondent, while he acknowledged the value of training for enhancing the employment prospects of workers – "If they leave here and want a job somewhere else, they are going to be far more capable of getting one" – remained cynical about the company's role with respect to the anticipated change. As he saw it, the company had no real commitment to the provision of additional training for workers (this was a requirement imposed by Award Restructuring) and hence it was likely that there would come a time when the company would say that "...we don't need that any more anyway".

In contrast with the above ambivalent views, two of the respondents from this division who anticipated a change were markedly more positive in their attitudes towards the change. One respondent argued that the change (towards more worker involvement in training in the future) was desirable on the grounds that:

...it's going to make more people versatile. It's going to make people accept change more and it's going to make the workforce more flexible. It's going to

give people a bit of self-esteem, a little bit of self-satisfaction, give them some credentials. (senior supervisor)

The other respondent simply made the point that: "I think any change in the area of people involvement is definitely very desirable".

Finally, there was one respondent from the tooling division (out of the ten respondents who were presented with this prompt) who anticipated no change, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in training. This respondent (a 'wages' employee and also a shop steward) suggested that, beyond a certain point, any further increase in worker involvement in training would be unlikely because of the financial implications, namely, that "everybody will be demanding extra money and all like that".

The above evaluations by tooling division respondents of the likelihood of a future change in the involvement of divisional workers in training must be seen in the context of respondents' accounts of their experience to date with respect to this activity category. As indicated previously, there was some evidence (from the analysis of data pertaining to the past and present contexts) to suggest that, as a group, respondents from the tooling division had had a long and relatively stable history of little or no worker involvement in training (apart from that which constituted their initial training as trade apprentices). However, in recent years (estimates ranged from 1985 to 1991), the involvement of divisional workers in training had reportedly increased. This change was seen, by a majority of respondents, to be a direct outcome of the industry-wide reform to restructure the award and develop a more flexible and multi-skilled workforce. As above for the future context data, there was evidence in these data of similarly ambivalent attitudes towards the change. For example, reference was made to a lack of company support for the change (workers reportedly attended training of their own initiative and were not actively encouraged by divisional management to do so); there was a perception that only the younger workers could benefit from increased involvement in training; concern was expressed about the extent to which skills acquired in training were subsequently applied on the job; and there were expressions of dissatisfaction with the current reward scheme (with its emphasis on multi-skilling as opposed to specialisation) on the grounds that it discriminated unfairly against older employees who were less able than younger employees to cope with the 'academic' demands of a return to formal training.

As indicated above, there were twelve respondents from the production division (67% of the available sample for this division) who anticipated some change in the

future in the involvement of divisional workers in training. Compared with their counterparts in the tooling division, there was more variability among respondents from the production division in their perception of the specific nature of the anticipated change. Specifically, there were nine respondents who predicted that there would be more involvement of divisional workers in training in the future; one respondent made reference to a qualitative change in the nature of the training that would be available to workers in the future; and two respondents predicted less involvement of divisional workers in training in the future.

The nine respondents who anticipated an increase included six 'wages' employees (two females and four males) and three supervisors (one senior supervisor and two first line supervisors). Seven of these respondents were asked to provide estimates of when they thought the anticipated change would be likely to occur. One respondent indicated that he did not know. Estimates provided by the remaining six respondents included: (i) 'within the next six months' (one respondent); (ii) 'within the next year' (two respondents); (iii) 'within the next two to three years' (two respondents); and (iv) 'within the next five years' (one respondent). Compared with their counterparts in the tooling division, these respondents varied considerably in their attributions about why the anticipated change would occur. As for the tooling division, the introduction of Award Restructuring constituted the most commonly cited reason for the anticipated change, but in this case, explicit reference to this reform was made by three respondents only. One of these respondents made additional reference, in his response, to the role of training in helping the division to be 'more efficient and to improve quality'.

The remaining six respondents made attributions for which no obvious, specific groupings could be identified. For example, one respondent made reference to the changing demographics of the division (brought about the retirement of older employees) which would necessitate the training of younger employees in the skills required for them to "carry on" and "be able to run a place successfully". A second respondent attributed the anticipated change to the forthcoming introduction of a new model vehicle which, with its attendant problems, would necessitate an update of workers' skills. A third respondent commented on his understanding that the company was currently under some pressure from the unions to provide workers with more training. (Although the respondent made no explicit reference to Award Restructuring, this may have been implied.) A fourth respondent expressed his strong opinion that a

commitment to training was essential for the survival of the company. In his own words:

Yes, [training] will increase, and if it doesn't increase, we won't be here to talk about it again... I think General Motors has decided that they will be an on-going part of the vehicle industry within Australia, so they'll do what's required to make sure that happens. (senior supervisor)]

A fifth respondent attributed the anticipated change to an increase, in the future, in the skill requirements for workers, such that, "the requirement that you will have of the worker will be so high, so high that you will probably need a degree to come in here and work". And finally, a sixth respondent argued that, since "management doesn't know how anything operates on the floor", it was necessary for workers to acquire the entire range of competencies (including those related directly to the job, as well as those associated with more peripheral activities, such as, safety and house-keeping) required for effective work at this level.

While there was evidence of some ambivalence among respondents from the tooling division in their attitudes about the anticipated change, respondents from the production division appeared to hold more positive views. Six of the nine respondents who predicted more involvement of divisional workers in training in the future either implied or stated explicitly that they considered the change to be desirable. This positive evaluation was based variously on the perception that (i) increased training would contribute to the competitiveness of the company (three respondents); (ii) increased training would serve to increase workers' skills – "...it teaches them more" (one respondent); and (iii) increased training (the provision of which would be formalised through Award Restructuring) would ensure that workers who wanted to develop more skills would now have the opportunity to do so – "...if you say you want to learn, then they've got to, not go out of their way, but make it a lot more easy for people to be trained on jobs" (one respondent). There was one respondent only who expressed concern about the value of the anticipated change. This respondent argued that, unless workers were remunerated for participation in training which was provided after hours, it would be unlikely that they would express any interest in attending. In the respondent's own words:

...if people don't get paid to go on extra training, not in work hours, in extra, quite often they won't go... I know a few of them won't do anything unless they get paid by the company and unless they are going to gain something out of it, and a lot of them don't consider gaining knowledge as a gain. ('wages' employee)

As indicated above, there was one respondent from the production division who anticipated a qualitative change (time not specified) in the involvement of divisional workers in training in the future. Specifically, this respondent (a first line supervisor) was making reference to his own personal objective to develop the leadership skills of those workers in his area who showed some potential in this regard. The respondent described his training strategy as follows:

[I would] put them in my seat – I'll stand back and take a back seat, but let them be a supervisor for a day or so, to let them bring the problems to me... I will let them be a supervisor, see it from the other side of the fence how some of them perceive it to be, to appreciate how they talk to a supervisor and how they are treated because I'll let them encounter confrontation, and I believe that should be part of their character building. (first line supervisor)

Finally, of the twelve 'change' respondents from the production division, there were two who anticipated that, in the future, there would be less involvement of divisional workers in training. Both of these respondents were male 'wages' employees. In one case, the respondent argued that if the company did not provide training when it had the opportunity to do so – as was the case, it was suggested, at the present time when "the industry is depressed and there is not enough work for the workers that they have got" – then it was even less likely that training would be provided "as the industry goes up again" in the future. The second respondent argued that, since all of the workers in his area had already completed the requisite training for work in this area, there would be little to be gained from participation in any further training in the future. This respondent also indicated his opposition to the idea of training for the sake of training:

[There is] no point in sending an operator to a trouble shooting course because unless they are going to be a die setter, they're not going to get any benefit out of it. ('wages' employee)

Neither of the above respondents was asked to indicate when they thought that the anticipated change towards less involvement of divisional workers in training would be likely to occur.

Of the eighteen respondents from the production division who were presented with this prompt, there were six (one third of the sample) who anticipated no future change. These respondents were all 'wages' employees and included three females and three males. Spontaneous elaborations on their responses were provided by three of these respondents. These elaborations included: (i) a reference by two respondents to the likelihood that current inequities in the provision of training for workers (there was reportedly some favouritism in decisions about which workers would have access to

training opportunities) would continue into the future; and (ii) a reference by one respondent to his perception that there was no commitment, on the part of divisional management, to the provision of training for workers: 'I think they've got the feeling that everybody should know their job without being trained'.

Finally, the reader is reminded briefly of the context within which the above evaluations by production division respondents were made. As indicated previously, there was evidence to suggest that, while workers in the production division currently had some involvement in training (provided both on-the-job and off-the-job), the level of training in the division at any given time appeared to be largely contingent on production demands (so that at times of high production, training commitments were often foregone). There was also evidence of some dissatisfaction with the nature of the training provided (in relation to both the quality of on-the-job training and whether or not some of the activities classified as 'training' (eg. company tours) constituted real training); there were concerns about favouritism in the selection of workers for participation in training courses; and there was a perception that the attitudes of some workers towards training were obstructionist (the view being that training was not obligatory and that, as such, one should not be expected to participate unless paid to do so). While the production division had a much less well-defined history than the tooling division with respect to the involvement of divisional workers in training, there was nevertheless some evidence that, over recent years (from the late 1980's onwards), the level of training in the division had increased somewhat. As for the tooling division, this change was seen in the context of the Award Restructuring reform. Finally, despite the existence of the above concerns about training in the division at the present time, there was nevertheless a perception that the current divisional management were more strongly committed to the development of the division's human resources (for example, through initiatives such as the provision of more training for workers) than their predecessors had been.

On the basis of the above analysis of future context data pertaining to the activity category 'attend training', the following concluding points regarding similarities and differences between the two divisions are offered. First of all, the two divisions differed somewhat in terms of the percentage of respondents from each who anticipated a change, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in training. As indicated, 90% of the available sample for the tooling division anticipated a change, compared

with two-thirds of the available sample for the production division. Attention was drawn, however, to the fact that for both divisions the percentage of 'change' respondents constituted a majority.

The second concluding point is that the results of a closer analysis of the data for each division provided evidence of some further divisional differences. First of all, tooling division respondents, as a group, were somewhat more consistent than their counterparts in the production division in their perceptions of the direction of the anticipated change. As indicated, all of the respondents from the tooling division who anticipated a change predicted an increase, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in training. In the production division, of the twelve respondents who anticipated a change, nine predicted an increase, one made reference to a qualitative change, and two predicted a decrease. It is interesting to note that, in each division, the majority of respondents who predicted an increase, indicated that the change was either already underway or that it would be likely to occur in the near future (within the next two to three years).

Secondly, tooling division respondents were also more consistent than production division respondents in their attributions about why the anticipated change would occur. As indicated, a common perception among tooling division respondents was that the anticipated change would be a direct consequence of the Award Restructuring reform. In contrast, no such consensus was indicated in the attributions of production division respondents. These attributions variously included references to (i) the impact of Award Restructuring; (ii) the importance of training for the survival of the company; (iii) the implications of the changing demographics of the workforce for the training of younger employees; (iv) pressure from the unions to provide more training for workers; (v) the training implications of the forthcoming introduction of a new model vehicle; and (vi) the need to provide comprehensive training for shop floor workers in order to compensate for a lack of managerial competence with respect to shop floor operations.

A third difference between the divisions emerged in respondents' perceptions of the desirability of the anticipated change towards more involvement of divisional workers in training in the future. Specifically, among tooling division respondents who anticipated this change, there was clearly a degree of ambivalence. As the reader will recall, these respondents variously expressed concerns about (i) the relevance of training for older employees; (ii) the value of formal schooling (off-the-job training) as opposed

to practical on-the-job experience; (iii) the lack of consolidation of skills acquired during training, on the job; and (iv) a lack of genuine company support for more training for workers. In contrast, production division respondents who anticipated this change held more positive views about the change. Reference was made by these respondents to the value of training for (i) enhancing the competitiveness of the organisation; (ii) developing workers' skills; and (iii) satisfying the desire of workers to learn more. With respect to this latter finding, it should be noted, however, that there was also evidence in the production division data of the existence of more negative views about training. These views (expressed predominantly by the 'no change' respondents and respondents who anticipated a decrease in the involvement of divisional workers in training in the future) were specific to the training which was occurring in the division at the present time (that is, they did not reflect respondents' evaluations of the desirability of training per se). Specifically, concerns were expressed about (i) a perceived lack of commitment, on the part of divisional management, to training for workers (and related to this a perception that divisional management held the view that "everybody should know their job without being trained"); (ii) the existence of inequities in workers' access to training opportunities; and (iii) the existence of obstructionist attitudes among some workers (who held the view that, since they were under no obligation to attend training, they should not do so unless adequately remunerated for their time).

A third point that can be made by way of conclusion concerns seniority differences in respondent evaluations of the likelihood of future change with respect to this activity category. Given the small total sample size for each division and the even smaller numbers of respondents representing each of the two broad seniority levels (namely, 'wages' employees and supervisory staff) it is, of course, impossible to say anything conclusive about division-wide differences associated with this demographic. Nevertheless, it is still worth commenting on trends in the data, where these emerge. In the case of the present data set, it might be noted therefore that, of the five supervisory staff from the production division who were presented with the 'Attend Training' prompt (data were missing for one supervisor), four anticipated that there would be more involvement of divisional workers in training in the future and one anticipated a qualitative change in the nature of the training that would be provided. Put another way, the 'no change' respondents and the respondents who anticipated a decrease in the involvement of divisional workers in training in the future were all 'wages' employees.

This finding raises questions about whether or not (i) supervisors in the division were simply more optimistic than 'wages' employees about the likelihood of future change with respect to this activity category; (ii) supervisors had access to information, not available to 'wages' employees, on which their evaluations of change were based; and (iii) supervisors felt a greater obligation than 'wages' employees to present the division in a positive light.

A fourth and final concluding point concerns the extent to which the findings of the above analysis are consistent with what one might expect given the associated historical context for each division. The findings for the tooling division are perhaps easier to interpret in this regard than those for the production division. As indicated, the tooling division appears to have supported a long history of little or no worker involvement in ongoing training and development; moreover, this is perhaps not inconsistent with the traditional emphasis in this division on specialisation (as opposed to multi-skilling). Given this context, it would not seem unreasonable to suggest that the introduction of the Award Restructuring reform (with its emphasis on the development, through structured training, of a flexible and multi-skilled workforce) would have constituted an event of some significance in this division's recent history. As such, the finding from the above analysis, that all but one respondent from the available sample for this division anticipated an increase, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in training, is perhaps not surprising. Furthermore, the finding that respondents shared a degree of ambivalence about this anticipated change also 'makes sense' when seen in the context of the division's history with respect to training for workers.

Compared with the tooling division, the future context data for the production division were not so readily interpretable in the context of this division's relevant history. Perhaps the only conclusion that can be reached here is that the variability which emerged in respondent accounts of the history of the production division with respect to the involvement of divisional workers in training also emerged in respondent evaluations of the likelihood of a change, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in training. Interestingly, however, where a change towards more training involvement for workers was anticipated, respondents from the production division were notably more positive in their attitudes towards this change than were their counterparts in the tooling division.

(iii) Safety Meetings

'Safety Meetings' constituted the third and final activity category for which a difference between the two divisions was indicated. As shown in Table 6.5, 64% of the available sample for the tooling division anticipated a change, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in safety meetings, compared with 43% of the available sample for the production division. It should be noted, however, that the difference between the divisions in this regard – of 21% – only just met the nominated criterion for the classification of a 'difference'. It should also be noted that, for the production division, missing data were recorded for five respondents (including three supervisory staff and two 'wages' employees). Interestingly, if the data had been available for just one of these respondents, and if this respondent had anticipated a change in the future, then the difference between the two divisions (in terms of the percentage of respondents anticipating a change in the future) would have been less than 20%, leading to a classification of the divisions as similar, rather than different. While this observation highlights a problem with the current method for the classification of similarities and differences between the divisions, it must be remembered that this approach was adopted simply as a means by which to manage the data and systematically report the findings. As has been illustrated above, in order to get some insight into similarities and differences that might actually exist between the divisions, a more detailed analysis of the data for each division (that goes beyond the initial arbitrary classification of similarities and differences) is required. It is to this more detailed analysis that we now turn.

In all, there were seven respondents from the tooling division (out of eleven) who anticipated a change, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in safety meetings. These respondents included three supervisory staff (two senior supervisors and one first-line supervisor) and four 'wages' employees (one shop steward and three leading hands). In all cases, the direction of the anticipated change was towards more involvement of divisional workers in safety meetings in the future. Five of these respondents provided estimates of when they thought the anticipated change would be likely to occur. In four cases, it was suggested that the change was already underway and that it would be likely to be ongoing in the future. A fifth respondent indicated that, while the change was "already happening over a broad spectrum of [the company]", it

would be another three to four months before the change would be clearly evident in the tooling division.

Attributional data were available for five respondents. Specifically, there were two respondents who attributed the anticipated change to the cost, to the company, of compensating employees for work-related injuries. In the words of these respondents:

[Safety] definitely will increase. We've started that already... Because of the cost of compensation and accidents. I think it's a necessity of the company to do something to try and prevent accidents, and by involving the worker they're making the worker more aware of how accidents happen and why accidents happen and the consequences of accidents... (senior supervisor)

[The company is] getting very determined in safety, so I think they're getting the average worker to get involved... because I think it might help them save a lot of money. ('wages' employee, leading hand)

A further two respondents saw the anticipated change as being associated with the relocation of the division (currently underway) to the site of the company's main manufacturing and assembly operations. One of these respondents, who had recently made the transition to the new site, attributed the increasing emphasis on safety to the role of the newly recruited divisional safety monitor:

Well, we've got a, what do you call him, safety monitor or whatever he is, that seems to be wandering around the place with nothing better to do but be a pain, and I guess he's quite correct in what he's saying, because I guess I'm going to say after 30 years, I really don't know what I've involved myself in – plastics and fumes and all this sort of thing – you really don't know what you've done to yourself. And he's saying you shouldn't be breathing it all, and you should be doing this, and you shouldn't be doing that, and you shouldn't get it on your hands. And, you know, in that manner I see, yes, he will eventually get the message across and there will be big changes in safety to what we have had at Woodville. ('wages' employee, leading hand)

In a similar vein, the second respondent (a senior supervisor) argued that the involvement of divisional workers in safety would be likely to increase in the future, simply because, at the new site, workers would “come under the auspices of a safety officer”. The respondent made the further point that, while such an individual had previously been assigned to the tooling division, “we never saw him because he [was] based at Elizabeth”. Finally, a fifth respondent attributed the anticipated change to the introduction, in recent years, of occupational health and safety legislation. In this respondent's own words:

While Occupational Health and Safety keeps at the forefront [the involvement of workers in safety will increase]. I don't think they will let it drop away. ...a perfect example [is] with the plastics, [with] more things being made out of plastics these days... I don't know whether they know when this stuff is melted,

the fumes and things like that... so there is always... you are under the microscope all the time with new things that they are making. And of course more of the car is being made of plastics anyway. I think that it won't get any less. I would imagine that it would get more important. It is a very important thing I think. ('wages' employee, shop steward)

The reader may have noted that the above responses can be distinguished in terms of the nature of the changes to which they refer. In some cases, the reference is to a change in the involvement of divisional workers in safety (this, of course, was the intended focus of respondents' evaluations); in others cases, the reference is to a change in the emphasis given to workplace safety by the division (how important workplace safety is to the division). This finding highlights the problem (already alluded to in the context of previously reported results) of interpretive inconsistencies among respondents. It seems that, even when one presents respondents with highly specific questions, it is possible that there will be differences between respondents in their interpretations of these questions and, moreover, that respondents' interpretations will differ from the interpretations intended by the researcher. While the significance of this problem should not be underestimated, it is perhaps more important to ask oneself what, if anything, can be gained from a knowledge of respondents' different interpretations. For example, in the present case, the finding that some respondents referred, not to a change in worker involvement in safety, but rather to a more general change in the emphasis given to the importance of workplace safety, may suggest that the notion of an active role for workers with respect to safety lacks salience in this particular cultural context. In other words, it may be that interpretive data of this kind constitute an important source of information about a group's culture.

Finally, all but one of the above respondents expressed positive attitudes towards the anticipated change. Reference was made both to the cost control implications of a stronger commitment to workplace safety, as well as to the implications for the improved health and well-being of workers. In contrast, there was one respondent whose comments indicated a degree of ambivalence about the anticipated change. This respondent expressed his concern about the current trend towards the development of safety rules which were expected to apply in every situation. He was pessimistic about the future in this regard – "it's going to get crazy" – and maintained that there were times when "common sense" should be allowed to prevail.

Four of the eleven respondents from the tooling division who were presented with this prompt indicated that they thought there would be no change in the future in the

involvement of divisional workers in safety meetings. These respondents included two supervisors (one senior supervisor and one first-line supervisor) and two 'wages' employees (one with leading hand status). Both of the supervisors spontaneously elaborated on their responses. In one case, the respondent predicted that employee representatives from the shop floor would continue to attend safety meetings in the future and suggested further that, in his opinion, it was desirable that they do so – "I think that should and will still occur". In the other case, the respondent indicated that, in the future, workers would continue to be involved in safety meetings because this was a requirement established "by law". Neither of the 'wages' employees offered any elaboration on their initial 'no change' response.

Finally, the reader is reminded briefly of the context within which the above evaluations by tooling division respondents were made. As indicated previously, there was evidence (from data pertaining to the present context) that the workers in the tooling division currently had some involvement (frequency estimates ranged from one monthly to three monthly) in activities designed to promote workplace safety. These activities took the form of (i) either safety talks by section supervisors or safety handouts which workers were required to read; and (ii) company-wide safety meetings attended by divisional safety representatives (elected from among shop floor workers). There was also evidence (from data pertaining to the past context) that, although the division lacked a strong shared history with respect to worker involvement in safety, attention to this area may have increased somewhat around the mid-1980's when a number of changes in government legislation pertaining to occupation health and safety were introduced. It appears, however, that the momentum gained during this period was not maintained during the later years of the decline of the division. We turn now to a consideration of the findings for the production division.

As indicated above, 43% of the available sample for the production division (specifically six out of fourteen respondents) anticipated a change in the future in the involvement of divisional workers in safety meetings. In terms of the direction of the anticipated change, five of these respondents predicted more involvement of divisional workers in safety meetings in the future, and one respondent predicted less. The former included two supervisors (one senior supervisor and one first-line supervisor) and three 'wages' employees. Estimates of when the anticipated change would be likely to occur

were provided by three of these respondents and included (i) 'already underway'; (ii) 'within the next year'; and (iii) 'within the next twelve to eighteen months'.

Respondent attributions about why the anticipated change would occur varied considerably. Two respondents expressed the view that the involvement of divisional workers in safety "has got to change" because, at the present time, it was simply inadequate – "It's one of the areas they haven't really looked at much since I've been there", and "...there's no meetings for safety, all we're getting is a letter". One of these respondents went on to say that "it's really in everyone's interest to have a safe environment" and the other commented on his observation that supervisors had become more aware of the desire of workers to be better informed (about a range of issues including those related to workplace safety). A third respondent attributed the anticipated change to the increasing pressure which was being exerted on management by the shop floor, for there to be more involvement of shop floor workers in safety. In this respondents own words:

It can't [stay the same]. That will have to alter because there is pressure being brought to bear on management on safety, and I guess that there's got to be some safety meetings held or films shown or things like that on safety. *Interviewer:* Pressure from whom? *Respondent:* Well from the safety committee and from some people off the shopfloor, through the Health and Safety reps. ('wages' employee)

A fourth respondent attributed the anticipated change to the rising cost of compensation, as well as to pressure from the division's current safety officer. In this respondent's own words:

I think they'll probably become more and more involved slowly... whether the reason is mercenary or not, with the work cover scheme the way it's set up. Injured workers are a burden, right, that we now have to carry, whereas before we could pay them off and get rid of them. So for that reason we would be looking to improve our safety performance anyway... plus we've got a really, really 'gung ho' safety officer at the moment who's really, [who] puts the word on everyone. (senior supervisor)

And finally, a fifth respondent made reference to previous experience – "There was some talk a while back of a safety group being formed" – which had given him reason to believe that the involvement of divisional workers in safety would be likely to increase in the future. However, as indicated in the following excerpt, exactly when this change would take effect would depend, in the respondent's opinion, upon progress with the production of the forthcoming new model vehicle:

And that again depends on where we are, at the stage of our vehicle production. I think once we've introduced our new model and we've sort of settled down a bit

and we've got the shop back in order, then I think those things will start. (first-line supervisor)

In all of the above cases, the desirability of the anticipated change was either implied or articulated explicitly. On the one hand, the change was seen as desirable because it would help to ensure the protection of workers from physical injury; on the other hand, the change was seen as desirable from a cost control point of view.

As indicated above, of the six 'change' respondents from this division, there was one who predicted a decrease in the involvement of divisional workers in safety meetings in the future (time unspecified). This respondent, who was a 'wages' employee, argued that supervisors had insufficient time, given their responsibilities with respect to other aspects of divisional operations, to provide workers with regular safety talks. They were even more constrained in this regard during busy periods. In the respondent's own words:

No, if anything, they'll probably get less. If we get busy, then there's no time to sort of... see every boss up there, like us, has probably got a job allocated to them, they've got 3 or 4 departments they've got to look after. As far as... like one supervisor's in charge of moulding and he's got other duties as well to do. And they probably have to do these safety talks every now and again, but they're probably saying well, we're too busy now, we haven't got time to get it done. ('wages' employee)

Interestingly, compared with their counterparts in the tooling division, the 'change' respondents from the production division were more consistent with respect to their interpretations of this particular prompt question. For all but one of the above respondents, it was clear that the anticipated change related specifically to a change in the involvement of divisional workers in safety (whether by way of attendance at safety meetings, attendance at safety films, or participation in 'safety groups').

Of the fourteen respondents from the production division who were presented with this prompt, there were seven who anticipated no future change in the involvement of divisional workers in safety meetings, and one who indicated that she did not know whether or not there would be a change. All of these respondents were 'wages' employees and the group was evenly divided in terms of gender. Four respondents spontaneously elaborated on their responses. In one case, the respondent expressed her concern that there was only one safety officer on site (currently allocated to the afternoon shift) and that this person was not active in terms of advocating for more worker involvement in safety – "They've got a safety officer, but [(s)he doesn't] seem to do a lot about it". A second respondent expressed her view that, since the monthly

safety talk by section supervisors was “standard procedure”, it would be likely to continue into the future. A third respondent argued that workplace safety was largely an individual responsibility and that, as such, it should not be necessary for workers to attend formal safety meetings: “You don’t need someone to come along at a meeting and tell you about it because if you’ve got enough brains, you should be able to see whether it’s safe or not”. And finally, a fourth respondent indicated that a change, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in safety was unlikely because production demands in the division were such that “we couldn’t afford to be taken off our machines”.

The context in which the above evaluations by production division respondents were made was not dissimilar from that described above for the tooling division. There was evidence (from data pertaining to the present context) to suggest that the workers in the production division currently had some involvement (frequency estimates ranged from one monthly to three monthly) in activities designed to promote workplace safety. As for the tooling division, these activities took the form of (i) either safety talks by section supervisors or safety handouts which workers were required to read; and (ii) company-wide safety meetings which were attended by divisional safety representatives (elected from among shop floor workers). It was also the case, as for the tooling division, that in recent years (towards the end of the 1980’s), the division had placed more emphasis on the importance of worker involvement in safety. This change was variously attributed to changes in government legislation pertaining to occupational health and safety, and an increase, over recent years, in the cost of compensation for work-related injuries.

The above analysis of future context data pertaining to the activity category ‘Safety Meetings’ suggests the following general conclusions about similarities and differences between the two divisions. First of all, in terms of respondent evaluations of the likelihood of an increase, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in safety meetings (or other activities related to safety), the two divisions did appear to differ. As indicated, 64% of the respondents from the tooling division (almost two-thirds of the available sample) anticipated an increase, compared with 36% of the respondents from the production division (just over one-third of the available sample). It might also be noted that, for the production division, the ‘no change’ and ‘don’t know’ responses constituted more than half of the responses for this division (specifically, 57%); in contrast, for the tooling division, the ‘no change’ responses

constituted just over one-third of the responses for this division (specifically, 36%). Only one respondent from the entire sample for both divisions (a 'wages' employee from the production division) anticipated a decrease in the future in the involvement of divisional workers in safety meetings.

Secondly, the analysis of the attributional data suggested a further difference between the divisions. As above for some of the other activity categories, there was evidence in these data of the same 'externality' versus 'internality' in respondent attributions about why the anticipated change towards more involvement of divisional workers in safety activities would occur. Specifically, tooling division respondents attributed the change to external factors which could be seen to be largely outside of the division's control – the rising cost of compensation, occupational health and safety legislation, and the relocation of the division. In contrast, production division respondents were more inclined to see the change as being driven by internal factors. Thus, while the rising cost of compensation was cited as one factor influencing the change, other factors included (i) an increasing awareness on the part of supervisors that workers' wanted to be better informed (about safety and other issues); (ii) pressure from shop floor workers (both ordinary workers and those acting as safety representatives) to increase their involvement in safety activities; (iii) pressure from the division's safety officer; (iv) a general recognition of the importance of workplace safety as an area of divisional operations that required more attention; and (v) evidence that some planning in relation to workplace safety may have already occurred (with 'talk' of the formation of safety groups comprising shop floor workers).

The third conclusion concerns respondents' evaluations of the anticipated change (towards more involvement of divisional workers in safety activities in the future). In this regard, the divisions appeared to be quite similar, with generally positive attitudes being expressed towards the change. Interestingly, in both divisions, these positive evaluations were based on considerations of workers' physical well-being (attention to workplace safety protects workers from physical harm) and cost considerations (attention to workplace safety reduces accidents, thereby also reducing the cost of compensation). There was no reference in any of these evaluative data of the potentially positive human resource management implications of encouraging workers to take a more active role with respect to the safety of their workplace.

A fourth and final general conclusion concerns the interpretation of the above findings within the context of each division's history with respect to this activity category. Given the similarity between the divisions in this regard, an understanding of the historical context provides no immediately obvious explanation for the above finding that there were more respondents from the tooling division than from the production division who anticipated a change in the future towards an increase in the involvement of divisional workers in safety activities. In fact, given general contextual data suggesting that the production division had traditionally been more supportive than the tooling division of initiatives designed to promote worker participation, one might have predicted the reverse of the above finding (that is, that more production division respondents than tooling division respondents would anticipate an increase in the future in the involvement of divisional workers in safety).

What can be explained by the historical data, however, is the above finding that, in neither division, did evaluative comments about the anticipated change contain any reference to the positive human resource management implications of increasing the involvement of divisional workers in safety activities. As indicated, for both divisions, the desirability of the anticipated change was argued in terms of the cost implications and the implications for the physical well-being of workers. This finding is not inconsistent with historical data suggesting that, in both divisions, the role of workers with respect to their involvement in safety activities appears to have been a predominantly passive one (taking the form of attendance at safety meetings, which were essentially forums, for information dissemination as well as access to written material in the form of safety handouts).

In addition to the above general conclusions, the following more specific summary points are also offered. Firstly, among the respondents from each division who anticipated a change towards more involvement of divisional workers in safety activities in the future, there was a perception that the change, if it was not already underway, would be likely to occur in the near future (within at least the next eighteen months). Secondly, while the small sample size for each division makes it difficult to draw any conclusions about seniority differences between the 'no change' and 'change' groups for each division, it is perhaps worth noting that, for the production division, all of the 'no change' responses, the single 'don't know' response, and the single 'change towards a decrease' response were made by 'wages' employees. In contrast, the two supervisors

from this division who were presented with this prompt both anticipated a change towards more involvement of divisional workers in safety activities in the future. The third point is that it was difficult to detect any common thematic content in the elaborations of the 'no change' (and in one case, 'don't know') respondents from either division. As indicated, in the production division in particular, these elaborations were highly variable in terms of their thematic content. (The reader will recall that the prediction that change was unlikely was based variously on the view that (i) the current 'standard procedure' with respect to worker involvement in safety was adequate; (ii) the current safety officer showed no interest in advocating for change; (iii) safety was, and should be, regarded primarily as an individual responsibility; (iv) production demands were such that workers could not be taken off their machines; and (v) supervisors were too busy to support a change towards more involvement of divisional workers in safety activities.) The fourth and final point is that some inconsistency was observed among tooling division respondents in their interpretations of this particular prompt question. As indicated, there were some respondents who referred to a change, specifically in the involvement of divisional workers in safety activities, and other who referred to a change in the emphasis given to the importance of workplace safety in the division. Attention was drawn to the possible cultural implications of interpretive differences of this kind.

APPENDIX D3

Study III: Analysis of prompt data for the 'ideal' contextPrompted activity categories: Similarities between the two divisions(i) Group Problem-Solving

Table 6.7 shows that there were five respondents from tooling division (56% of the available sample for this division) and eight respondents from the production division (53% of the available sample) who advocated some change in the involvement of divisional workers in group problem-solving. As indicated, for both divisions, the majority of these respondents provided this information in response to prompting, rather than spontaneously in response to the initial open-ended question(s). Specifically, this was the case for four out of the five 'change' respondents from the tooling division and for six out of the eight 'change' respondents from the production division. Moreover, in all cases, the change which was advocated was towards a more active role for divisional workers with respect to group problem-solving. In the discussion which follows, the findings of a more detailed analysis of the 'ideal' context data pertaining to this activity category are presented, first for the tooling division and then for the production division. Consideration is then given to the main similarities and differences between the divisions which are suggested by these findings. And finally, a broader contextual interpretation of these findings (which takes into account the associated findings for the other contextual domains of interest) is offered.

Tooling Division. The five 'change' respondents from the tooling division included four 'wages' employees (two with leading hand status, and one a shop steward) and one first-line supervisor. With respect to length of service with the company, this group comprised three longer-serving employees (with between 17 and 33 years of service with the company) and two shorter-serving employees (each with six years of service with the company). All five respondents indicated that they thought that divisional workers should have more involvement than they currently did in group problem-solving. (It will be recalled that the current status of the role of workers with respect to this activity was such that workers had either no involvement in group problem-solving

or, as was the case in some work areas, very limited involvement on an informal basis.) Three of the five 'change' respondents elaborated on their responses. In one case, the respondent (who provided this information spontaneously) argued that, because of their close proximity to, and hence good practical knowledge of the job, workers should be involved in solving problems related to the job. In his own words:

I would bring the planner down and involve the planner in all aspects of his job, that he can see what he has planned, what was drawn up, what has been changed. And that goes right down, that the people who are actually doing the job are allowed to put their two bits in, because a tradesperson on the shop floor, he is actually working with that, not necessarily the leading hand or the foreman. Bring the planner down, get them all together and say 'We have got a problem, what can we do?'. (first-line supervisor)

A second respondent argued in favour of worker involvement in group problem-solving on the grounds that "everybody's got a different opinion of doing something, and they must be able to work the problem out". This response is somewhat ambiguous in that it is not clear whether the respondent regards the existence of diverse opinions as a good thing (a valuable resource for effective problem-solving) or a bad thing (an inevitable, but unwanted source of conflict which must itself be resolved before problems can be effectively worked through). And finally, a third respondent simply indicated his strong support for worker involvement in group problem-solving:

I think it's an excellent idea. I think it really is a good idea. ('wages' employee, leading hand)

There were four respondents from the tooling division who indicated that they would not make any changes to the current role of divisional workers with respect to their involvement in group problem-solving. These respondents included three first-line supervisors and one 'wages' employee (with leading hand status). Length of service with the company for this group ranged from 25 to 33 years. All four 'no change' respondents elaborated on their responses to a greater or lesser extent. Two of the supervisors expressed their strong opposition to the involvement of shop floor workers in group problem-solving. In one case, it was argued that, since it was the supervisor and not the worker who was ultimately responsible for the outcomes of problem-solving decisions, worker participation in problem-solving was inappropriate. In this respondent's own words:

I might have a problem on a tool and I could get six people there and they could come up with six different solutions on how to fix that problem. But if I'm the supervisor or the manager or whatever, it's my responsibility to make that

decision, not theirs. I'm the one that's going to get that kick in the arse, so I make the decision. (first-line supervisor)

In the other case, the respondent gave a number of reasons for why he believed workers should not be involved in group problem-solving. As he saw it, most workers did not want responsibility of this kind, it was questionable whether they could cope with it, and there was a belief among workers (which, in the respondent's view, was well-founded) that, even if they were given the opportunity to be more involved, their power to influence decision outcomes would still be very limited. The following extracts from this respondent's full response serve to illustrate:

I made a mistake a couple of times of asking for involvement and you get to the stage where you really... Old Fritz had a good saying, he said 'They don't really need to know a lot of this stuff. We shouldn't tell them'. And it's true, because some of the reason, and I'm not being derogatory... the simple reason those people are on the shop floor is because that's all they want to do. They didn't want to become involved. A lot of people don't like responsibilities. ...we have even got that now, that people don't like even taking a leading hand's job from being a shop floor person, because they get extra responsibility. So really in a way Fritz was right, they probably don't need to know a lot of this stuff and sometimes it's just putting dynamite in their hands and they don't know how to operate it. I really think that the way things are at the moment, the place is going pretty good, so I really wouldn't want to change it. (first-line supervisor)

And subsequently:

...maybe in some ways [shop floor workers] are a bit like me. You can say a lot but you're not gonna have a big influence on any change in a big organisation like [company name]. It's very regimented and you've got your chain of command, and a bloke on the shop floor... all right he might change a couple of things in his area, he might get a light put in the corner so he can read a drawing better, which is all a help, don't get me wrong, but he's not gonna have a big influence on the running of the place and I think that tends to quieten people down. They realise that fact. People aren't completely stupid. (first-line supervisor)

The third supervisor in the 'no change' group indicated that he was happy with the current situation, whereby shop floor workers who had "reasonable sort of nous" would occasionally, and on an informal basis, participate in problem-solving and/or decision-making related to their current job. Interestingly, this respondent was not unlike his colleagues above in that previously, in response to prompting about the present context, he had expressed his concerns about the relevance of more formalised team-based approaches to work in a tooling environment¹²¹. This respondent had argued that, given

¹²¹ While this finding provides some support for the argument that, in the present study, the unit of analysis might more appropriately have been the individual (and his/her overall pattern of responding across all five contextual domains of interest), rather than the individual's response to specific questions (within a given contextual domain), the point has been made previously (see Section 6.2, p. 355) that, for

the nature of the work in the tooling division, as well as the way in which jobs were designed, it was unrealistic to expect that team approaches to getting work done (such as those which were reportedly practised at Elizabeth, where the company's production operations were based) could be successfully implemented in this environment. In his own words:

Well, the team thing from what I can understand at Elizabeth is that they've got a group of people that are willing to stay back and talk and solve problems, and they solve their own problems without a positive leader... Well, when you've got a tool drawing that says you've got to go in this direction, you can't not have a leader because the leader... his line is already laid out for him and it's got to be followed through. So the group atmosphere, where you might have... something happening on a line of thirty odd men... they can talk as a group of people and overcome that problem... [But] my people, tradespeople, work mostly by themselves on their own job. So they're only concerned with that section what they're doing on a tool at that particular time. (first-line supervisor)

And finally, the fourth 'no change' respondent, a 'wages' employee (with leading hand status) indicated that he was satisfied with the current situation whereby, every month or so, a small number (two or three) of the workers from his area would be asked to participate in group problem-solving along with technical personnel (a planner and project engineer), the area supervisor, and the leading hand. Interestingly, the respondent argued that this approach was critical in ensuring that shop floor workers fully understood and subsequently complied with the job specifications which had been developed by technical personnel. This suggests that the direction of communication in these 'group' activities may have been largely one-way. In the respondent's own words:

It's the only way that you can make it work, because if the technical people know what they want, and they don't pass the message on down to us, we make it our own way and it's not what they want, you're only wasting your time. ('wages' employee, leading hand)

Finally, and as shown in Table 6.7, data were missing for three respondents from this division. These respondents included two senior supervisors and one 'wages' employee (with leading hand status).

Production Division. Before discussing the findings of the more detailed analysis of production division data, the same point can be made as was made previously in relation to data pertaining to the future context (see Appendix D2, p. 733), namely, that because of their variable exposure to a number of different 'group' or teamwork initiatives (in particular, the Team Concept in the past and more recently the Automotive Quality

both divisions, the number of spontaneous references to the 'ideal' context that were contained within responses to questions about the present context was relatively few.

Assurance Programme (AQAP)), the yardstick against which respondents subsequently evaluated the likelihood of future change and, with respect to the 'ideal' context, made recommendations about changes that ideally should occur, was different for different individuals. As indicated previously, this feature of the present data set creates some problems for the current approach of aggregating data and then comparing 'change' and 'no change' respondents as if they all shared a common reference point. While this issue suggests the need for some revision of the present method, it has been necessary for the purpose of the present analysis to proceed as with all previous analyses. In reporting the results of this analysis, however, attention is drawn to the particular type of 'group' activity to which a 'change' or 'no change' respondent was referring, wherever such qualifying information was provided.

As indicated, there were eight respondents from the production division who argued in favour of a more active role for divisional workers with respect to group problem-solving. These respondents included the four supervisory staff (two senior supervisors and two first-line supervisors) from this division for whom information pertaining to this activity category was available, and four 'wages' employees. All of the former were males, while the latter included two males and two females. Respondent length of service with the company for this group ranged from 3 years to 18 years (mean = 13 years, median = 16 years).

Respondents varied in the extent to which they elaborated on and/or qualified, their responses. There were two respondents who provided no additional information. In one case, the respondent (a 'wages' employee) simply said that there should be more involvement of workers in group problem-solving; in the other, the respondent (a first-line supervisor) reiterated his strong support for Quality Circles (which he had previously expressed in response to questioning about the future context). Two respondents (both 'wages' employees) advocated a reintroduction of the team meetings which had been held in the past as part of the Team Concept initiative. In both cases, this information was provided spontaneously in response to the initial open-ended question(s). In the words of one of these respondents:

I think myself I would go back to having a team meeting... Perhaps only once a month, but I would go back to that. I think there's a lot of good can come out of those. Because there's a lot of people... we've two or three very clever people here that are really good on ideas. And honestly, they are good and I think you could get the ideas off these people. ('wages' employee)

A fifth respondent (a senior supervisor) advocated a change in the division's current approach to the AQAP initiative. He was critical of the top down management of this programme and argued that, unless it was made more relevant to workers (the implication was that workers should have more input with respect to the content of the programme), then its value to the division would remain questionable. In this respondent's own words:

I'd probably get rid of [AQAP meetings] in their current form because they just don't work... Because [they are] pushed from the top down. If an operator or any person can't see an advantage in it, or a use for it, then they won't use it... while its basic philosophy is fine, and in a lot of organisations it works well, we're doing something fundamentally wrong [so] that it fails, and it's pretty useless the way we use it. (senior supervisor)

A sixth respondent (a first-line supervisor) suggested that group problem solving through the formal AQAP mechanism was appropriate in the event that "you have a specific problem that is compounding" which requires "some sort of expertise" for its resolution. At the same time, however, the respondent argued that there should be more informal group problem-solving within individual work areas. Such a change would require supervisors to build "a good rapport" with their workers, thereby creating a climate in which workers felt more confident about putting their ideas forward.

Finally, there were two 'change' respondents from the production division who, while they elaborated on their responses, talked about worker involvement in group problem-solving in general terms; that is, they made no reference to specific 'group' activities in which they were currently involved, or in which they had been involved in the past¹²². One of these respondents (a senior supervisor) argued that shop floor workers should ideally be more involved than they currently were in solving problems that arose in their own work area; he also argued that, where problems had implications for the effective function of more than one work area, workers from the affected areas should collaborate in the problem-solving effort. In this respondent's own words:

Well, I would turn around and get everyone involved in it. I would get the maskers involved in their masking problems [and] the painters involved in their painting problems. I'd pull them off in small teams... And then when an assembler says 'I don't know why the bloody painter does that' then we get the painters and the assemblers to meet so the assembler can say to the painter 'Why do you do that, because that makes it hard for me', or vice versa. (senior supervisor)

¹²² One of these respondents was a longer-serving employee (with 20 years service with the company) who would have had experience of both the Team Concept and AQAP initiatives; the other was a shorter-serving employee (with only three years service with the company) who may or may not have had experience of the AQAP initiative.

The other respondent (a 'wages' employee) argued that, because of workers' intimate and, by implication, superior job knowledge, it was desirable that they should have more involvement than they currently did in group problem-solving. In this respondent's own words:

You've got to because the workers are the ones who find the problems, nobody else does. Engineers don't know about the problems, management don't know the problems, they don't know how to find them. The problems come up as the job is being done. ('wages' employee)

Of the remaining seven respondents from the production division for whom information pertaining to this activity category was available, six indicated that, if they were in charge of the division, they would not change the current involvement of divisional workers in group problem-solving. One respondent reported that he was undecided. The 'no change' respondents were all 'wages' employees and included two females and four males. Length of service with the company for this group ranged from four years to thirty years (mean = 13.8 years, median = 12 years).

All of the 'no change' respondents elaborated on their responses. Interestingly, there were references by four respondents to their negative experience of 'group' activities in the past, whether in relation to the Team Concept or the AQAP initiative. As indicated in the following excerpts from these respondents, the failure (or at least very limited success) of these initiatives was variously attributed to (i) poor worker attitudes (including the view that participation was an opportunity to avoid work and the attitude that 'it's not my job'); (ii) poor team leadership which resulted in informal agendas taking precedence over formal agendas; (iii) the failure of management to follow up on workers' ideas; and (iv) the existence of a reward scheme – namely, the 'suggestion scheme' whereby individual workers were rewarded financially for good ideas – which discouraged workers from contributing their ideas in group venues (such as, AQAP meetings) where no such rewards were offered:

[Teamwork] would be hard to set up 'cos it gets abused so easy... Well... they used to give us half an hour or an hour a week for a meeting, and most of the people just used it to go there and have a bludge. There were a few that tried to solve problems in the area and stuff like that, but most of the other people just thought it was a rest time. ('wages' employee)

I wouldn't like the [team set-up]... As I said, well it became a bitching thing, and as I said, people put some good ideas [forward], but there wasn't much done about it. ('wages' employee)

No, [team meetings/group problem-solving] has been tried in the past [the reference here is to AQAP] and I don't think it really works... People lose

interest. I mean, it's very hard to get motivated. I mean, after all, it's only a job, it's your work. And you look around and you see engineers that are on big dollars – \$100,000 a year – and to me it's their job to fix something like that. Why should we do their job for them? We're employed as operators and they have a suggestion scheme up there for suggestions, but it's taking the money out of the suggestion scheme. People think 'Well, I'm not going to do this AQAP course because if I make a suggestion within that group, you're not going to get paid money for it'. ('wages' employee)

The Team Concept is a good idea, I've always considered it was a great idea if you could have an Italian family in each team, 'cos they work together smashing... But you don't have that involvement [and] I wouldn't know how to get it...
Interviewer: Why is that? *Respondent:* [It's the] nature of the people, I think, yes. You always get these silly little 'aggros' what come in, and you know, oh, 'I don't like him', or 'I don't like her'. It's stupid things, you know... and without that, [without] an Italian family sort of bonding, you wouldn't get it. ('wages' employee)

A fifth 'no change' respondent indicated that he was happy with the current 'informal' approach to problem-solving which was the norm in his area. In his own words:

...if we've got a problem, we try to solve it as a group, not necessarily bring the staff in. If we've got a problem – well, say [with] a person or a part or something like that – we try to solve the problem ourselves. If we can't do that, well the next step is to bring the management in. ('wages' employee)

The point can be made that this respondent was similar to his counterparts above in that he was also opposed to the reintroduction of more formalised team-based approaches, such as that which had been attempted with the Team Concept. In response this same prompt, presented in the context of questioning about the anticipated future, the respondent had expressed the following sentiments:

...technically, [team meetings] were a waste of time. You've got a group of young ones sitting around a table... well, you've walked around the factory long enough, I think, to see what some of them look like, and the way some of them can behave. You can imagine what some of them could be like if you did have meetings just within a group of them.. ('wages' employee)

Finally, a sixth 'no change' respondent indicated that she was satisfied with the current situation whereby selected workers were able to participate in group problem-solving through the formal mechanism of AQAP meetings. This respondent was a shorter-serving employee (with four years' service with the company) who had had no experience of the earlier Team Concept initiative.

As indicated, there was one respondent from the production division – a 'wages' employee with nineteen years service with the company – who indicated that he was unsure as to whether or not, if he were in charge of the division, he would support the reintroduction of 'group' or team-based approaches (in this case, in the form specifically

of AQAP meetings). As he saw it, participants in problem-solving groups sometimes lacked the expertise required to solve difficult problems. Despite this, they would persist in holding regular group meetings, and this would lead to a kind of 'meetings for the sake of meetings' mentality. In this respondent's own words:

I'd like to [reintroduce AQAP meetings], but I'm not sure... Because sometimes I think it can be a waste of time... Sometimes I think they're there, and they decide they have to sort of solve a problem so that, even if they sort of can't solve it, they'll try and do whatever they can just to make it appear, if you like, that they've solved the problem or they're doing something. They're not prepared to say, you know, this is beyond us... So they just keep having meetings and they might go on month, after month, after month. ('wages' employee)

Finally, and as indicated in Table 6.7, there were four respondents from the production division for whom data pertaining to this activity category were not available. These respondents included one first-line supervisor and three 'wages' employees. The former was a male and the latter comprised two males and one female. Length of service with the company for this group ranged from five years to fourteen years (mean = 9 years; median = 8.5 years).

Conclusion. On the basis of the results reported above, the following concluding comments can be made regarding similarities and differences between the two divisions in terms of respondent views about the 'ideal' role of divisional workers with respect to 'Group Problem-Solving'.

First, the divisions were similar in that the respondents from each were roughly evenly divided in their views about whether or not the role of divisional workers with respect to group problem solving (and other activities associated with more team-based approaches to getting work done) ideally should change. As indicated, just over half of the respondents from each division (56% from the tooling division and 53% from the production division) advocated some change in the role of divisional workers with respect to this activity category. In all cases, the change which was advocated was towards a more active role for workers (in the sense, primarily, of workers having more opportunities than currently to participate in group problem-solving and related activities). Moreover, for the majority of 'change' respondents from both divisions, prompting was required to elicit this information (that is, most respondents did not provide this information spontaneously, in response to the initial open-ended question(s)).

A second concluding point is that there was some evidence to suggest that, as a group, the 'change' respondents from the production division were somewhat more

articulate than their counterparts in the tooling division about the value of the changes which they had proposed. As indicated, of the five 'change' respondents from the tooling division, only three elaborated spontaneously on their responses. Moreover, there was no obvious common thematic content in these elaborations. In one case only was there an explicit reference to the desirability of involving shop floor workers in group problem-solving because of the potentially valuable contribution (in terms of 'practical' job knowledge) which they could make. In contrast, this theme emerged with some consistency in the associated production division data. As indicated, of the 'eight' change respondents from this division, six elaborated spontaneously on their responses. Of these, five made more or less explicit reference to the view that shop floor workers had valuable job knowledge and that, as such, there should be more opportunity for them to contribute their ideas, whether in the context of formal or informal problem-solving venues.

It should be emphasised that the above conclusion was suggested by a comparison of the 'change' groups from each division in terms of respondents' spontaneous elaborations on, and/or qualifications of their responses. While data of this kind are of interest because they can highlight differences, between individuals and groups, in their level of articulation about any given issue, they do not enable one to make inferences about the individual's, or the group's, actual knowledge of the issue. It might therefore be argued that, in any subsequent administration of the present method, respondents should be asked specifically to indicate why they consider the changes which they advocate to be desirable. Systematic prompting of this kind would provide a more complete set of qualifying data – in the form of respondent attributions – and, as argued previously, such data may constitute a valuable source of information about the culture(s) of the groups being investigated.

A third concluding point is that, from a cultural point of view, the 'no change' data pertaining to the activity category 'Group Problem-Solving' were perhaps of more interest (in terms of their potential cultural significance) than the associated 'change' data. As indicated, 44% of the available sample from the tooling division (specifically four out of nine respondents) indicated that they would not change the current involvement of divisional workers in group problem-solving and related activities; similarly, 47% of the available sample from the production division (seven out of fifteen respondents) gave a 'no change' or, as was the case for one respondent, a 'don't know',

response. All of these respondents (from both divisions) elaborated spontaneously on their responses. As indicated, there were three respondents from the tooling division (all supervisory staff) who expressed their opposition to group problem-solving and team-based approaches in general. The grounds for this opposition included (i) a belief by one respondent that such approaches constituted an infringement of the traditional role of divisional supervisors; (ii) a belief by a second respondent that divisional workers neither wanted, nor could cope with, the responsibility which such approaches entailed and, moreover, that workers were appropriately realistic about their relative powerlessness within the organisation; and (iii) a belief by a third respondent that such approaches were not appropriate in a tooling environment given the nature of the work which had to be performed and the way in which jobs were designed.

In contrast to the above, respondents from the production division held quite different views about why the involvement of divisional workers in group problem-solving and related activities should not change. As for the tooling division, there was evidence of explicit opposition among these respondents to team-based initiatives (that is, it was not the case that the 'no change' respondents from the production division were simply communicating their satisfaction with the current situation). Unlike the tooling division, however, where this opposition appeared to be underpinned by an allegiance to traditional views (for example, about the respective roles of supervisors and workers and about how work should be performed and jobs designed), in the production division, it appeared to have been shaped primarily by respondents' past experience. As indicated, of the seven 'no change/don't know' respondents from the production division, there were six who referred to their negative past experience of team-based approaches (specifically, the Team Concept in the more distant past and the AQAP initiative in the more recent past). A common perception among these respondents was that these approaches failed (or, at least, enjoyed only very limited success) because of poor worker attitudes; other perceived problems included worker skills (specifically, the perception that some problems were too difficult for workers to solve), poor team leadership, a failure on the part of management to follow up on workers' ideas, and the existence of a reward scheme (the 'suggestion scheme') which provided financial incentives for individual problem-solving initiatives, thereby undermining the goal of more effective problem solving through teamwork.

A fourth, and final, concluding point concerns the analysis of the above data in terms of respondent demographics. One finding of interest in this regard (which, because of the small numbers of respondents involved, unfortunately could not be statistically validated) was that the divisions appeared to differ in terms of the seniority of the 'change' and 'no change' respondents from each. In the tooling division, supervisory staff were better represented in the 'no change' group than in the 'change' group. The former comprised four respondents, three of whom were supervisors, while the latter comprised five respondents, only one of whom was a supervisor. The opposite was true for the production division. In this division, there was no representation of supervisory staff in the 'no change/don't know' group (all seven of the respondents in this group were 'wages' employees). In contrast, the 'change' group included four supervisory staff (out of a total of eight respondents). Given the argument that the more senior members of an organisation (in this case, supervisory staff) are likely to be more influential than those at lower levels of the hierarchy (in this case, 'wages' employees), in terms of their ability to either enable or constrain change, the above pattern of responding, if it could be shown to be statistically significant (of course, this would require sampling more widely from each division), would no doubt have implications for the success of any change effort involving the division-wide adoption of team-based approaches.

There were no particularly noteworthy patterns of responding with respect to the other demographic variables of interest. Nevertheless, it is perhaps worth mentioning that the two respondents from the tooling division whose length of service with the company was very short, relative to that of the other respondents in this sample, were among the 'change' rather than the 'no change' respondents from this division. Of course, in the absence of a larger sample (in which shorter-serving employees were better represented), it is purely speculative as to whether or not this finding is simply an artefact of the present data set or whether it is indicative of a more general trend in this division. Finally, for the production division, there was no indication of a difference between respondents in the 'change' and 'no change' groups in terms of either their length of service with the company or their gender.

Contextual analysis of 'ideal' context data for 'Group Problem-Solving

We turn now to a consideration of how the above findings might be interpreted within the broader context of respondent experience with respect to the activity category

'Group Problem-Solving'. In other words, to what extent are the above findings for the 'ideal' context consistent with what one might expect given the findings for all of the other contextual domains of interest (that is, the past context, the present context, the anticipated future context and the other context)? Stated another way, to what extent does a coherent picture of respondent experience with respect to this activity category emerge when one considers, as a whole, the associated findings for each of the five domains of context about which respondents were asked?

A second, and related, question which is addressed in this section concerns the extent to which the above findings for the 'ideal' context, apart from serving to confirm existing insights, can be shown to provide additional insights (over and above those suggested by the findings for the other contextual domains), which may be of value in terms of understanding the culture of the group(s) being investigated. In other words, does information about the 'ideal' context add anything to what we already know about the group, based on information about the other contextual domains?

In the discussion which follows, the results of the contextual analysis of 'ideal' context data pertaining to the activity category 'Group Problem-Solving' are presented, first for the tooling division and then for the production division.

Tooling Division. It will be recalled that, for the tooling division, the analysis of data pertaining to the historical context provided good evidence to suggest that this division had had a relatively long, and stable, history of little or no worker involvement in group problem-solving and/or related team-based activities. Moreover, there was little to suggest that the role of divisional workers with respect to this activity category had changed significantly in recent years. With respect to their experience of the present context, all but one of the respondents from this division reported that there was no current involvement of the workers in this division in group problem-solving and/or related activities.

The findings for the 'other' context were quite consistent with those for the past and present contexts. As a group, respondents from the tooling division had had little experience of other organisations. Only three respondents from this division (25% of the sample) indicated that they had had direct experience of another organisation (ie. that they had worked elsewhere). It was also the case that, while there were a number of references to differences between the respondent's current and 'other' organisation,

none of these differences could be classified as differences associated with the activity category 'Group Problem-Solving'.

The findings for the future context, on the other hand, provided some evidence of a perception that the involvement of divisional workers in group problem-solving and related activities would be likely to increase in the future. Specifically, there were five respondents from the tooling division (45% of the available sample) who anticipated such a change. As suggested by the attributional data, however, this anticipated change was seen primarily as an imposed change, in the sense of being attributed to circumstances which, it could be argued, were largely outside of the division's control. The most commonly cited reason for the anticipated change was the relocation of the division to the site of the company's main manufacturing and assembly operations where, it was perceived, there was more support for team-based approaches to getting work done. Reference was also made to factors such as pressure from the unions, the downsizing of the division (the argument being that team approaches were more appropriately practised with a smaller workforce), changes in workforce demographics (in particular, level of education) which had changed workers' expectations about their role in the organisation, and the introduction of Award Restructuring (which would serve to break down traditional trade barriers thereby providing a context in which closer working relationships between the members of different trade groupings would be possible).

A second noteworthy feature of the future context data for the tooling division was that there was no evidence in these data of positive attitudes towards the involvement of workers in group problem-solving and related team-based activities. On the contrary, there were some respondents (specifically, three supervisory staff) who expressed their clear opposition to such practices which they saw as constituting an infringement of the supervisor's traditional role (given that the supervisor was ultimately responsible for work outcomes, it was appropriate that he should have primary responsibility for decision-making and problem-solving) and which they saw as being ill-suited to solving the kind of complex problems which were typically encountered in this division (and which, by implication, required a level of expertise beyond that which was available on the shop floor). Apart from these expression of explicit opposition, there was also a recognition by a further two respondents from this division that team-based approaches were simply not 'the way things were done' in this division.

Given the profile of respondent experience suggested by the above findings – that is, for the present context, the past context, the other context, and the anticipated future context – it is perhaps somewhat surprising that more than half of the respondents from the tooling division (56% of the available sample) subsequently went on to argue that divisional workers ideally should have more involvement than they currently did in group problem-solving and related activities. In other words, despite respondents' lack of experience (whether actual or anticipated) of a more active role for workers with respect to this activity category, and despite evidence of negative rather than positive attitudes towards workers adopting such a role in the future, the findings for the 'ideal' context suggested that there would be at least some support, among the members of this division, for group problem-solving and related team-based initiatives, if these were to be introduced. It is perhaps worth mentioning here that, of the five 'change' respondents from this division, there were four whose support for change could be explained, at least in part, by some aspect of their demographic profile. Specifically, these four respondents were all 'wages' employees. They included: (i) two respondents whose length of service with the company was very short relative to the other respondents in the sample for this division (length of service with the company for each of these respondents was six years); (ii) one respondent who was a shop steward (and whose close affiliation with the union over a number of years would arguably have exposed him to different perspectives); and (iii) one respondent who had had experience of 'other' organisations (in particular, his current after hours work as an instructor with a local college of Technical and Further Education) which may have shaped the consistently positive attitudes which he expressed towards worker involvement in activities indicative of an active, rather than a passive, role for workers. Thus, each of these four 'change' respondents had some characteristic which set them apart from their 'no change' counterparts and which, it might be argued, would be likely to positively influence their receptiveness to the desired change, should it ever be implemented.

At the same time as the above findings for the 'ideal' context were somewhat contrary to what one might have expected, given the findings for the other contextual domains, there were nevertheless some consistencies which emerged between these findings and the broader context of respondent experience (as represented by the findings for the other contextual domains). With respect specifically to the 'change' data, the reader is reminded that only one of the five 'change' respondents from the

tooling division advocated change spontaneously; for the remaining four 'change' respondents, specific prompting was required in order to elicit this information. Furthermore, there was an absence of rich elaborative data associated these 'change' responses, suggesting perhaps that respondents lacked a well-developed understanding (awareness) of the value of the changes which they were advocating. And finally, the 'no change' data contained evidence of the same explicit opposition to worker involvement in group problem-solving and related activities as had been expressed previously in responses to questioning in relation to the other contextual domains.

Production Division. Overall, the broader contextual analysis of 'ideal' context data (pertaining to the activity category 'Group Problem-Solving') for the production division produced somewhat more consistent results than did the associated analysis of 'ideal' context data for the tooling division. In other words, the linkages between the findings for the 'ideal' context and the findings for the other contextual domains of interest were somewhat more readily identifiable for the production division than they were for the tooling division.

The reader will recall from results reported previously that, with respect to respondents' experience of the current involvement of divisional workers in group problem-solving and related activities, it was difficult to distinguish between the two divisions. In the production division, as in the tooling division, workers reportedly had no current involvement (or very little current involvement) in such activities. Data pertaining to the past context of respondents' experience, however, highlighted a marked difference between the divisions. As indicated above for the tooling division, there was no evidence to suggest that the workers in this division had ever participated (at least not in any formal capacity, nor on any kind of regular basis) in group problem-solving and related team-based activities. The general view seemed to be that such activities involved an approach to work which was not compatible with traditional work practices in the division and which encroached upon the traditional role of divisional supervisors. In contrast, there was good evidence to suggest that the workers in the production division had had considerable past exposure to group problem-solving and related team-based activities. As indicated, this took the form of participation in semi-autonomous teams (which had been introduced in the early years of the division's establishment under the banner of the Team Concept) and, more recently, participation in group problem-solving meetings (as part of the AQAP initiative). Interestingly,

however, while there were some individuals for whom the experience of these initiatives appears to have been positive, the overriding impression created by the historical data was that both the Team Concept and the AQAP initiative were regarded as failed projects, both from an individual and an organisational perspective. As indicated, concerns were variously expressed about (i) workers lacking the necessary attitudes, skills, and experience for effective teamwork; (ii) inadequate and ineffective team leadership; (iii) the failure, on the part of management, to follow up on workers' ideas; and (iv) the tendency for team meetings (in this case the reference was specifically to AQAP meetings) to be abandoned whenever production demands became excessive.

The future context findings for the production division were similar to those for the tooling division in that less than half of the available respondents from this division (6/17 respondents or 35% of the sample) anticipated some change, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in group problem-solving and related activities. It was also the case that the 'change' respondents from this division, like their counterparts in the tooling division, were in good agreement that the direction of the anticipated change would be towards more involvement of divisional workers in such activities in the future. (There was one respondent from the production division who anticipated a 'decrease').

As indicated, however, the findings for the future context also suggested a number of differences between the divisions. One such difference was suggested by the analysis of attributional data. As indicated above, there was a perception among the 'change' respondents from the tooling division that the anticipated change would be an imposed change – it would come about because of circumstances perceived to be largely outside of the division's control. In contrast, respondents from the production division were more variable with respect to the types of attributions that they made. While there were some respondents from this division who showed the same 'externality' in attributional style as that exhibited by their counterparts in the tooling division (there were references, for example, to the anticipated change coming about because of a general trend in industry towards more participative human resource management practices and because of the need to deal with the unfamiliar problems that would inevitably arise with the forthcoming introduction of a new model vehicle), there were other respondents from this division who held the view that the anticipated change would

come about because of an explicit commitment, on the part of divisional management, to provide workers with more opportunities for involvement in divisional operations.

A further difference between the divisions was that respondents from the production division appeared to be more variable than their counterparts in the tooling division with respect to their attitudes toward worker involvement in group problem-solving and related activities. Whereas the evaluative data from the tooling division contained evidence of negative attitudes only, the production division evaluative data contained evidence of both positive and negative attitudes. Positive attitudes were indicated in references, by three respondents, to their belief that a change towards more involvement of divisional workers in group problem-solving was desirable; positive attitudes were also indicated in references, by a further two respondents, to their belief that divisional management were supportive of such initiatives. Negative attitudes, on the other hand, were indicated in the expression, by one respondent, of his opposition to team-based approaches (on the grounds of his negative past experience of such approaches) and in references, by a further two respondents, to their perception that divisional management were not prepared to forfeit the control which they had traditionally enjoyed in order to help ensure the success of team-based approaches.

With respect to the findings for the 'other' context, the same conclusion as that suggested above for the tooling division also applies to the production division. Specifically, while respondents from the production division appeared to have had more extensive experience of 'other' organisations than their counterparts in the tooling division – both quantitatively (in terms of the amount of experience acquired) and qualitatively (in terms of the variability of this experience) – there were no differences between their current and other organisation(s) which were reported by the respondents from this division which could be classified as being associated with the activity category 'Group Problem-Solving'.

As suggested above, the findings for the 'ideal' context for the production division could be fairly readily linked to the findings for the other contextual domains of interest. In particular, there emerged a fairly clear link between respondents' negative past experience of team-based approaches and their subsequent lack of support for a change in the 'ideal' context towards more involvement of divisional workers in group problem-solving and related activities. As indicated, of the seven respondents from this division (47% of the available sample) who did not advocate change (there were six 'no

change' respondent and one 'don't know' respondent), there were five who made reference, in their response to questioning about the 'ideal' context¹²³, to their negative past experience of the Team Concept and/or the AQAP initiative. It seems reasonable to conclude, therefore, that at least for some of the respondents from the production division, their negative past experience had served to influence the way in which they thought about the 'ideal'.

At the same time, however, there was good evidence of support in this division for a more active role for workers with respect to 'Group Problem-Solving'. As indicated, just over half of the available sample from this division (8/15 respondents or 53% of the sample) argued that, ideally, the workers in their division should be more involved than they were currently in group problem-solving and related activities. The point was also made that these 'change' respondents appeared to be somewhat more articulate than their counterparts in the tooling division in expressing their support for such a change¹²⁴. As indicated, of the eight 'change' respondents from this division, there were five who made reference to the intimate job knowledge possessed by shop floor workers and their view (more or less explicitly expressed) that such knowledge constituted a valuable resource for use in problem-solving situations. There was also an argument (by one respondent) that management should adopt a more "hands-off" approach to the running of AQAP meetings, thereby allowing workers to feel more ownership of this programme and the problems which it sought to address; and there was an argument (by another respondent) that supervisors should seek to develop a climate in their work area in which workers felt confident to contribute their ideas.

The point can be made that the clear evidence of support for worker involvement in group problem-solving and related activities which emerged in the 'ideal' context data for the production division was quite consistent with evidence of positive attitudes towards worker involvement in such activities which emerged in the data pertaining to the anticipated future context. This finding for the 'ideal' context is also not inconsistent with what one might expect, given the evidence (from data pertaining to the other activity categories) that, as a group, the respondents from the production division

¹²³ There was a sixth respondent from this group who had previously – in response to questioning about the anticipated future context – also indicated his opposition to team-based approaches on the grounds of his negative past experience of the Team Concept.

¹²⁴ This may reflect the fact that supervisory staff were better represented in the 'change' group for the production division than they were in the 'change' group for the tooling division. The point can still be made, however, that half of the 'change' respondents from the production division were 'wages' employees and half were supervisory staff.

appeared to have had more exposure than their counterparts in the tooling division, to a range of activities indicative of a more active role for workers.

Finally, it is worth commenting briefly on the possible implications for change of the above contextual analyses. First of all, with respect to the tooling division, it would seem that any attempt to redesign the work in this division around semi- or fully-autonomous teams would need to deal with member resistance to change which was firmly rooted in tradition (ie. traditional views about how work should be organised and about the respective roles of workers and their supervisors). In this sense, the change agent would have a critical educational role which, among other things, could involve helping supervisory staff to redefine their role and providing them with the necessary training to equip them with the skills, attitudes etc. required for their new role. The implications for the production division are somewhat different. In this division, any attempt to introduce a change of the kind described above would need to take into account member resistance which was based, not in tradition, but in previous experience of similar change initiatives which had failed. In this context, the change agent may be required to adopt a more consultative role – seeking information from divisional members about their perceptions of past problems and their views about how these problems might be overcome to help ensure the success of the new change effort.

(ii) Record Work-Related Information

Table 6.7 shows that the two divisions were similar in that approximately half of the respondents from each advocated some change in the involvement of divisional workers in recording work-related information. Specifically, there were five respondents out of nine (56%) from the tooling division and eight respondents out of fifteen (53%) from the production division who advocated some change. All but one of these respondents provided this information in response to specific prompting. In one case, the respondent (a first-line supervisor from the tooling division) advocated change spontaneously (ie. in response to the initial open-ended question(s)). With respect to the nature of the changes that were advocated, all of the 'change' respondents from the tooling division, and five of the 'change' respondents from the production division argued that, ideally, divisional workers should be more involved than they were currently in the recording of work-related information. The remaining three 'change' respondents from the production division included two respondents who advocated changes of a qualitative

nature and one respondent who argued that the involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping should decrease.

In the section which follows, the findings of a more detailed analysis of 'ideal' context data pertaining to the activity category 'Record Work-Related Information' are presented, first for the tooling division and then for the production division.

Tooling Division. The five 'change' respondents from the tooling division included two first-line supervisors and three 'wages' employees (two of whom were leading hands, and one of whom was a shop steward). All of these respondents were longer-serving employees, whose length of service with the company ranged from 17 years to 33 years.

As indicated, in all cases, the direction of the change which was advocated was towards more involvement of divisional workers in recording work-related information. All five 'change' respondents elaborated, to a greater or lesser extent, on their responses. Specifically, there were four respondents who provided information pertaining to the nature of record-keeping in which they believed divisional workers should become more involved. In one case, the respondent argued that it would be a good idea for workers to keep records of anything that constituted an 'exception to the rule'. In the respondent's own words:

I think that things out of the ordinary, it wouldn't be a bad idea [to record them]. I think that there are so many things that are similar to one another, but something out of the ordinary, [record] how you did it. And quite a good way... you can just take a photograph of it... and then you can see 'Oh, yes, that is how we did that'. ('wages' employee, shop steward)

A second respondent, in response to the initial open-ended question, argued that, in order to prevent the recurrence of particular problems, records should be kept of how these problems were resolved when they were first encountered. The respondent was critical of the company's traditional approach in this regard, commenting that:

Don't do what [the company] used to do, shelve [the problem], and on the next programme the same shitter came out, and it was just the same thing, and we started all over again. (first-line supervisor)

Subsequently, in response to prompting, the respondent went on to promote his particular approach of requiring his subordinates to complete a checklist which asked them about their specific responsibilities with respect to each completed job. The respondent's rationale for adopting this practice was as follows:

It is not that I am trying to put the blame on a particular person and saying 'You have done wrong'. But if I get a job that was done back, I do not wish to blame the

whole section. I am not blaming that person, but he was slack. And when I introduced that checklist I could go back and say 'You ticked that off, but you never tested it, and that is not good enough'.

A third respondent recommended the development of a manual specifying the particular procedures which should be followed in relation to the completion of work in his area:

...probably [record-keeping for workers] is not a bad idea when I come to think about it, because... if we were to set a manual out on our particular job, there are certain things that have to be done. And quite often they get missed because someone else does the job, and misses certain points... ('wages' employee, leading hand)

And a fourth respondent indicated that, in his opinion, it was desirable that the workers in his area were themselves responsible for recording information pertaining to the prototype work in which they were involved. In this respondent's own words:

[It's] very appropriate [to involve workers in record-keeping]... Well, in our area we make patterns, models, aids and such like. One of the big things is the models, right. Now we must keep records of the models, it's imperative. What I do when a person finishes a model... I give them a sheet. On that typed up sheet it says what the name of the model is, what the part number is, what its specifications are, datums and everything else. And I get them to write it out themselves and when they've written it out, I go through it and sign it. And consequently... they feel as though they've created something, they've done it, and it's their information that's on that sheet. And it's good, they enjoy that. ('wages' employee, leading hand)

It is worth noting that, in all of the above excerpts, a theme which emerges with more or less clarity is that record-keeping is important, perhaps even critical, from a technical and/or quality control perspective. An isolated theme (which appears in the last excerpt above and for which there was no other evidence in this data set) concerns the view that a more active role for workers with respect to record-keeping could serve to enrich workers' jobs.

Finally, the fifth 'change' respondent from the tooling division – a first-line supervisor – indicated that, while he thought that workers "could do a little bit more [record-keeping]", the extent of their involvement in this activity would be "subject to the nature of the work". As he saw it, one might expect to "get more of that on the production side of things".

The remaining four respondents from the tooling division who provided information pertaining to this activity category all indicated that, in their opinion, there should be no change in the involvement of divisional workers in recording work-related information. These 'no change' respondents included two supervisory staff (one first-line supervisor and one senior supervisor) and two 'wages' employees (one with leading hand status).

The former were longer-serving employees, with 28 years' and 40 years' service with the company respectively, and the latter were shorter-serving employees, each with only six years' service with the company.

All four 'no change' respondents elaborated on their responses. The first-line supervisor indicated that, in his opinion, record-keeping constituted a supervisory, not a worker, responsibility. In his own words:

No. I don't reckon that the workers should be involved in that. I believe that the person who's responsible has got to be on his toes enough to realise what that person is doing, be it 10 people or 15 people. He's got to know what stage they're at because if his supervisor asks him a question, he's pretty stupid if he has to run up to Joe Blow and say 'What are you doing? What stage are you at?'. (first-line supervisor)

The senior supervisor regarded worker involvement in record-keeping as time-wasting:

No. Once again, [it's] time-wasting. If you get people sitting down trying to record everything they've done, eventually it gets to the stage [where] no-one's got time to read it, or take any action on it anyway. So it's a waste of time recording it. (senior supervisor)

The two 'wages' employees argued that, in their opinion, there was no need for workers in the tooling division to be involved in recording work-related information. One of these respondents implied that, while such a practice might be seen to have some relevance for trade apprentices, ideally the apprentice should be working alongside a qualified tradesman "so that he is picking up the information anyway of what that tradesman does". The other respondent indicated that, while he couldn't "see any reason really for a worker to record what they do", perhaps one exception was the recent requirement – associated with the implementation of Award Restructuring – for divisional workers to "explain basically what we do". The respondent went on, however, to express his cynicism about the ultimate value of this particular recording effort: "But, then again, it got taken out of our hands".

Finally, and as indicated in Table 6.7, there were three respondents from the tooling division for whom missing data were recorded. These respondents included one senior supervisor, one first-line supervisor, and one 'wages' employee with leading hand status. These respondents were all longer-serving employees, whose length of service with the company ranged from 25 years to 35 years.

Production Division. As indicated above, of the eight 'change' respondents from the production division, there were five who argued that divisional workers ideally should be more involved than they were currently in the recording of work-related information.

These respondents were all 'wages' employees and included two females and three males. Length of service with the company for this group was variable and ranged from 3 years to 19 years (mean = 10.6 years; median = 9 years).

All five respondents elaborated on their responses. Two respondents argued for both an increase in the level of worker involvement in record-keeping in the division and an improvement in the quality of workers' current record-keeping efforts. In their own words:

Yes, I think in some areas they could do more of that. And possibly they could be more responsible for what they do than at the present time. Like, make a better job of it. ...Because a lot of the time the [record] sheets don't get filled out correctly and, therefore, the figures that they show aren't really reflecting [what is happening]. Whereas if they were more responsible for just putting down the correct stuff, not so they're going to have to do more afterwards, but they'd highlight better where the problems are. ('wages' employee)

Yes. I think that could be improved... I think there could be more, and an improvement on what they do. ('wages' employee)

The second respondent above went on to argue further that divisional workers should have a more active role for workers in relation to the completion of quality assurance sheets. It appeared that, at the present time, the division's quality inspectors (the respondent herself worked in this role) had sole responsibility for this task:

...we [ie. quality inspectors] do a record sheet for quality assurance. We take some sheets out and record a lot of stuff off the lines. It's sort of a monitor thing, where you have to go and see if they're using the right materials, and if they were taking stocks, and all this sort of thing. And I think the people themselves should be more involved in those sheets that we do... See, on those sheets you do, you go and see if they're using the right material, because if you're not using the right material for the product you're making that could be a real... sometimes you can find out, you know, a day later and that's no good. ('wages' employee)

A third respondent argued that workers should record the details of the production problems which they encountered, including the nature of the problem, its likely source, and how it might be overcome. In the respondent's own words:

[Workers] should record the problems they've got. We don't really have to do that much any more. *Interviewer:* What sort of information could workers in your area usefully record? *Respondent:* Moulding problems. What was the problem. The reason it was there and what they think could rectify it. ('wages' employee)

A fourth respondent indicated that, in his opinion, it would be useful for workers who were starting work on a new job to maintain – presumably for some finite period of time – a record of their production rates and reject rates:

I think [recording] would be a good thing for a person, probably not now, but on new jobs. I think it would be a good thing for a person to log their own production

rates and to log their own reject rates, and sort of for a copy to go around to different people like QA [ie. Quality Assurance] and things like that, so that they [QA?] can get a sort of a true picture of what's actually going on. ('wages' employee)

And finally, a fifth respondent argued that workers should keep records of problems which they encountered – "...things what upsets them, about the machines, the way things are set up, the stand what you use to put your parts on" – which made it difficult for them to get their work done.

It is interesting to note that, as for the tooling division, each of the above respondents – except perhaps the last – makes a more or less explicit reference to the idea that record-keeping serves an important quality control function. Nowhere in these data was there any reference to the idea that, by giving workers responsibility for recording what they do, workers jobs could potentially be enriched.

As indicated above, there were two respondents from the production division, both of whom were supervisory staff, who advocated changes that seemed to be more appropriately classified as qualitative changes. In one case, the respondent argued that, instead of workers having to manually record what they did, record-keeping should be computerised:

...I feel that it should be done electronically. I feel that people get a kick out of using this equipment, and if they know what it is for, and why you do it, and why it is there... (first-line supervisor)

The other respondent argued that, to the extent that workers were required to maintain records of what they did, then they should be allocated time specifically for this activity and, moreover, that the activity should be regarded as constituting a formal part of their job function. In the respondent's own words:

...if we're going to give the people those jobs to do, then it's got to be seen as a part of their job function, okay. For example, right now their job might be, you know, 'Put two nuts in that and put it over [to] the side'... And then, as an extra, they say 'And mark off on this sheet these attributes, right. Did it have that? Did it have that?' But you don't get any extra time to do that. So the only problem with recording can be, while it may well be necessary, we don't actually give them the time to do it as part of their job function. And therefore, either the recording loses out, in which case you can lose valuable information, or the product loses out in the form of bad quality because they're rushing trying to do both and they don't really have the time and that's happening a little bit even now. (senior supervisor)

I subsequently asked this respondent about the role of divisional workers with respect to the collation of the information which they had been required to record. The respondent conceded that, while shop floor workers currently had no responsibilities in this regard –

data management being the domain of senior divisional personnel (ie. managers and senior supervisory staff) – there were nevertheless some shop floor workers who were more than adequately equipped to carry out this work. In the respondent's own words:

Well, there's people out on the shop floor that we don't look at twice during the day and outside they run small businesses, and they're presidents of Apex and so on and so forth... I mean we've got guys out there with computer skills that are far in excess of any of us.

Finally, the respondent went on to argue that it was difficult to give workers a more active role with respect to record-keeping (in the sense of extending their involvement beyond simply data collection, to data analysis) because "I can't spare them off the line and [management] won't give me people to replace them".

Of the eight 'change' respondents from the production division, there was one who advocated a decrease in the involvement of divisional workers in recording work-related information. This respondent was a female 'wages' employee with five years service with the company. As she saw it, there existed in the division, to some extent at least, a kind of 'recording for the sake of recording' mentality:

I'd probably decrease [the amount of recording that workers are required to do]... Because I think half the things they're doing are a waste of time anyway because [management] do nothing with it... it's just 'Oh, yes, very good, you've done that. We'll put that in our filing cabinet and we might look at it later' sort of thing. ('wages' employee)

In addition to the above 'change' respondents, there were seven respondents from the production division who expressed the view that there should be 'no change' in the involvement of divisional workers in recording work-related information. This group comprised five males and two females, all of whom were 'wages' employees. Length of service with the company for this group was variable and ranged from four years to thirty years (mean = 13.1 years; median = 9 year).

All but one of the 'no change' respondents elaborated, to a greater or lesser extent, on their responses. In five cases, the respondent either implied or stated explicitly that (s)he was satisfied with the current level of involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping. The following excerpts serve to illustrate:

No, it works all right as it is. ('wages' employee)

I'd leave it much as it is. ('wages' employee, inspector)

No, there's really no need for [recording], you know, unless it's part of your particular job. ('wages' employee)

I think that's all they need to do – up in the moulding section anyway – because they've got enough doing their jobs, especially if it's very busy. ('wages' employee, inspector)

Personally, I don't think they really take any notice of the data, so I think it's just all right as it is. ('wages' employee, die setter)

It is interesting to note that the fourth excerpt above recalls the earlier reference to workers having insufficient time for record-keeping and the associated criticism that, instead of being regarded as an integral part of a worker's formal job function – as it should have been – record-keeping was seen as something of an adjunct to this – a requirement over and above the worker's formal job requirements. It is also worth making the point that, implicit in the last excerpt, is the suggestion that workers may be largely unaware of the practical relevance of the data which they were required to collect.

Of the seven 'no change' respondents from this division, there was one who expressed explicit opposition to the requirement that workers should keep records of what they did. On the one hand, the respondent indicated that he could see little point in a worker recording what (s)he did – the work was either done or it was not done:

...if you walk in the gate and [you do] seven and a half hours work, or whatever it is, and you walk back out and you think you haven't done nothing, well there is no good recording [the fact], is it? Because if you walk in the gate and when you go home you think to yourself 'Well, I've done my day's work. I don't have to have a guilty conscience like some do' – and you know some have, they walk through the gate and back out as fresh as when they walked in... ('wages' employee)

On the other hand, the respondent believed that record-keeping could potentially be used by supervisors as a means of discriminating unfairly against some workers:

I don't believe in records like that. I think that reverts back to a sort of.... [the worker] can say 'Well, I've kept a record of what I've done, this is it', and he's most probably done that. And [the supervisor] will most probably turn around and point the finger at Joe Blow and say 'Well, you're the laziest bastard that ever drew breath – 'Where's you're bloody record?'

Finally, and as indicated in Table 6.7, there were four respondents from the production division for whom missing data were recorded. These respondents, all of whom were males, included three supervisory staff (one senior supervisor and two first-line supervisors) and one 'wages' employee. The supervisors were longer-serving employees whose length of service with the company ranged from 14 years to 20 years, while the 'wages' employee was a shorter-serving employee, with 8 years' service with the company.

Conclusion. On the basis of the above analysis of 'ideal' context data pertaining to the activity category 'Record Work-Related Information', there are a number of concluding points which can be made regarding similarities and differences between the two divisions. These are as follows:

First, the two divisions were found to be roughly equivalent with respect to the proportion of respondents from each (56% from the tooling division and 53% from the production division) who advocated some change with respect to this activity category. In terms of the nature of the changes which were advocated, however, there was some evidence of a difference between the divisions. While all of the 'change' respondents from the tooling division (representing 56% of the available sample) argued that ideally workers should be more involved than they were currently in the recording of work-related information, only five of the eight 'change' respondents from the production division (representing 33% of the available sample) advocated such a change. It will be recalled that, for the production division, there were two 'change' respondents who advocated 'qualitative' changes and one 'change' respondents who advocated a 'decrease'.

There was also some evidence to suggest that the divisions might differ in terms of respondent perceptions about the kinds of recording activities (whether new or existing) in which workers might become more involved. Specifically, respondents from the tooling division appeared to be somewhat more variable than their counterparts in the production division with respect to the kinds of recording activities which they mentioned. In the case of the tooling division, these activities variously took the form of: (i) documenting 'exceptions to the rule'; (ii) recording solutions to problems which were encountered; (iii) developing a job procedures manual; (iv) recording prototype specifications; and (v) completing a checklist indicating 'who did what' with respect to specific jobs. In contrast, the range of different types of recording activities which were mentioned by respondents from the production division was somewhat narrower, with the main focus being on activities associated with the monitoring of production output and quality. Other activities which were mentioned by the respondents from this division included: (i) recording information about production problems which were encountered (the nature of the problem, its likely source, and possible resolution); and (ii) recording information about problems, associated with such things as equipment set up, which prevented workers from getting the job done.

This difference between the two divisions is not inconsistent with what one might expect given the different core business activities of each division (mass production for the production division and the development and manufacture of specialised tooling for the tooling division). It also probably reflects the fact that the members of the tooling division had had considerably less experience than their counterparts in the production division, of worker involvement in record-keeping. Hence, it may be that there was simply more scope for them to speculate about the possible forms that this activity might take, if it was to be somehow incorporated into the role of divisional workers.

A second concluding point concerns similarities and differences between the divisions which were suggested by the analysis of the thematic content of respondents' elaborations on their responses. A theme which emerged with some consistency in the elaborative data for both divisions was that a key function – perhaps the primary function – which was served by record-keeping was that of control, whether in relation to the quality of the work produced or in relation to some other aspect of technical operations within the division. Specifically, this theme emerged, with more or less clarity, in the responses of four 'change' respondents and one 'no change' respondent from the tooling division (representing 56% of the available sample) and five 'change' respondents (including one who had advocated a qualitative change) from the production division (representing 33% of the available sample).

There was little evidence in the data from either division to indicate an awareness of the possible motivational implications of a more active role for workers with respect to record-keeping – the idea that a worker's job could potentially be enriched as a consequence of the performance feedback provided by record-keeping. As indicated, this theme emerged in the response of only one respondent from the tooling division. It was, however, quite well-articulated by the respondent concerned. The production division data contained almost no evidence of this theme. While there was one respondent who conceded that there were some divisional workers who would be more than adequately equipped, in terms of their skills and experience, to take on a more active role with respect to record-keeping (specifically, to get involved in data analysis), there was no evidence of any serious consideration having been given to redesigning workers' jobs along these lines.

Apart from the above similarities between the divisions, the thematic content analysis also revealed some differences between the divisions. For example, a theme which

appeared to be unique to the tooling division concerned the perception that record-keeping was an activity which somehow lacked relevance for workers in a tooling environment. There was evidence of this theme in the responses of perhaps five respondents from this division (including four 'no change' respondents and one 'change' respondent). Specifically, there were two respondents who indicated that they could see 'no reason' to involve divisional workers in the recording of work-related information; there was one respondent who regarded it as 'time-wasting' to involve workers in record-keeping; there was one respondent who argued that record-keeping should be the responsibility of supervisory staff and not workers; and there was one respondent (the 'change' respondent) who suggested that worker involvement in record-keeping might be more appropriate to work in a production environment.

In contrast with the above, the 'no change' respondents from the production division tended to see change as unnecessary, not because they questioned the relevance of involving workers in record-keeping, but because, to a greater or lesser extent, they considered the current role of workers with respect to record-keeping to be satisfactory. As indicated, of the six 'no change' respondents from this division who elaborated on their responses, there were five who expressed this view. This is not to say, however, that respondents from the production division (including the 'no change' respondents) did not voice some criticism of the current approach to this aspect of divisional operations. There was evidence, for example, of a degree of cynicism among workers about the current emphasis on record-keeping, on the basis that often nothing appeared to be done with the information that they were required to record. It was also suggested that workers took little notice of the results of their recording efforts (which were displayed around the division in the form of graphs showing performance outcomes). And there was evidence that workers had insufficient time to carefully and conscientiously record what they did, record-keeping being an adjunct to, rather than an integral part of, their formal job requirements.

The third and final concluding point concerns the analysis of the above data in terms of respondent demographics. For the tooling division, there was no difference between the 'change' and 'no change' groups in terms of respondent seniority. In other words, supervisory staff and 'wages' employees were represented in both of these groups. It is difficult to comment on differences with respect to tenure because of the small numbers of respondents involved. However, it can be noted that both of the shorter-serving

employees from this division (each with six years' service with the company) gave 'no change' responses. This finding can be contrasted with the finding reported previously for 'Group Problem-Solving', namely, that in relation to this activity category, both respondents advocated 'change'. For the production division, it is perhaps worth noting that supervisory staff were represented in the 'change' group, but not in the 'no change' group (which comprised all 'wages' employees). However, attention is drawn to the fact that missing data were recorded for three of the five supervisory staff in the sample for this division. Finally, there was no evidence of a difference between the 'change' and 'no change' groups from this division in terms of either respondent length of service with the company or gender.

Contextual analysis of 'ideal' context data for 'Record Work-Related Information

Tooling Division. There was good evidence, from data pertaining to the past context, to indicate that the workers in the tooling division had had a long and stable history of little or no involvement in the recording of work-related information. There was also evidence that the situation at the present time was very similar to what it had been in the past. In other words, to the extent that there was any involvement at all of divisional workers in record-keeping, it was confined to single work areas (ie. it was not division-wide) and it typically involved a few workers only.

With respect to the anticipated future context, the majority of respondents from this division (80% of the available sample) indicated that they did not foresee any significant change, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in the recording of work-related information. There were two respondents only from this division who anticipated a change with respect to this activity category. While the anticipated change was, in both case, towards more involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping, the point was made that the change described by one of these respondents was a highly localised change, in the form of the respondent's own personal initiative to encourage the workers in his area to maintain records of various work procedures. A noteworthy feature of respondent elaborations on their 'no change' responses was that they provided some confirmation of existing evidence (from data pertaining to the past and present contexts) that, in this division, record-keeping was regarded as largely irrelevant to the rôle of workers. Specifically, there were two respondents who simply expressed their conviction that change would not happen; a third respondent maintained that record-keeping would continue to be the responsibility of supervisors and leading hands; a

fourth respondent indicated that, given the time-consuming nature of the activity, it was unlikely that workers would ever have much involvement in it; and a fifth respondent indicated that, while he thought change was unlikely, it was perhaps not impossible given the current context of industry-wide reform associated with Award Restructuring. It is perhaps not insignificant that nowhere in these data was there any reference to the view that a change towards more worker involvement in record-keeping, while unlikely, might nevertheless be desirable.

Finally, there was no evidence in the data pertaining to the 'other' context to suggest that the respondents from this division had had experience (whether direct or indirect) of other organisations which might have provided them with a different perspective on the role of workers with respect to record-keeping. The reader is reminded that there were six respondents from this division (50% of the sample) who reported no knowledge of what it was that the workers in other organisations did. The remaining six respondents included one who indicated that there was no difference between his current and his 'other' organisation (in terms of what workers did), and five who described various differences, none of which could be classified as being associated with the activity category 'Record Work-Related Information'.

Given the above broader context of respondent experience with respect to this activity category (as represented by the findings for the present context, the past context, the anticipated future context, and the 'other' context), one might have predicted that the proportion of respondents likely to advocate an increase in the involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping – in response to the subsequent questioning about the 'ideal' context – would have been less than the 56% that was recorded. This finding suggests the possibility that, should the tooling division introduce a change which required divisional workers to assume a more active role than they currently had with respect to record-keeping, then there may be more support for such a change than one might have predicted on the basis of the findings for the other contextual domains of interest.

At the same time, however, the point can be made that, of the five respondents from this division who advocated change, there were three who gave the impression of lacking a firm conviction about the value of the changes that they were recommending. Specifically, one of these respondents expressed the view that "it wouldn't be a bad idea" for divisional workers to record "things out of the ordinary"; another respondent considered the possibility of a job procedures' manual being developed for use in his

area and made the point that “probably it’s not a bad idea when I come to think about it”; and a third respondent suggested that, while divisional workers “could do a little bit more [record-keeping]”, one might expect to “get more of that on the production side of things”.

In contrast with the above, the remaining two ‘change’ respondents from this division impressed as being much more certain about the changes which they were recommending. In one case, the respondent indicated that he would “most certainly” implement record-keeping for workers. This took the form of, on the one hand, requiring workers to maintain a record of “who did what” with respect to particular jobs and, on the other hand, requiring workers to record solutions to problems when they were first encountered, so as to reduce the likelihood of their recurrence. Interestingly, with respect to the former, the respondent’s assertion that this practice was not intended as a means of allocating individual blame was contradicted somewhat by his subsequent comment that “I am not blaming that person, but he was slack”. The second respondent indicated that he considered it “very appropriate” for the workers in his area to have some record-keeping responsibilities, in relation specifically to the recording of prototype specifications. As indicated, this respondent was the only respondent from this division who gave any indication that he was aware of the motivational implications of giving workers responsibility for recording what they did. With respect to the ‘no change’ data for the ‘ideal’ context, the point can be made that these data were consistent with previous evidence (from findings pertaining to the other contextual domains) suggesting that record-keeping was generally not regarded as a salient activity in respondent conceptions of the role of workers in this division.

On the basis of the above contextual analysis (of tooling division ‘ideal’ context data pertaining to the activity category ‘Record Work-Related Information’), there are perhaps two main conclusions which can be drawn. The first is that, if a change was to be introduced into this division which required divisional workers to assume direct responsibility for recording work-related information, then it is likely that divisional members would vary somewhat in their support for this change (with some members approving the change and others being resistant to it). The second, and perhaps more important conclusion, concerns evidence that record-keeping appeared to be regarded as a somewhat irrelevant activity in member definitions of the role of workers in this division. As indicated, divisional members had had very little experience (whether in

the context of their present organisation or other organisations) of the workers in their division being involved, to any significant degree, in record-keeping. This factor is one which the change agent would need to be mindful of, in particular because of its likely implications for the choice of a suitable change strategy.

Production Division. As indicated, there was evidence to suggest that, as a group, the respondent from the production division had had considerably more exposure to worker involvement in record-keeping than had their counterparts in the tooling division. Data pertaining to the present context of respondents' experience indicated that the workers in this division were currently involved, to varying degrees, in the recording of work-related information. There were two main factors which appeared to influence the extent of a worker's involvement in this activity, namely, the worker's location in the division (in some sections workers were required to do more record-keeping than in others) and the current stage of model production (there was a requirement for more record-keeping in the early stages of model production when operational issues were still being resolved). Data pertaining to the historical context of respondents' experience with respect to this activity category provided evidence to suggest that the involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping may have increased in recent years, due to a drive by divisional management to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of production operations in the division. There was also evidence (in the data pertaining to both the past and present contexts) of a perception, which was shared fairly widely among respondents, that record-keeping served the primary purpose of production control. Respondents from this division, like their counterparts in the tooling division, displayed little awareness of the motivational implications of giving workers responsibility for recording work-related information.

The findings for the future context provided evidence of a perception that the current trend towards more worker involvement in record-keeping was one which would be likely to continue into the future. Specifically, this view was shared by almost half of the respondents from this division (nine respondents or 47% of the sample). A number of reasons were suggested for why this anticipated change would occur, the most commonly cited of these being that, in order to ensure its survival in the longer term, the division would need to further increase its commitment to the quality and efficiency of its operations. This attribution recalled the theme which had emerged previously in data pertaining to the past and present contexts, namely, that record-keeping was regarded as

serving a critical production control function. Other reasons for the anticipated change included: (i) a reference by one respondent to the division's current effort to become an accredited quality supplier (and the associated requirement that records of various production indices be maintained); (ii) a reference by a second respondent to the forthcoming introduction of a new model vehicle (which, with its attendant problems, would require an increased emphasis on careful record-keeping); and (iii) a reference by a third respondent to the influence of technological change (in particular, the development of increasingly complex parts and machinery which would necessitate an increase in workers' recording responsibilities). Interestingly, there was only one respondent from this group who offered an explanation for the anticipated change in terms of the job enrichment implications of increasing workers' record-keeping responsibilities.

The point was also made, in relation to the above 'change' data that, while respondent attitudes towards the anticipated change were generally positive (ie. the change was seen as desirable), there was nevertheless evidence of some ambivalence toward it. Reference was made, for example, to record-keeping being a necessary but undesirable activity ("a pain in the butt to do it"), to there being insufficient time allocated to the task, and to the danger of record-keeping becoming a "paper exercise".

The proportion of respondents from the production division who anticipated 'no change' in the future in the involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping was roughly equivalent to the proportion of respondents who anticipated an increase (there were eight 'no change' respondents, comprising 42% of the available sample). The elaborative data associated with these 'no change' responses provided some evidence to suggest the respondents concerned regarded the current role of workers with respect to record-keeping as satisfactory. One respondent did, however, make reference to the importance of achieving a balance between a worker's responsibility for direct production, on the one hand, and his/her responsibility for record-keeping, on the other.

The findings for the 'other' context, for the production division, were not dissimilar to those reported above for the tooling division. That is, none of the differences between their current and their 'other' organisation(s) which respondents reported were classified as being related to the activity category 'Record Work-Related Information'. This finding was somewhat surprising since, given their considerable exposure to other organisations (at least relative to their counterparts in the tooling division), and given

the nature of these other organisations (typically employing unskilled labour), it would seem reasonable to assume that a number of the respondents from the production division would have had experience of other organisations in which workers (unlike the workers in their current organisation) would have had no responsibility whatsoever for record-keeping.

One can only speculate as to why respondents might have failed to mention this difference. A possible explanation lies in the way in which respondents interpreted the questions about the 'other' context. The reader is reminded that these questions sought information about (i) whether or not respondents were aware of what it was that the workers in other organisations did; (ii) whether this awareness was based on direct or indirect experience; and (iii) what perceived differences (in what workers did) existed between the respondent's current and 'other' organisation(s). It was found that, when describing differences between their current and 'other' organisation(s), respondents tended to focus on differences of a general nature – associated, for example, with the level of social activity in the organisation, the level of job satisfaction of workers, the organisation's operating reward system etc. – rather than differences that were necessarily directly linked to what it was that workers did (ie. the role of workers). Clearly, however, these were differences that were highly salient to respondents in the sense that they mattered more than other differences which might have existed but were not mentioned (such as, differences with respect to workers' record-keeping responsibilities)¹²⁵. Attention should also be drawn to the fact that questioning in relation to the 'other' context did not include presentation of the prompt questions (as it did for each of the other contextual domains of interest). It is quite likely that, had respondents been prompted specifically about differences between their current and their 'other' organisation(s), in terms of worker involvement in record-keeping, then this activity category would have been represented in the production division findings for the 'other' context.

¹²⁵ While this same argument might equally apply to the 'other' context finding for the tooling division (which, as indicated above, was similar to that reported for the production division), the point can be made that, compared with their counterparts from the production division, respondents from the tooling division had had considerably less experience of 'other' organisational contexts. Moreover, this experience was narrower in the sense that it was acquired in similar organisational contexts to that in which respondents currently worked. As such, it seems unlikely that respondents from the tooling division would have had exposure to a different role for workers, with respect to record-keeping, from that which existed in their current organisation.

Given the above broader context of respondent experience with respect to the activity category 'Record Work-Related Information' (as represented by the findings for the present context, the past context, the anticipated future context, and the 'other' context), the subsequent findings for the 'ideal' context are not inconsistent with what one might have expected. In particular, the finding that only one one-third of the respondents from the production division argued that divisional workers should, ideally, be more involved in record-keeping than they were at the present time is not surprising, given that record-keeping was an activity for which workers (at least the workers in some areas) already had considerable responsibility. It was also not surprising, given the past and present context of respondents' experience, that the changes which were advocated tended to be changes in relation to either current practices or past practices which had been neglected. So, for example, there were references to the desirability of: (i) increasing workers' current record-keeping responsibilities; (ii) encouraging workers to be more conscientious in their approach to record-keeping; (iii) allocating time specifically for record-keeping; and (iii) reintroducing the past practice of keeping records on production problems that were encountered. There were only two respondents who referred to record-keeping activities which could be classified as 'new' in the sense that the workers, at least in their particular work areas, would have been unlikely to have had any experience of them. In one case, the respondent suggested that it would be a good idea for new workers to record their production and reject rates; in the other, the respondent suggested that workers should record their dissatisfaction with such things as equipment set-up which, when faulty, prevented them from getting the job done.

As indicated, approximately half of the respondents from the production division (47% of the available sample) argued that there should be 'no change' in the current involvement of divisional workers in record-keeping. While these respondents generally seemed to be satisfied with how much record-keeping workers were required to do, their responses nevertheless contained evidence of some ambivalence towards, or dissatisfaction with, the practice. For example, one respondent made reference to his perception that workers took little notice of the summary information pertaining to the data which they collected; another respondent implied that, during busy periods, workers did not have time to keep records of what they did.

It would appear, therefore, that in the case of the production division, there existed a fairly clear link between the findings for the 'ideal' context and the findings for the past

and present contexts. It can also be argued that the findings for the 'ideal' context were not inconsistent with the findings for the anticipated future context. With respect to the latter, respondents were similarly divided in terms of their 'change' and 'no change' responses and there was also evidence of a degree of ambivalence towards the practice of record-keeping. Finally, the point can be made that a common theme which emerged in the data pertaining to all of the contextual domains about which respondents were asked (with the exception of the 'other' context) was that record-keeping was seen as serving the primary function of production control. Like their counterparts in the tooling division, respondents from the production division displayed little awareness of the possible motivational value of involving workers in record-keeping.

The findings of the above contextual analysis have a number of implications for the success of future efforts, by production division management, to increase the record-keeping responsibilities of the workers in this division. Unlike the tooling division, where members' lack of familiarity with a record-keeping role for workers would be likely to constitute at least one source of resistance to a change of this kind (should it be attempted), the problem for the production division is likely to be associated more with the lack of a firm conviction – particularly among some divisional workers – about the value of record-keeping and the significance of their role in relation to this activity. In view of this, one might prescribe an approach to change which would involve: (i) more direct communication between management and workers about the purpose of record-keeping and the potential benefits it offered to the individual worker, the team of which (s)he is a part, and the division as a whole; (ii) a more consistent effort, on the part of divisional management, to provide tangible evidence of the practical outcomes of workers' record-keeping efforts (ie. the argument that workers needed to be more convinced than they were currently that management acted on the data which they collected); (iii) allocating sufficient time for workers to engage in conscientious record-keeping; and (iv) enriching the role of workers with respect to record-keeping by allocating data analysis responsibilities to workers and providing them with the necessary training to meet these responsibilities.

(iii) Information Meetings

As indicated in Table 6.7, the divisions were similar in that a majority of respondents from each advocated some change in the involvement of divisional workers with respect to the activity category 'Information Meetings'. Specifically, change was advocated by

seven out of ten respondents from the tooling division (ie. 70% of the available sample) and by thirteen out of sixteen respondents from the production division (81% of the available sample). Table 6.7 also shows that, for the tooling division, these 'change' data were entirely generated through specific prompting. No respondent from this division advocated change spontaneously, in response to the initial open-ended question(s). In contrast, for the production division, there were four respondents who advocated change spontaneously¹²⁶; the remaining nine 'change' respondents from this division, like their counterparts in the tooling division, required specific prompting to elicit this information. With respect to the nature of the changes that were advocated, the emphasis in the data from both divisions was on the need for an improvement of some kind in divisional communications pertaining to information dissemination. In particular, the 'change' data from both divisions contained references to the need for divisional workers to receive more work-related information than they did currently (whether this was provided in the context of formally organised information meetings, or on a more informal day-to-day basis) and to the need for there to be more two-way information flow (the recommendation being that divisional management should seek information from, as well as give information to, workers).

In the section which follows, the results of the more detailed analysis of 'ideal' context data pertaining to the activity category 'Information Meetings' are presented, first for the tooling division and then for the production division.

Tooling Division. The seven 'change' respondents from the tooling division included two supervisors (one senior supervisor and one first-line supervisor) and five 'wages' employee (three of whom had leading hand status and one who was a shop steward). With respect to length of service with the company, this group included both of the shorter-serving employees in the sample for this division (each with only six years' service with the company) and four longer-serving employees (whose length of service with the company ranged from 17 years to 40 years).

Five of the seven 'change' respondents from the tooling division elaborated, to a greater or lesser extent, on their responses. In one case, the respondent (a leading hand) argued that information meetings should be used, not just for the purpose of disseminating information downwards (from management to workers), but also for the purpose of disseminating information upwards (from workers to management). Such a

¹²⁶ Two of these respondents provided additional 'change' data in response to subsequent prompting about the 'ideal' role for workers with respect to 'Information Meetings'.

change could provide the assurance, which was currently lacking, that workers' problems and ideas were being heard by divisional management. In this respondent's own words:

I would like to also have that sort of situation where [workers] can put input back too. Let's be honest, there's nothing worse than having a heap of problems in your shop, and you keep telling your foreman, and you never know whether your foreman puts it in here, and goes home and forgets about it, or whether he takes it to his next in charge, or whether it ever gets to the top. You really don't know...
...[Information meetings provide] an opportunity then for everybody to try and put [their] ideas. Whether it goes past me or not, that's once again another matter. ('wages' employee, leading hand)

A second respondent (also a leading hand) indicated that "No, there's not enough" involvement of divisional workers in information meetings. This respondent then went on to talk more generally about his perception that the supervisors in the division seemed to be opposed to a more involved role for workers on the grounds that such a role presented supervisors with a threat to their job security. The respondent also drew attention to the greater autonomy and responsibility enjoyed by the workers in his own section – the Jig Shop – and in the Pattern Shop, compared with the workers in other sections of the division¹²⁷. The respondent's verbatim response was as follows:

Well, I think it's up to the supervision themselves to get the workers involved. I think the supervision, that's the whole problem in a factory, that they don't let the people get involved... how can I put it? When I first started there, I really wanted to be involved in anything... I used to, you know, [if] it was a special job and it had to be done in a hurry, I would start at six o'clock in the morning and work to eight o'clock at night. I did that three nights a week for two weeks and I worked all day Saturdays to get the job done. Now to me, I didn't do it for the money, I did it for the job, right. And I've even cancelled my holidays to get a certain job done, like, a job I could finish. My holidays were due so I put it back. To me, that's being involved with the job. But down there, they don't like it, they don't like you being involved... To me, I got the feeling that supervisors feel as if you're trying to give too much and you might be sort of after their job or something like that... to me, the only true tradesmen down there are [in] the Pattern Shop, and [in] our section. The others may be tradesmen but they weren't allowed to use their brains, right. So all they'd do is do what they're told. Where[as] in our section, I let my boys use their own brains, right. I encourage it, and if they ever get into strife I don't mind them coming up and asking me. But I don't walk up to them and say 'You've got to do it that way'... Let them figure out their own problems. I mean they have made mistakes and I help them out, and that's the only way they're going to learn. ('wages' employee, leading hand)

¹²⁷ A possible explanation for this difference is that the nature of the work performed in both the Jig Shop and in the Pattern Shop was such that it allowed the tradesmen in these areas considerable scope to exercise their 'artistic' or design capabilities. In contrast, in other sections of the division, tradesmen were required to work according to predetermined and rigidly defined job specifications.

A third respondent (a senior supervisor) indicated that he thought that the State of the Nation meetings were “a good idea” in that the workers were “sort of interested” in them; he further suggested the possibility that “you could make that a two way thing, [that] the information goes both ways”.

The above responses can be seen as similar in that each contains some evidence of a belief (albeit stated with more or less conviction) that divisional workers should have a more active role than they did currently. This theme did not emerge in the responses of the other two ‘change’ respondents for whom elaborative data were available. One of these respondents (a ‘wages’ employee) expressed the view that State of the Nation meetings, in their current form, did not provide divisional workers with enough information concerning, in particular, how strategic issues might impact upon the day-to-day operational activities of workers. The respondent was critical of the fact that information of this kind was not given routinely, but rather it was left to workers to ask for it. In the respondent’s own words:

I think that [workers] should know what’s happening in maybe... [the]relationship of their job with the way things are happening, or where it’s going to, or what they’re going to be doing say in two months. Like... at the moment, our programme’s starting up, and it’s not until you sort of ask questions or... You’ve got to sort of, like, dig deep... the information [should be] given freely instead of workers [having] to work it out for themselves or having to really dig deep. (‘wages’ employee)

The other respondent (a leading hand) simply commented on the importance of keeping workers “informed of everything that is done at meetings”, the implication being that this was not happening to the extent that the respondent believed it should be.

Finally, of the seven ‘change’ respondents from the tooling division, there were two for whom no elaborative data were available. In one case, the respondent (a ‘wages’ employee and shop steward) simply indicated that ‘yes’ he would increase the involvement of divisional workers in information meetings; in the other case, the respondent (a first-line supervisor) expressed his view that workers “should be involved more than what they are” in information meetings.

The three ‘no change’ respondents from the tooling division were all first-line supervisors. All three respondents were also longer-serving employees, whose length of service with the company ranged from 25 years to 33 years. One respondent reiterated a view which he had expressed previously, namely, that in his opinion ‘information’ and other types of meetings were necessary only when problems arose. The respondent implied that his current approach in this regard – which involved consulting formally

with technical staff only when problems arose which he (as the section supervisor) or his leading hand could not solve – worked entirely to his satisfaction. A second respondent indicated that, in his opinion, State of the Nation meetings were “a good idea” and that, as such, if he was in charge of the division, he would ensure that these meetings would “carry on”. The third respondent indicated that he “really wouldn’t want to change” the involvement of divisional workers in information meetings. This respondent questioned the value of a more ‘active’ and involved role for divisional workers in general, arguing that, as he saw it, the majority of workers “didn’t want to become involved” and “don’t like responsibilities”. With respect specifically to the current involvement of workers in information meetings, the respondent made the point that:

Well, there’s always a question time, and it is always the same people that ask questions, and they are always the same questions that sometimes become totally irrelevant to the point that somebody’s trying to make. (first-line supervisor)

Finally missing data were recorded for two respondents from the tooling division, including one ‘wages’ employee with leading hand status and one senior supervisor. Both respondents were longer-serving employees, with 30 and 35 years’ service with the company respectively.

Production Division. The thirteen ‘change’ respondents from the production division included ten ‘wages’ employees and all three of the supervisory staff (including one senior supervisor and two first-line supervisors) for whom data pertaining to this activity category were available. With respect to gender, this group included four female respondents and nine male respondents (the three supervisory staff were males). Length of service with the company for this group was highly variable and ranged from 3 years to 30 years (mean = 13.15 years; median = 15 years).

The changes that were advocated by these respondents could be classified broadly into two groups: (i) changes that referred specifically to the division’s current State of the Nation meetings; and (ii) changes associated with the more general dissemination of information within the division. With respect, first of all, to the former, there were eight respondents who advocated some change in the involvement of divisional workers in State of the Nation meetings. Of these, five – including three ‘wages’ employees and two supervisors (one first-line supervisor and one senior supervisor) – argued that there should be more of these meetings and/or that the meetings should be held on a more regular basis. The verbatim responses of the three ‘wages’ employees were as follows:

I would like to see them have more of them, more regular... I think the people deserve to get involved that bit more... ('wages' employee)

Yes, [I would keep them the same]. Maybe have a few more of them. ('wages' employee)

And the company [should be] more involved with the people, as regards these... let's have one of these [State of the Nation] meetings say every six weeks, every two months, but no longer. Don't let it lapse any longer than that. ('wages' employee, inspector)

The first two of the above responses were elicited through specific prompting, while the third was elicited in response to the initial open-ended question.

The two supervisors who advocated this particular change – in both cases in response to prompting – elaborated somewhat more on their responses than did the three 'wages' employees above. Specifically, the first-line supervisor commented on what he thought the broad focus of State of the Nation meetings should be and he also emphasised the need to subsequently seek feedback from workers about the information which was disseminated in these meetings:

I would make more of [the State of the Nation meetings]... you have got to have more of it, to let [workers] know what is going on, to let them know the good with the bad. Let's get their input... You let them know every month [that] this is what we have done, this is how we have gone, this is good work... but then you have to [communicate] that down to the various small levels... have a session – 'What do you think we should do? What's happened here?' – and get this feedback and involvement from the troops. (first-line supervisor)

The senior supervisor advocated a return to more regular State of the Nation meetings (he had previously noted that, in recent months, the frequency with which these meetings were held had begun to decline) and he commented on the value of these meetings for obtaining immediate feedback from workers (in the form of both verbal and non-verbal responses) regarding their views about the information which they were being given.

...any 'personal contact' type information, as opposed to written information, is the way to go because you can get instant feedback, plus you get the feel for it rather than just the feedback. (senior supervisor)

Apart from the above recommendations for more and/or more regular State of the Nation meetings, there were a number of other changes which were advocated which pertained specifically to the involvement of divisional workers in these meetings. One respondent indicated that he would like to see a situation where, instead of the same few

workers always asking questions in State of the Nation meetings, all of the workers who attended would be invited to contribute:

...[get] comments from everybody, not just from say three or four people [who] keep talking all the time. ...like the whole lot do get involved, but it's only like three main people who've got questions and questions firing. ('wages' employee)

A second respondent argued that the information which was disseminated in State of the Nation meetings should be presented in a form which was more understandable to workers than was currently the case. Like the respondent above, this respondent also made reference to the relatively passive role that the majority of workers currently played in these meetings:

I would change [State of the Nation meetings] in as much that, quite often, they throw a lot of figures around which most people don't understand... figures don't mean a lot to a lot of people... and quite often people come up [and say] 'What was he talking about?'. And you have got to try and explain what he was saying, and that happens so many times. In fact, every meeting I've ever been to, I've had people come up to me and say 'Oh, I didn't really understand anything'. I say 'Why didn't you ask?'... but they won't. Afterwards, when they ask for comments or ask for questions, you get very few people stand up, like at most meetings, they won't. ('wages' employee, inspector)

And a third respondent argued that workers, rather than management, should have responsibility for collating performance information and summarising it in a form suitable for presentation in State of the Nation meetings:

[Management] come up with these graphs and say 'We've done this, rejects, medical visits... This is not good enough, that is not good enough. They have to improve this, improve that. You people out on the shop floor, you should know all the safety hazards'. Things like that... *Interviewer:* What would you need to do to improve that situation? *Respondent:* What you do is get the figures for the month. You get one person, like let's say you've got yourself this month. I give it to you. The figures for the month could be accident reports and the costing, and rejects, right? So you've got one day, a whole day to do all that. Next time it's somebody else's turn. ('wages' employee)

As indicated, all three of the above respondents were 'wages' employees. Moreover, in all cases change was advocated in response to specific prompting.

In addition to the above eight respondents, there were four respondents – all 'wages' employees – who advocated change of a more general nature (ie. concerning information dissemination and communication in the division more generally). Three of these respondents advocated change spontaneously (of these, two subsequently also provided prompted 'change' data) and one advocated change only in response to specific prompting. With respect to the former, one respondent argued that, if he was in charge of the division, he would seek to reduce the proliferation of rumours in the

division. He indicated that he would deal with rumours through the use of meetings (the purpose of which would presumably be to correct employee misinformation). In the respondent's own words:

There would be one [thing I would change]. Every time a good rumour came out of what's going to happen, I wouldn't let that rumour go for any length of time. I would squash it on the head one way or other, in the course of a week, just to put everybody's mind at rest or whatever. *Interviewer:* How would you do that? *Respondent:* Through a meeting. ('wages' employee)

A second respondent argued in favour of more job-related information for workers:

I think what I would be doing for the people is to give them as much information as they need for doing [their] job. ('wages' employee)

This argument was extended in the respondent's subsequent response to prompting. He advocated more information meetings for workers and suggested that, if workers were better informed about the production demands which the division as a whole was required to meet, then they would be better able to understand the demands which were placed on them, as individuals, to perform:

Yes, [more meetings], but mainly for information to the people. You've obviously got a show to run, they will need to know how much work is involved in what they've got to do, and how many of these different items they've got to do. They really need to know that information, so that they can see that you're not pushing them because you want to push them, and because you've had a bad night the night before.

In a similar vein to the respondent above, a third respondent argued that workers should be kept up-to-date with the information that they required in order to do their job properly. The respondent indicated that she thought this could be best achieved through informal face-to-face communication between the necessary parties. In her own words:

I think the main thing is [information about] what's going on. Like sometimes you're on a machine and there could be a problem with a part, and you don't even get to know, so sort of [ensuring that workers are] more up-dated, like [about] what's going on. *Interviewer:* How could that be done? *Respondent:* Probably I think it just needs somebody sort of to go around and spend a bit of time and talk to people and just, you know, sort of... talking to people is better than sort of sending circulars round that people just sort of think 'Oh, yes', you know, and just chuck aside. ('wages' employee)

Subsequently, in response to prompting, this respondent also expressed the view that information pertaining to the company and its performance should be communicated more widely in the division:

[There should be] more general communication, I think to sort of let you know... you always wonder how the cars are selling, and how many we've got stock-piled,

and like this new car that's supposed to be out in September – but when is the launch date?

And finally, in response to prompting, a fourth respondent argued that there should be more communication in general from divisional management to the workers on the shop floor. This respondent was critical of management's failure to engage in two-way communication with workers and, in particular, to consult with workers about changes which were being proposed:

...I think you do need more information from management... well, about everything really. About, you know, I mean on your day to day work basis. The only time you really get any information is if something has happened or you know, something's wrong. Then they'll come and say 'Well, we're changing this or...'. They don't come out and every say 'Well, we're looking at changing this. What do you think?' ('wages' employee)

Of the thirteen 'change' respondents from the production division, there was one – a first-line supervisor – whose support for more involvement of divisional workers with respect to 'Information Meetings' was indicated in his response to questioning, not about the 'ideal' context, but about the anticipated future context. There was a reference in this response to the respondent's personal opinion that, compared with the current approach of disseminating information through formal State of the Nation meetings, there would be "more value in getting the group together and discussing with them as much information as you possibly can share". In response to subsequent prompting about the 'ideal' context, the respondent simply nodded his approval to my suggestion that he appeared to be supportive of "more information going to workers". The point can also be made that this respondent's overall pattern of responding to questions pertaining to the 'ideal' context suggested that he was strongly supportive of a more 'active' role for divisional workers in general.

The remaining three respondents from the production division who provided information pertaining to the activity category 'Information Meetings' all indicated that, if they were in charge, they would not change the current involvement of divisional workers in information meetings. These respondents were all 'wages' employees. They included two males and one female, and their respective tenure with the company was 5, 9, and 15 years. Two of these respondents provided some (albeit brief) elaboration on their 'no change' response and, as indicated below, in both cases the reference was specifically to State of the Nation meetings.

It gives the people an idea about how their area's running and stuff like that. ('wages' employee)

No [I wouldn't change that], because they're only telling you what's happening in the industry that's all, so I don't think so. ('wages' employee, inspector)

The third respondent simply indicated that "Yes" he would maintain the current involvement of divisional workers in information meetings.

Finally, as indicated in Table 6.7, missing data were recorded for three respondents from this division, including one senior supervisor, one first-line supervisor, and one 'wages' employee. Length of service with the company for these respondents was 20, 14, and 8 years respectively.

Conclusion. The following concluding points regarding similarities and differences between the two divisions are suggested by the above analysis of 'ideal' context data pertaining to the activity category 'Information Meetings'.

First, and as indicated, the two divisions were similar in that a majority of the respondents from each (70% of the available sample from the tooling division and 81% of the available sample from the production division) advocated a change in the involvement of divisional workers with respect to this activity category. Moreover, in all cases, the change which was advocated was towards an improvement of some kind in divisional communications – with particular reference being made to the need to increase the amount and relevance of top-down information to workers, and the need to encourage the two-way flow of information between workers and management.

Second, the divisions were similar in that the proportion of 'change' respondents from each whose 'change' data implied support for a more active role for workers (with respect to the activity category 'Information Meetings') was roughly equivalent. Specifically, there were three out of seven 'change' respondents from the tooling division (43%) and six out of thirteen 'change' respondents from the production division (47%) whose responses could be classified in this way. With respect to the former, it will be recalled that there were two respondents from the tooling division who expressed their firm conviction that divisional workers should have more opportunity than they did currently to "use their brains" and to contribute their ideas (whether in the context of formal information meetings, or on a more general day-to-day basis); a third 'change' respondent from this division simply suggested the possibility that information meetings could be used as a venue for the dissemination of information upwards (ie. from workers to management) as well as downwards (ie. from management to workers). With respect to the latter, there were two respondents from the production division who

argued that divisional workers should have more opportunity than they did currently to contribute their ideas (again, whether this was in the context of formal information meetings, or more generally); a third respondent commented on the value of information meetings for obtaining feedback from workers; a fourth respondent argued for the more widespread participation of workers in information meetings (the specific recommendation being that more workers should ask questions in these meetings); a fifth respondent suggested that workers should be given responsibility for collating performance data and preparing it for presentation in information meetings (this was currently a managerial responsibility); and a sixth respondent advocated the more widespread sharing of information between workers and management via teams or groups.

A third concluding point concerns the finding that none of the 'change' data for the tooling division were elicited spontaneously (ie. in response to the initial open-ended question(s)), whereas there were four respondents (out of thirteen) from the production division for whom open question 'change' data were available. These respondents (all of whom were 'wages' employees) variously argued that: (i) State of the Nation meetings should be held on a more regular basis (one respondent); (ii) there should be more information meetings for the purpose of dealing with rumours (one respondent); and (iii) divisional workers should have access to more job-related information (two respondents). One possible interpretation of this finding is that the dissemination of information to workers may have constituted a more salient issue (ie. an issue of more immediate importance) for respondents from the production division than for respondents from the tooling division. Such an explanation is not inconsistent with historical data suggesting that, compared with their counterparts in the tooling division, respondents from the production division had had considerably more exposure, over recent years, to worker involvement in information meetings. These meetings were reportedly held every one to three months in the production division, whereas in the tooling division they were reportedly held only once or twice a year. This explanation is also not inconsistent with the above finding for the 'ideal' context that respondents from the production division were more inclined than their counterparts in the tooling division to advocate change that was specific to information meetings, rather than change which involved the dissemination of information in the division more generally. There were eight respondents (out of thirteen) from the production division for whom

this was the case, compared with perhaps two respondents (out of seven) from the tooling division.

Alternatively, it might be argued that, to the extent that information dissemination constituted a more salient issue for respondents from the production division than for respondents from the tooling division (the evidence was suggestive only), then this might be explained simply in terms of differences between the divisions in workers' qualifications and the nature of workers' tasks¹²⁸, which were such that one might expect workers in the production division to be more dependent on information from their superiors for getting the job done than workers in the tooling division.

A fourth concluding point is that the 'ideal' context data for the tooling division contained some evidence – not found in the associated production division data – of supervisory opposition to a more involved role for workers, whether generally or with respect specifically to 'Information Meetings'. For example, one respondent (a 'wages' employee) commented on his perception that supervisory staff in the division felt threatened by workers who assumed a more involved role, fearing that these workers might be "after their job". A second respondent (a first-line supervisor) suggested that a more involved role for workers was inappropriate on the grounds that, as he saw it, the majority of workers "didn't want to become involved" and "don't like responsibilities". And a third respondent (also a first-line supervisor) questioned the value of information meetings for workers, suggesting that such meetings were necessary only when problems arose. (While this respondent voiced no explicit opposition to a more involved role for workers, one might reasonably argue that his approach would seriously limit the opportunity for workers to assume such a role, at least with respect to 'Information Meetings'.)

As indicated, there was no such evidence of supervisory opposition to a more involved role for workers in the 'ideal' context data (pertaining to the activity category 'Information Meetings') for the production division. At the same time, however, there was evidence of a perception that divisional supervisors and managers could be doing more than they were currently to promote such a role for workers. As indicated, there was one respondent (a first-line supervisor) who talked about the need to "encourage

¹²⁸ As indicated previously, the majority of workers in the tooling division were qualified tradesmen who were involved in the development, manufacture (according to clear specifications), and try-out of specialised tooling; in contrast, the majority of workers in the production division had no professional or trade qualifications and they were involved in the mass production (including moulding, painting and assembly) of plastic components for use in vehicle assembly.

feedback and involvement from the troops”; a second respondent (a ‘wages’ employee) argued that all workers who attended information meetings should be encouraged to ask questions (‘wages’ employee); a third respondent (a ‘wages’ employee) suggested that workers should be given the job of summarising performance data for presentation in information meetings (currently a managerial/supervisory responsibility); and a fourth respondent (a ‘wages’ employee) suggested that management should ask workers for their opinions about changes which they were proposing (‘wages’ employee).

A fifth and final concluding point concerns the analysis of the above data in terms of respondent demographics. There was some evidence of a difference between the divisions with respect to the seniority of the ‘change’ and ‘no change’ respondents from each. As indicated, the three supervisory staff from the production division for whom data pertaining to the activity category ‘Information Meetings’ were available (missing data were recorded for two supervisors from this division) advocated change; that is, there were no supervisory staff represented in the ‘no change’ group for this division. In contrast, supervisory staff were represented in both the ‘change’ and ‘no change’ groups for the tooling division. Specifically, two of the seven ‘change’ respondents from this division were supervisors, while all three of the ‘no change’ respondents were supervisors (with missing data being recorded for one supervisor from this division). With respect to respondent tenure with the company, it is perhaps worth mentioning that the two shorter serving employees included in the sample for the tooling division both advocated change. For the production division, there was no evidence of a difference between the ‘change’ and ‘no change’ groups in terms of respondent tenure. Both longer-serving and shorter-serving employees were represented in these groups. It was also the case, for the production division, that male and female employees were represented in both the ‘change’ and ‘no change’ groups.

Contextual analysis of ‘ideal’ context data for ‘Information Meetings’

Tooling Division. Data pertaining to the historical context of respondents’ experience with respect to ‘Information Meetings’ suggested that the tooling division had had a long history in which there was no formal mechanism by which information was disseminated to workers. State of the Nation meetings constituted a relatively new practice, having been introduced into the division some five years prior to the commencement of the present study. Reports indicated that, while these meetings were attended by all divisional workers, they were held, on average, only once or twice per

year. A common perception was that management had introduced these meetings in order to deal with increasing rumours about the possible closure of the division.

With respect to the future context, a majority of the available respondents from this division (7/11 or 64%) anticipated that, in the future, there would be no change in the involvement of divisional workers in information meetings. Elaborative data on these 'no change' responses were scarce. There was one respondent who indicated that it was not "the [company] way of doing things" to seek to keep workers well-informed; a second respondent expressed the view that the current 'State of the Nation' meetings should continue; and a third respondent argued that if a change was to occur in the future (and he considered this to be unlikely), it would be no more than a manifestation of the particular managerial style of whoever happened to be in charge at the time.

The remaining respondents from this division (that is, four respondents or 36% of the available sample) anticipated that, in the future, there would be more involvement of divisional workers in information meetings (whether State of the Nation meetings or other meetings held for the purpose of disseminating information to workers). Attributional data provided some evidence of a perception that the anticipated change would be due primarily to external factors, that is, factors considered to be outside of the division's control. For example, reference was variously made to (i) the forthcoming relocation of the division to the company's main manufacturing and assembly operations, where it was perceived there was more support for teamwork and associated practices; (ii) changes in the broader social context which were influencing employee role expectations; and (iii) the move towards multi-skilling and the breaking down of traditional trade barriers which, it was argued, would necessitate an overall improvement in communications within the division. In addition to the above, there was one respondent who attributed the change to a desire on the part of divisional management to "try and have a better running unit, a happier unit"; and there was one respondent who indicated that the change would be part of his own personal commitment to ensuring that his subordinates were kept well-informed.

Data pertaining to the 'other' context of respondents' experience indicated that, as a group, respondents from the tooling division had had little experience of other organisations. Half of the respondents from this division indicated that they had no knowledge of what it was that the workers in other organisations did. The other half included three respondents with direct experience of having worked elsewhere and three

respondents whose knowledge of other organisations was based on indirect experience. Of the fourteen differences between respondents' current and 'other' organisation which were mentioned (see Table 6.3, p. 358), there was one which pertained to the activity category 'Information Meetings'. Specifically, this was a reference by one respondent to the fact that, in another organisation in which the respondent had worked, there had been no such thing as 'State of the Nation' meetings, whereby management provided workers with information about the organisation that was of strategic as well as operational significance.

On the basis of the contextual data above, it can be concluded that, as a group, respondents from the tooling division had had little experience of worker involvement in formal information meetings (whether in their current or other organisations). Moreover, there was a perception that this situation would be unlikely to change much in the future. To the extent that future change was anticipated, it was seen as likely to be imposed (that is, a response to external factors outside of the division's control), rather than the result of an explicit attempt on the part of divisional management to effect change. In view of these findings, the subsequent finding for the ideal context – namely, that there was considerable support for a change with respect to 'Information Meetings' (as indicated, 70% of the available sample advocated change) – might reasonably be interpreted to mean that the respondents from this division felt some dissatisfaction with this aspect of the current role of divisional workers. This interpretation is supported by respondents' elaborations on their 'change' responses. Specifically, reference was made to (i) the desirability of divisional workers having more input into formal information meetings; (ii) the desirability of a more active and involved role for workers generally; (iii) the need for improved communications to workers about how strategic issues might impact upon their day-to-day operational activities; and (iv) the need for workers to be kept well informed about the outcomes of divisional meetings. Interestingly, these data were, in all cases, provided by 'wages' employees. The point might also be made, as previously, that the arguments in favour of change tended to focus on the need for change of a general nature (ie. concerned with divisional communications in general), rather than change which was specific to the involvement of workers in formal 'State of the Nation' meetings. This finding was entirely consistent with the historical context of respondents' experience (with respect to this activity category), as described above.

Finally, while the above data for the 'ideal' context suggest that the members of the tooling division might be reasonably receptive to a change towards more involvement of divisional workers in information meetings (if such a change was to be introduced), it would nevertheless be important for change agents to be aware of the relative unfamiliarity of this group with such a role for workers. Furthermore, given the finding that all of the 'no change' respondents from this division were supervisory staff, one might expect that, at this level, there might be a degree of resistance (whether active or passive) to the change.

Production Division. As for the tooling division, formal information meetings appeared to constitute a relatively new practice in the production division, having been introduced into this division some three years prior to the commencement of the present study. In the production division, however, the meetings were held considerably more often than they were in the tooling division. Depending upon production demands at the time, the frequency of occurrence of these meetings ranged from one meeting every month, to one meeting every three months. As a group, respondents from the production division tended to associate the introduction of information meetings with the arrival of a new divisional manager, who was perceived to support more participative approaches to management.

With respect to the future context, the findings for the production division were similar to those reported for the tooling division in that a majority of the available respondents from the production division (10/16 or 63%) anticipated no change, in the future, in the involvement of divisional workers in information meetings. The elaborative data associated with these 'no change' responses provided evidence of both satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the current involvement of divisional workers in information meetings. There was evidence, for example, of a belief that an increase in the involvement of divisional workers in information meetings, while unlikely, would nevertheless be desirable. It was also suggested by one respondent that information meetings, in their current form, were of limited value because the same issues tended to be raised time and again, with no action taken to resolve these issues. In contrast, the finding for two respondents that their 'no change' responses implied 'no decrease' in the anticipated future involvement of divisional workers in information meetings, suggested at least some degree of satisfaction with current practices in this regard.

Apart from the above 'no change' respondents, there were two respondents from the production division for whom 'don't know' responses were recorded, and four respondents for whom 'change' responses were recorded. With respect to the latter, the anticipated change was, in all cases, towards an increase in the involvement of divisional workers in information meetings. Of the four respondents from this division who anticipated an increase, three attributed this change to an explicit attempt by divisional management to keep workers better informed. A fourth respondent linked the change to the forthcoming introduction of a new model vehicle which, with its attendant problems, would necessitate an increase in information dissemination to workers. These attributional data provided somewhat of a contrast with the corresponding attributional data from the tooling division, which emphasised the role of external factors in the anticipated change.

With respect to the 'other' context of respondents' experience, the point has been made previously that respondents from the production division had had somewhat more experience of other organisations (almost half of the production division sample had had previous experience of working elsewhere) than their counterparts in the tooling division and, moreover, that this experience had been somewhat broader in the sense of spanning a wider range of different types of organisations. As for the tooling division, however, the activity category 'Information Meetings' was very poorly represented in the 'other' context difference data for this division. Out of a total of thirty four differences (between respondents' current and 'other' organisation (s)) which were mentioned, there was only one which pertained to the involvement of workers in information meetings. This was a reference by one respondent to her perception that, in another organisation in which she had worked, there had been more involvement of workers in meetings in general, including meetings for the purpose of disseminating information to workers.

Given the broader context of respondents' experience with respect to 'Information Meetings' (as reflected in the above findings for the present context, the past context, the anticipated future context and the 'other' context), one might perhaps have expected that, when subsequently asked about the 'ideal' context, respondents from the production division would have been less inclined than they were to advocate change with respect to this activity category. (The reader is reminded that 81% of the available sample from this division argued that there was a need for an improvement of some kind

in divisional communications pertaining to the dissemination of information to workers). In other words, in view of (i) the current involvement of divisional workers in information meetings (which was considerable relative to that of workers in the tooling division), (ii) the generally positive attributions about change (both experienced and anticipated) in relation to this activity category, and (iii) evidence of at least some satisfaction with current information dissemination practices in the division, one might have expected the 'ideal' context data to have contained less emphasis on the need for improvement than they did. The point has been made, however, that the improvements which were advocated by respondents from the production division were, on the whole, more focussed than those which were advocated by respondents from the tooling division. As indicated, respondents from the production division were more inclined to advocate change which was specific to the division's formal information meetings, rather than change in relation to divisional communications more generally. This difference between the divisions is, of course, not inconsistent with contextual data indicating that the divisions differed in terms of members' current exposure to worker involvement in information meetings.

In conclusion, it would appear that in the production division, as in the tooling division, there existed a perception that the role of divisional workers with respect to information dissemination could be improved upon.

Given the findings of the above contextual analysis, one might predict that there would be reasonable support among the members of the production division for some of the changes that were advocated, should these be introduced. As indicated, in the production division, there was evidence that members had had reasonable exposure to worker involvement in information meetings, attributions about why the meetings had been introduced were generally positive, as were attributions about why there might be more involvement of divisional workers in such meetings in the future, and there was no evidence (as there was in the tooling division) of supervisory opposition to a more involved role for divisional workers with respect to information meetings.

Prompted activity categories: Differences between the two divisions

(i) Attend Training

As indicated in Table 6.7, there were four respondents from the tooling division (44% of the available sample) and sixteen respondents from the production division (89% of the available sample) who advocated some change with respect to the

involvement of divisional workers in training. Table 6.7 also shows that, for the tooling division, this information was, in all cases, provided in response to prompting. In contrast, for the production division, five of the sixteen respondents who advocated change did so spontaneously (in response to the initial open-ended question(s)), with the remaining eleven providing this information in response to prompting. In the discussion which follows, details of the findings for the tooling division are presented first, followed by details of the findings for the production division. Consideration is then given to some of the major similarities and differences between the divisions that were suggested by these findings.

Tooling Division. The four 'change' respondents from the tooling division included two supervisors (one senior supervisor and one first-line supervisor) and two 'wages' employees (one with leading hand status). Three of these respondents were longer-serving employees (with between 28 and 40 years of service with the company) and one was a shorter-serving employee (with six years of service with the company). Respondents varied with respect to the specific type of change which they were advocating. One respondent (a 'wages' employee with leading hand status) argued that workers should have the opportunity to develop skills in other areas of divisional operations, beyond their own area of specialisation. In this respondent's opinion, this would have the effect of breaking down some of the barriers that currently existed between the various trade groups within the division. It would also serve to satisfy the respondent's own desire to broaden his skill base:

I'd like to see more [training], and maybe even go to the stage of broadening it a little bit, because I believe that we should have more interaction between our groups. We're in the situation – and let's be honest, I'm as guilty as the rest of them – there's the wall, it's 'them and us' and, unfortunately, that's the way it's grown up... I would really like to be able to do, or learn to do, some of the machining and that type of thing... I think I would like to know a little more about that because, once again, it's like my electrical [training] and my welding [training] and that, it's a little adjunctive [and] would be handy. ('wages' employee, leading hand)

A second respondent (also a 'wages' employee) argued for a qualitative change in training whereby the training that was provided, instead of maintaining its current narrow focus and teaching workers "only what [the company] wants you to know", should become more broad-based in the sense of teaching workers a number of different ways of doing things. Such a change, it was argued, would ultimately contribute to the growth of the company. The third respondent (a senior supervisor) advocated more

involvement of divisional workers in training that was specific to the work in which they were actually engaged. This respondent was critical of workers' initial apprenticeship training, arguing that it was too general and, as a consequence, failed to adequately prepare them for work on-the-job. The respondent also expressed his view that, because workers lacked competence 'on-the-job', a situation was maintained whereby the job was completely controlled by supervisors and leading hands, and whereby the individual worker ultimately "stops thinking":

...it's always been the case in the toolroom of the leading hand and the foreman controlling the job completely, and the worker doesn't have much say, mainly because he's not competent. He doesn't know how to read the drawings, he doesn't know how to interpret them, he doesn't know the function of the tools that we're building. (senior supervisor)

And finally, a fourth respondent (a first-line supervisor) simply expressed the view, without any elaboration, that "there should be lots of training".

The remaining five respondents from the tooling division who were presented with this prompt (as shown in Table 6.7, data were missing for three respondents) all indicated that, if they were in charge of the division, they would not make any changes to the current involvement of divisional workers in training. These respondents included two supervisors (both first-line supervisors) and three 'wages' employees (all with leading hand status). Four of these respondents were longer-serving employees (with between 17 and 33 years of service with the company) and one was a shorter-serving employee (with six years of service with the company). It is interesting to consider briefly the qualitative data associated with these 'no change' responses. The data for the three 'wages' employees are described first, followed by the data for the two supervisors.

One of the 'wages' employees expressed the view that, in his opinion, the current apprenticeship training was "pretty adequate" and that, beyond that, it was simply a matter of training to keep abreast of technological change. In a similar vein, a second 'wages' employee made the point that "...you would have to keep up with everything... within reason, of course". And a third 'wages' employee indicated that he was opposed to an increase in the amount of 'formal' training for workers on the ground that, in his opinion, workers learned best simply by doing the job. With respect to the supervisors in this group, one gave an account of his current and, by implication, his 'ideal' approach to the training of his subordinates. In this respondent's own words:

Well training... once I found out from the leading hand that a person is not capable in doing the job, I encouraged the leading hand to look after him, and help him out so that he knows what he is supposed to do. I also encouraged the people in [my area]... that everyone was rostered around, that everyone knew how to make it, and once that was done, then I selected the people for a job that they could do best. Now we had Bill on the drill. He was magic. Putting Fred on the drill who couldn't do it, didn't want to do it, or whatever, it just didn't work out... They all knew how to make guns, but after I found out who can do things better and faster, not necessarily faster, but better, because at that stage our aim was quality... (first-line supervisor)

What is interesting about this excerpt is the essentially 'Taylorist' approach to job design which it describes. All workers are given an opportunity to perform a given task; on the basis of their performance, the supervisor selects the 'best person' for the task; this person is then permanently assigned to the task and ultimately becomes a specialist in it. The point might also be made that, while there is an implication that this approach might have some motivational value, it's primary purpose, as seen by the respondent, would appear to have been one of production control – specifically, maintaining quality standards. Finally, the second supervisor in the 'no change' group offered, as evidence that the current involvement of divisional workers in training was, in his opinion, satisfactory, his observation that some of the division's current 'in-house' training courses seemed to be "quite popular". He commented further that: "To some degree, if something's popular, it can't be too bad".

Production Division. As indicated, there were sixteen respondents in all from the production division who advocated some change with respect to the involvement of the workers in their division in training activities. Included in this group were five respondents who provided this information spontaneously and eleven respondents who provided this information in response to specific prompting. All five of the supervisory staff from the production division sample (including two senior supervisors and three first-line supervisors) were represented in this group, with the remaining eleven 'change' respondents being 'wages' employees. All of the former were males, while the latter included five females and six males. Respondent service with the company for this group was highly variable and ranged from three years' service to thirty years' service.

The reader will recall that the change data that were generated spontaneously, that is, in response to the initial open-ended question(s), have already been described in some detail (see Section 6.3.4, pp. 430-445). In the present context, it is useful to briefly recap on these data. It will be recalled that one respondent made reference to the

desirability of using experienced operators to show less experienced operators how to do the job. A second respondent argued that workers should always be adequately trained in new processes before having to execute these processes on the job. This respondent also advocated 'train the trainer' courses for skilled operators. A third respondent argued that workers involved in spray painting should have access to formal training, provided by 'experts'. A fourth respondent advocated more training for divisional workers in relation to quality requirements, as well as in relation to changes in job processes. And a fifth respondent argued that workers should have access to training in problem-solving skills.

As indicated, the change data for the remaining eleven 'change' respondents from the production division were elicited through specific prompting. As with the open question data, the prompt data varied in terms of the specific types of changes being advocated and also in terms of the extent and content of respondent elaborations on their responses. Despite this variability, however, some attempt is made in the analysis which follows to group these data in terms of the commonalities which emerged.

Of the eleven respondents referred to above, there were seven (including six 'wages' employees and one first-line supervisor) who made reference to the desirability of providing workers with more training, than they were currently receiving, in relation to some aspect of their present job. Specifically, there were references to the need for more training in quality standards and the detection of quality problems; there were references to the need for more training in basic job procedures (ie. how to do the job); and there were references to the need for more training in relation to safety and basic housekeeping. Interestingly, in the case of five of these seven respondents, the changes which they advocated were referred to in the context of a more general commentary about problems which they perceived the division to be experiencing, at the present time, in relation to worker performance in these areas. A sample of these responses is provided below:

I think they should keep [workers] up to scratch... we're having a lot of problems with bumpers, we have scrapped a lot of bumpers in the last few weeks and you get these problems where the operator's not doing this right, or not doing that right, or the paint's not good... then I think they should set up, even if it's only two people taken in a little group, and [they should] say 'Right, we're going to go through this and re-train you'. ('wages' employee)

[Workers should be] trained properly. I mean I had an instance of that the other day, where a chap was put onto a job, and the chap didn't even know how many went into that particular carton, you know the box, he didn't know which was left

and which was right, and I thought well, look, that's a bit slack on the leading hand's part. ('wages' employee)

Oh, there should be more [training]... Well, like [in] spray painting and that. ...there's two spray painters in there now. You tell them they're not spraying properly... But it just goes on and on and on. They're not painting the right parts... *Interviewer:* How should that [training] be provided? *Respondent:* I would send them on a three month course down to Regency Park [local college of technical and further education]... [I would] send them down there for say three months or two months on a proper training course. ('wages' employee)

In a similar vein, a fourth respondent from this group made reference to current production problems which, she believed, resulted from production operators being inadequately trained. As indicated in the following excerpt, however, this respondent saw the problem, not as a general problem, but as a problem which was specific to relief workers (brought into the division, on a temporary basis, from other divisions) and to regular workers who had been assigned to a different job:

Yes, I think [there should be more training for workers]. ...There's lots of sort of instances I can give you. Like I said, we've got these people coming over from Trim Fab [ie. another division] at the moment and our leading hand will put them, you know... send them down to someone [and] say 'Show them how to do that'. But if you're already there to do your job... you've got to stop what you're doing to show them how to do it. And I've seen it so many times in the last few months. They're not doing their job properly, but then you can't watch them all the time because you've still got your job to do. So I think with new people coming over – I can't say new starters because we haven't got any – but you can virtually call them new starters I suppose, and I've been bitching about it now for a couple of months, because for every day I was coming in, for about two weeks, [I was] just doing someone else's reworks because they weren't even shown the job properly... I think it's not just training for the new people [ie. the relief workers], I mean the people that have been here, you know, for years – because there's no job rotation – they might only get to do that job once a year, they've forgotten how to do it, and then they're expected to show someone else how to do it, and you end up with this great big mess. ('wages' employee)

All but one of the above respondents held the view (which was either implied or expressed explicitly) that training should not be carried out by the workers themselves. Three respondents argued in favour of training being provided by training 'experts' (whether they be internal, or external, to the organisation), and three respondents suggested that training should be the responsibility of either the leading hand or the supervisor. Two of the latter respondents made the additional point that the situation in the division at the present time was such that leading hands typically did not have time to adequately train workers.

Apart from the above responses, the prompt data from the production division also contained references to training needs that would be likely to arise from other changes

that respondents had advocated. For example, one respondent (a 'wages' employee) argued that more training for workers was desirable (indeed, it was essential) in order to equip workers for a role which entailed more responsibility. In this respondent's own words:

I'd like to see more training... I feel that if people are going to be made more responsible for a lot of things they do, they should have a proper training course, if you like, to be shown what to do. I mean, you can't sort of make people responsible for something if they don't know what they're doing. ('wages' employee)

In a similar vein, a further two respondents from this division (including one 'wages' employee and one senior supervisor) argued that more training for workers would be necessary to support the change in job design which they had advocated, whereby, instead of always working on the same job, workers should have access to opportunities for job rotation. In their own words:

...if people were willing to go to another section... [if] they wanted to go to another section, if at all possible, I would say 'Yes, by all means go to another section' and [I would] also give them a full training for that section. ('wages' employee)

...I believe in job rotation and that means that when you do job rotation everyone gets trained to do the job properly... I'm a great believer in people being trained, because I think leaving a person on the job... probably one of the most demeaning things you can do to a person is [to] let them stay there and do that one job, forever and a day. I don't believe in it. (senior supervisor)

None of the above respondents commented specifically on who they thought should be responsible for the training of workers. The senior supervisor, however, indicated that his normal practice was to "get my key people to train any new people". This respondent also expressed his concern that much of the training which was currently provided in the division was of a poor quality.

And finally, the prompt data from the production division included a number of 'stand-alone' responses for which no particular groupings were apparent. Specifically, there was one respondent (a 'wages' employee) who argued for a qualitative change in training, whereby there should be more equity in the allocation of training opportunities to workers. This respondent was referring specifically to training which was provided off-the-job (in the form, for example, of various training courses in areas such as workplace safety):

I'd like to see more of the workers getting trained, not a selected few... A rostered system, I think it should be a rostered system [where] everybody gets a turn. ('wages' employee)

A second respondent (a first-line supervisor) argued that workers should have the opportunity to, themselves, be trainers. Such a change would, in this respondent's opinion, have two main advantages. Firstly, it would help to ensure the effectiveness of training, the argument being that training delivered by a person with whom one is familiar is likely to be more effective than training delivered by a stranger. Secondly, it would serve to build the self-confidence and esteem of the worker to whom the responsibility for training had been allocated. In this respondent's own words:

I would make one of them [ie. one of the workers] a trainer, so that [the worker] is not trained by strangers. I find that you get more respect from that person within the group. I don't want to make it too competitive, [so] I would change the trainers over... this is another confidence builder, character builder, to be able to stand in front of people, and to teach people something, [it] gives somebody a feeling of importance... it lifts their esteem. ...then, you know, [people] who ride people and say 'He's an idiot', all of a sudden I have made him the trainer, so he's no longer an idiot, and what that does to him is he no longer listens to what they say, because, 'Here I am, I'm training them'. (first-line supervisor)

And a third respondent (a 'wages' employee whose views have already been partially represented in the present analysis¹²⁹) argued that all new workers should be required to complete induction training which, in his opinion, should occupy the first two to three months of their employment with the division. This respondent also made the suggestion that, within a given work area, each individual worker should be trained in the range of tasks undertaken by the workers in that area. This change was advocated on the grounds that:

You can't have one person knowing this job and one person knowing the whole lot. Because if there's any problems, the person who knows everything is going to get lumbered with all the work. It's got to be shared out and divided evenly. ('wages' employee)

And finally, the respondent was emphatic that training should be carried out by an 'expert'. In his own words:

It would have to be the employer, actually a trained trainer, a person who has been trained to do it. ('wages' employee)

Of the eighteen respondents from the production division for whom data pertaining to the activity category 'Attend Training' were available, there were two respondents who, in response to prompting, indicated that they did not see the need for any change in

¹²⁹ This respondent was one of the seven respondents who were referred to at the beginning of the present analysis (see p. 813) and who were grouped on the basis of a commonality which emerged in their prompt data. In this particular case, the respondent advocated more than one change with respect to the involvement of divisional workers in training.

the current involvement of divisional workers in training. Both of these respondents were 'wages' employees and both were male. Neither respondent elaborated much on his response. In one case, the respondent simply said "It's basically okay" and, in the other, the respondent said "...what goes on is sufficient, I would say".

Conclusion. On the basis of the above analysis of 'ideal' context data pertaining to the 'prompted' activity category 'Attend Training', the following concluding comments are offered regarding similarities and differences between the two divisions.

First, there was evidence that the divisions differed in terms of the extent to which the respondents from each believed that there should be a change in the involvement of divisional workers in training. As indicated, less than half of the available respondents from the tooling division (specifically, 44% of the sample), compared with almost all of the available respondents from the production division (specifically, 89% of the sample), argued in favour of some change in relation to this activity category. Moreover, while none of the respondents from the tooling division offered this information spontaneously (that is, in response to the initial open-ended question(s)), there were five respondents from the production division for whom this was the case. Taken together, these findings suggest that the issue of worker involvement in training may have been more salient to, and of more immediate concern to, the respondents from the production division than it was to the respondents from the tooling division.

Second, there was no evidence in either division of a difference between the 'change' and 'no change' respondents in terms of their demographic characteristics, specifically, their seniority and their length of service with the company. Having said this, however, it is interesting to note that, for the production division, there were no supervisory staff among the 'no change' respondents (that is, all five of the supervisory staff from the production division sample advocated some change), whereas, for the tooling division, the 'no change' respondents included two of the four supervisory staff from this division for whom data pertaining to this activity category were available (missing data were recorded for the two other supervisory staff included in the tooling division sample). To the extent that such a difference was to be statistically validated (of course, this would require sampling more widely from both divisions), it could have important implications for the likely success of any change effort which required significant involvement of workers in training, beyond that which was currently the norm. In other words, the finding that the more senior (and, therefore, possibly also more influential) members of

an organisation have a tendency to regard change as desirable rather than as undesirable (or vice versa) may be of more significance with respect to the likely success of a given change effort than the finding that the less senior (and hence, less influential) members of the organisation display such a tendency.

Third, the divisions were similar in that all of the 'change' respondents from each argued for either (i) an increase in the involvement of divisional workers in training, or (ii) some qualitative change (such as, broadening the scope of the training currently provided or reducing existing inequities in the allocation of workers to training) which, in the respondent's opinion, would effect some improvement in the overall experience of training for workers. There were no 'change' respondents from either division who advocated a decrease in the current involvement of divisional workers in training. It was also the case that, for both divisions, there was considerable variability among the 'change' respondents in terms of the specific types of changes which they advocated, as well as in terms of the extent to which they elaborated on their responses. There was, however, one theme which emerged fairly consistently in the elaborations of the 'change' respondents from the production division. As indicated, a common perception among these respondents was that the current standard of worker performance in this division was poor, particularly in relation to the quality of the work which they produced. The provision of extra training for workers was, therefore, seen largely as a means by which to improve worker performance. There was also some evidence of a shared perception among these respondents that worker training should, ideally, be provided either by training 'experts' (whether internal or external to the organisation) or by the worker's leading hand or supervisor. This implied some criticism of the current practice of on-the-job training of workers by their co-workers.

A fourth concluding point is that, in neither division, was there much evidence of a perception that training for workers could be a means by which to enrich workers' job and thereby develop a more 'active' role for workers. Of the four 'change' respondents from the tooling division, there was only one whose response might be classified as being consistent with such a view. In this case, the respondent (a senior supervisor) made the point that, to the extent that the workers in his division were better trained, they would have more control over their work (and, as a consequence, they would be less dependent than they currently were on their leading hand and supervisor). For the production division, there were four 'change' respondents, out of sixteen, whose

responses could be similarly classified. Two of these respondents (one a senior supervisor and the other a first-line supervisor) argued in favour of training workers to, themselves, become trainers. In one case, the respondent was quite explicit about the value of such a change for enhancing the self-esteem and confidence of workers. A third respondent from this division (a first-line supervisor) advocated training for workers in problem-solving skills (a change which might be regarded as a form of job enrichment). And a fourth respondent (a 'wages' employee) argued for more training for workers on the grounds that this constituted essential support for any change towards workers becoming more responsible. Without denying the potential significance of these various responses, it is still the case that they represented minority views. As the reader will recall, a theme which emerged with greater consistency and clarity in the production division 'change' data concerned the view that more training was needed in order to raise the standard of worker performance in this division.

The fifth and final point relates to the analysis of respondent elaborations on their 'no change' responses. As indicated, there were five respondents from the tooling division (56% of the available sample) who gave 'no change' responses, compared with two from the production division (11% of the available sample). The elaborations of the former were quite variable in terms of their thematic content, with references to (i) the need to offer no more training than that required to keep abreast of technological change (two respondents); (ii) the value of learning on-the-job, as opposed to attending formal training courses (one respondent); (iii) the particular approach to training which the respondent himself had adopted and which, by implication, was entirely adequate to meet the training needs of the workers in his area (one respondent); and (iv) the popularity of the in-house training courses which were currently available to workers in the division (one respondent). With respect to the latter, neither of the two 'no change' respondents from the production division elaborated much on his response. In each case, the respondent simply offered a brief comment to the effect that, in his opinion, the level of training for workers in the division at the present time was adequate.

Contextual analysis of 'ideal' context data for 'Attend Training'

At this point, having completed the analysis of 'ideal' context data pertaining to the 'prompted' activity category 'Attend Training', the question arises as to the extent to which the findings of this analysis can be interpreted within the broader context of respondents' experience with respect to this issue. In other words, what consistencies

can be observed between the above findings for the 'ideal' context and the findings associated with each of the other contextual domains of interest (namely, the present context, the past context, the anticipated future context, and the 'other' context)? The reader will appreciate that the task of trying to tease out the possible linkages between these various contextual domains is a difficult one. This is because, among other things (and as one would expect), there was always some variability among respondents in their experience with respect to a given contextual domain. In this sense, one is not able to describe a single past context (or a single present content, or a single anticipated future context etc.) which is able to represent the experience of all members of the group equally well. Rather, one is limited to representing each of these contextual domains in terms of a number of more or less clearly defined patterns which emerged in the data pertaining to each. Given this limitation, it is not possible to do more than offer the most tentative of conclusions regarding how the above 'ideal' context data might be interpreted within the broader context of respondent experience. With this caveat in mind, we turn now to a brief consideration of the main findings of this broader contextual analysis, presented first for the tooling division and then for the production division.

Tooling Division. Overall, the above findings for the tooling division, pertaining to respondent views about the 'ideal' role of divisional workers with respect to training, would appear to be fairly readily interpretable within the broader context of respondents' experience with respect to this issue. First, in terms of the historical context of this experience, it will be remembered that this division had had a relatively long history of little or no worker involvement in training, apart from that which constituted workers' initial apprenticeship training. However, there was general agreement among respondents that, in recent years, due to the introduction of Award Restructuring (with its implications for the development of a multi-skilled workforce), there had been an increase in the level of worker involvement in training in the division. Respondent views about this change tended to be, at best, ambivalent, with concerns variously being expressed about (i) the relevance of any further training for older employees; (ii) the inequity implied by the expectation that older employees, like their younger counterparts, should become multi-skilled; (iii) the tendency for the training currently received not to be subsequently applied on-the-job; and (iv) the lack of encouragement, by managers and supervisors, of workers to attend training. Considered

as a whole, these data provide little evidence of the existence in the tooling division of a culture strongly supportive of ongoing training and development for workers. In fact, it might be argued that the training credentials of the workers in this division were largely taken-for-granted, having been established (in most cases, many years ago) when workers completed their initial apprenticeship training and acquired the status of fully qualified tradesmen. In view of these findings (pertaining to the past and present contexts), it is perhaps not surprising that, in response to specific prompting about the 'ideal' context, less than half of the respondents from this division indicated that they thought that more training for divisional workers was desirable.

In a similar vein, one can also observe some consistency between the findings for the 'ideal' context and the findings for the future context. With respect to the latter, it will be recalled that a majority of the respondents from the tooling division (75% of the sample) anticipated that, in the future, there would be more involvement of the workers in this division in training. Again, Award Restructuring was cited as the key factor influencing this anticipated change. Perhaps most importantly, however, the same ambivalent attitudes towards training emerged in these data as had emerged previously in the data pertaining to the past and present contexts. Thus, even though worker training was clearly seen by respondents as constituting part of the division's future agenda, respondent attitudes to this change were far from positive. Given these attitudinal data, and the argument that respondent attitudes towards future change might be expected to foreshadow respondent views about the 'ideal', the subsequent finding for the 'ideal', namely, that there was not widespread agreement among respondents about the desirability of more training for divisional workers, would appear to be consistent with what one might expect.

Finally, there was no evidence in the 'other' context data to disconfirm the impression of the tooling division as a division in which respondents had had little experience (whether acquired in their current or other organisations) of worker involvement in ongoing training and development. The reader is reminded that there were six respondents from this division (50% of the sample) who reported no knowledge of what it was that the workers in other organisations did. The remaining six respondents included one who indicated that there was no difference between his current and his 'other' organisation (in terms of what it was that workers did), and five who

described various differences, none of which was related to the involvement of workers in training activities.

Production Division. As indicated, the same broad contextual analysis of 'ideal' context training data that had been conducted for the tooling division, was also conducted for the production division. Overall, this analysis revealed fewer consistencies between the findings for the various contextual domains of interest than had been revealed by the analysis for the tooling division. With respect, first of all to the historical context, it will be recalled that there was no clearly defined history of worker involvement in training which emerged for the production division. It did appear, however, that the workers in this division had always had some involvement in training (whether on-the-job training provided by a co-worker or off-the-job training provided by a training 'expert'). There was also some evidence that, in recent years, with the introduction of Award Restructuring, the level of worker involvement in training may have increased somewhat. Respondent attitudes toward the training currently provided were predominantly negative. In particular, there was a widely shared perception that the division's commitment to training, at any given time, was contingent upon production demands (such that training programmes were often abandoned at times of high production). Concerns were also variously expressed about (i) the quality of much of the on-the-job training which was provided; (ii) whether or not some of the training currently provided constituted 'real' training; (iii) bias in the allocation of training opportunities to workers; and (iv) obstructionist attitudes, among some workers, to participation in training. While it is difficult to clarify a direct link between these data and the 'ideal' context data reported above, it is not the case that these two sets of data represent incompatible views. As indicated, the production division was a division in which training for workers appeared to have always been on the agenda, to a greater or lesser extent. In other words, worker training was not a particularly unusual or exceptional activity in this division, in the sense that divisional members had little or no ongoing experience of it. Perhaps even more importantly, there was no evidence of a perception in this division (as there was in the tooling division) that training for workers was somehow irrelevant or unnecessary. In this sense, the subsequent finding for the 'ideal' context, namely, that a majority of the respondents from the production division (89% of the available sample) argued in

favour of more training for divisional workers, can at least be regarded as not inconsistent with what one might expect.

With respect to the findings for the future context, it was again the case that there was no clearly defined sense of the anticipated future (with respect to the involvement of divisional workers in training) that emerged in the data for the production division. Although a majority of the respondents from this division (67% of the sample) anticipated some future change (as was the case for the tooling division), there was more variability among these respondents, than among their counterparts in the tooling division, in their perceptions of the nature (and direction) of the changes anticipated and also in their attributions about why these changes would be likely to occur. It is perhaps interesting to note, however, that where the anticipated change was towards more involvement of divisional workers in training in the future – this was the case for nine respondents from this division (47% of the sample) – respondent attitudes towards this change were generally positive. For example, it was variously perceived that more training for workers would serve to (i) make the company more competitive; (ii) increase workers' skills; and (iii) satisfy the desire of workers to learn more. The important point is that there was no evidence in these data of the kind of ambivalent attitudes towards training (with respondents questioning the relevance of more training for workers) which emerged in the future context data for the tooling division. To this extent, where respondent evaluations of future change (specifically, the change towards more training for workers) were provided, these were consistent with the views about the 'ideal' which respondents subsequently expressed.

The findings for the 'other' context provided no evidence to suggest that the members of the production division had had significant exposure, through their experience (whether direct or indirect) of other organisations, to a markedly different training culture elsewhere. It will be recalled that there were three respondents from the production division (16%) who indicated that they had no knowledge of what it was that the workers in other organisations did, and sixteen respondents (84%) who indicated that they had some knowledge. The latter included four respondents who reported no difference between their current and their 'other' organisation (in terms of what it was that workers did) and twelve respondents who mentioned one or more differences each (with the total number of differences mentioned being thirty four). Of these twelve respondents, there were three who made reference to a difference which could be

classified as being related to worker training. In two cases, it was reported that there was more training for workers in the respondent's 'other' organisation, and in one case it was reported that there was no training for workers in the respondent's 'other' organisation. Clearly, these findings discount the possibility of there being a simple explanation for respondent views about the 'ideal' (with respect to worker involvement in training) in terms of respondent experience of other organisational contexts. In other words, the attitude of respondents that there should, ideally, be more involvement of divisional workers in training, cannot be explained in terms of respondent exposure to other organisational contexts which may have supported highly active training cultures.

Finally, the point should be made that, for the production division, respondent views about the 'ideal' appeared – at least in some cases – to be strongly influenced by respondent experience, over recent years, of the drive by divisional management to raise the quality of production in the division. It will be recalled that a common theme in respondent accounts of the 'ideal' role for divisional workers with respect to training was that more training was needed in order to raise the standard of worker performance in the division. In other words, these data contained evidence of the existence of a clear quality consciousness among respondent from this division.

(ii) Planning Meetings

As indicated, the tooling division and the production division differed in terms of the percentage of respondents who indicated that they thought that some change in the role of divisional workers with respect to the activity category 'Planning Meetings' was desirable. As shown in Table 6.7, there were six respondents from the tooling division (55% of the available sample), and sixteen respondents from the production division (89% of the available sample), who advocated some change (with the resulting difference between the divisions being -34%). It can also be seen from Table 6.7 that, for the tooling division, there was one respondent only who provided this information spontaneously (that is, in response to the initial open-ended question(s)). The remaining five respondents required specific prompting in order to ascertain their views about the ideal role of workers with respect to 'Planning Meetings'. In contrast, for the production division, there were nine respondents (just over half) who provided this information spontaneously, compared with seven who provided it in response to specific prompting. In the discussion which follows, the findings of a more detailed analysis of these data are presented, first for the tooling division and then for the production

division. As for the previous activity category, consideration is then given to the main similarities and differences between the divisions which are suggested by these findings, as well as to the extent to which these findings can be interpreted within the broader context of respondents' experience with respect to this issue.

Tooling Division. The six 'change' respondents from the tooling division included two supervisors (one senior supervisor and one first-line supervisor) and four 'wages' employees (three of whom were also leading hands). In addition, four of these respondents were longer-serving employees (with between 28 and 40 years of service with the company) and two were shorter-serving employees (each with six years of service with the company). All six respondents argued that divisional workers should have more involvement than they currently did in planning meetings and/or other types of planning activities. Additional qualifying information concerning the types of planning that workers should be involved in was provided (either spontaneously or in response to prompting) by five of these respondents. There was one respondent only for whom no qualifying data were available. This respondent simply indicated that "Yes" he would involve workers more in planning meetings.

All five of the 'change' respondents for whom qualifying data were available commented on whether or not they thought workers should be involved in equipment planning. In four cases (respondents included three 'wages' employees and one first-line supervisor), it was considered desirable that workers should have some responsibility for equipment planning (in the form, specifically, of input into decisions about equipment purchase) and in one case (the respondent was a senior supervisor) such a change was considered undesirable. The views of the former are illustrated in the following excerpts from two respondents:

It [would be] great to be able to go up and ask [workers], and even get their opinions on stuff before we buy it, hand it to someone and say 'Here, go try that. What do you think of it?' And if they come back and say 'No', you don't buy it.
(first-line supervisor)

Well, I'd consult [workers] and say, like, 'What equipment do you need?'
('wages' employee)

And in the words of the latter:

Well, the worker wouldn't get involved at all in [equipment planning]. ...I don't think he should. It becomes too involved, there's too many ideas, he's not up with it, he hasn't got the technical information and it can become... you can involve too many people in too many arguments and have too many points of view.
(senior supervisor)

All five 'change' respondents for whom qualifying data were available also commented on whether or not they thought that divisional workers should be involved in planning related to the scheduling and allocation of work. Three respondents (including two 'wages' employees and one senior supervisor) indicated that they would be in favour of such a change, and two respondents (including one 'wages' employee and one first-line supervisor) indicated that they would be against it. These opposing views are illustrated in the following two excerpts:

I think it's important that [the worker] does get involved in the planning at least with his immediate supervisor, because it makes him feel important. *Interviewer:* The planning of what? What sort of planning? *Respondent:* The planning of the job... the planning of the method and maybe even getting to the stage of planning who is going to do the job because some people are better at certain aspects of the job than others. (senior supervisor)

Job forecast is trying to find work for them and trying to schedule the workload into the toolroom. They wouldn't... I can't see any need for the shop floor to be involved in that. (first-line supervisor)

It should be noted that, whereas the respondent in the first excerpt above appears to be talking about worker participation in job allocation at a very localised level (that is, at the level of the individual work area or section), the respondent in the second excerpt appears to be talking about worker participation in job allocation at a divisional level. The point is that the nature of the job allocation activities at these different levels is likely to differ (in terms, for example, of the technical expertise required as well as the level of responsibility involved). With respect to the former, the main focus would presumably be on decisions about how to allocate work among the workers within a given work area. With respect to the latter, the main focus would presumably be on decisions about how to allocate entire tooling projects across the various sections or work areas within the division. It would appear, therefore, that the two excerpts above highlight a degree of interpretive inconsistency in respondents' definitions of 'job allocation activities'. This finding offers yet another illustration of the importance of qualitative data for understanding the meaning of quantitative data and for determining the extent to which comparisons between these data (in this case, comparisons between responses that indicate support for change and responses that indicate opposition to change) may or may not be valid.

There were three respondents (including two 'wages' employees and one senior supervisor) from whom information was available concerning their views about the 'ideal' role of workers with respect to job design planning. One of these respondents

provided this information spontaneously. In all three cases, it was argued that workers should, ideally, have some involvement in planning related to the design of their jobs.

The views of this group are illustrated in the following excerpt from one respondent:

Well I think, yes [I would involve workers in planning-type decisions]. Supervision must know a certain amount of people that's doing the job, right, and to me, that person that's going to do the job should be involved with how it should be done, or whatever. ('wages' employee, leading hand)

And finally, of the above five respondents for whom qualifying data were available, there were two (a 'wages' employee and a senior supervisor) who were asked about whether or not they thought that divisional workers should be involved in planning of a more strategic nature (involving decisions about the future direction of the division). It was perhaps not surprising, given the long history in this division of little or no worker involvement in planning of any kind, that both of these respondents indicated their opposition to such a change. In the words of the senior supervisor:

...most companies are pretty secretive about the direction in which they're heading, especially with regard to their future products and so forth. You can't share those sort of things with workers, because your secrets are out before you've even finished telling them. (senior supervisor)

Apart from the six 'change' respondents above, there were five respondents from the tooling division who indicated that, if they were in charge of the division, they would not make any changes to the current involvement of divisional workers in planning meetings and/or other types of planning activities. These respondents included four supervisors (three first-line supervisors and one senior supervisor) and one 'wages' employee (with leading hand status). All of these respondents were longer-serving employees with between twenty five and thirty five years of service with the company. Three of these respondents elaborated on their responses. In one case, the respondent – a first-line supervisor – argued that, since the workers in his area were all qualified tradesmen (with a high level of job knowledge), regular meetings for the purpose of planning were not required. In his own words:

The planning [meetings]... you only need that once you have got a problem. If everything runs apples you don't need that. The people know their trade.

The respondent went on to describe his current expectations regarding the planning responsibilities of the workers in his area. Specifically, he expected that workers would inform him when they did not have the appropriate tools/equipment to complete a given job; he also expected that they would inform him when supplies (such as paint) were running low and needed to be replenished. A second respondent – also a first-line

supervisor – indicated that, in his opinion, planning was, and should be, a supervisory responsibility and not a worker responsibility. In this respondent's own words:

No [workers should not be involved in planning meetings]. The supervisor or the manager of the business is responsible for running it. He shouldn't be duck shoving. He can ask people their opinions and that, but it's his responsibility. He's getting paid for it. He's gotta make the decisions. (first-line supervisor)

And a third respondent – a 'wages' employee (with leading hand status) – indicated that, while he did not consider it appropriate for divisional workers to participate in planning meetings, he believed that workers should be kept informed of "everything that is done at [these] meetings" and "what the planning is all about".

Production Division. As indicated, there were sixteen respondents from the production division who advocated some change in the involvement of divisional workers in planning meetings and/or other types of planning activities. These respondents included the five supervisory staff from the production division sample (including two senior supervisors and three first-line supervisors) and eleven 'wages' employees. All of the former were males, while the latter included four females and seven males. Length of service with the company for these respondents was highly variable and ranged from three years to thirty years.

As the reader will recall, the above group comprised nine respondents who commented spontaneously on their views about the 'ideal' role of divisional workers with respect to planning activities. While the analysis of these data has already been presented (see Section 6.3.4, pp. 435-445), it is useful in the present context to provide a brief overview of the key findings of this analysis. The nine respondents in this group included all five of the supervisory staff in the production division sample and four 'wages' employees. In all cases, the change which was advocated was towards a more active role for divisional workers with respect to planning activities. Specifically, there were seven respondents who advocated more involvement of workers in planning associated with the design of workers' jobs and the layout of work areas. One respondent argued that workers should participate in job allocation decisions (particularly as they related to workers' personal job preferences). And one respondent advocated more involvement of workers in planning of a more strategic nature (although the reader will recall that this particular change constituted one of two extreme options for change which were advocated by this respondent, the other involving a recommendation that the plant be de-unionised and that 'ethnic' labour only be

recruited). Finally, and as noted previously, an emergent theme in these open question data was that shop floor workers, because of their superior 'hands-on' knowledge and experience of production tasks, could make a valuable contribution to planning in relation to such tasks, if given the opportunity to do so. The logic of such a change was argued further on the grounds that it was workers (and not more senior organisation members) who were most affected by, and were the ultimate 'users' of, the outcomes of divisional planning activities at this level.

In addition to the above open question data, prompt data were available for eleven of the sixteen 'change' respondents from this division¹³⁰. These respondents included eight 'wages' employees, two first-line supervisors, and one senior supervisor. As with the open question data, the prompt data also provided evidence of support for a more active role for divisional workers with respect to planning activities. Specifically, of the eleven respondents for whom prompt data were available, there were four who argued that workers should be more involved in planning activities generally and six who argued for more worker involvement in (one or more) specific types of planning activities¹³¹. With respect to the latter, reference was made to the desirability of involving workers more in (i) planning associated with the design of workers' jobs and the layout of work areas (two first-line supervisors and two 'wages' employee); (ii) equipment planning (one first-line supervisor and two 'wages' employees); (iii) planning associated with work allocation and job scheduling (one 'wages' employee); and (iv) planning in relation to workers' training needs (one 'wages' employee).

As with the open question data, a common theme which emerged in the prompt data was that, because of their proximity to the job, shop floor workers (as opposed to more senior divisional personnel) had the kind of 'hands-on' job knowledge which respondents believed could contribute to more effective planning. There was also the argument that, because it was shop floor workers who ultimately had to work with the outcomes of many of the division's more local (as opposed to strategic) planning decisions, it made good sense for workers to have some input into such decisions. A sample of the prompt data is provided below which serves to illustrate this common thematic content:

¹³⁰ These eleven respondents included four respondents for whom both open question data and prompt data were available and seven respondents for whom prompt data only were available.

¹³¹ In the case of the remaining respondent (a senior supervisor who had previously advocated a number of changes in response to the open-ended question), the focus of the interviewer's prompt was solely on planning activities which the respondent *did not* believe divisional workers should be involved in.

Yes [I would involve workers in planning meetings]... because the operators would have some good ideas, what to do in the area... and for safety as well. ('wages' employee)

To a certain degree [I would involve workers in planning meetings], because... the workers on the shop floor have to put up with the new planning of what's going to happen. So I think the worker on the shop floor sometimes knows more than the person sitting at that desk... because he's out on the shop floor, he knows. Anybody can come along and put a plan on a piece of paper. [That is] not necessarily to say that that plan on that piece of paper is going to work on the shop floor. So if you have a bit of a discussion about it and say 'Well, that's what the boss wants' but 'That's what we want, we'll meet you half way down the track'... ..and I think you will find half the time, well, the boss would be happy and so would the workers. ('wages' employee)

I think that the workers should become involved when it comes to setting up a job... like they're bringing in the [new model vehicle] and they're setting this up, that they should have the workers [involved]... they're doing it on the lamp section, but then it's only the leading hands again and the die-setters. I think they might have one, might have been showing one operator or something. One operator is no good. You need to be able to take [all operators] and say 'This is what we're wanting. Do you think you've got adequate space to work in? How would you perceive that we put these things that makes it easier?'. And really, the operator's got no, they're just put on the job and [told] 'Right, this is it, [the] table's there, you get along with it!'. They might tell the foreman that they don't think it's right. He might say 'Oh, I think it is. Can you manage with it like that?'. Once you manage with it like that, it stays like that! ('wages' employee)

The view that I have is that the person who puts the thing together knows more about what goes on with that thing than the bloody engineer who only puts two, or three, or half a dozen together in his whole creative life – of whatever particular model he is doing. I feel that workers have got to have some input because they know what the problems are, they know what they get picked up on, the quality problems and whatever... we have the sort of situation here where they are now talking about making lamps and things, and there is not one person from the shop floor level that is ever attending these things because the philosophy is that [workers] have not got enough expertise. (first-line supervisor)

In the following excerpt, the respondent argues that 'wages' employees like himself, who are involved in die-setting, should be consulted about job scheduling decisions:

...they've got the schedulers... I think there are about four people that allocate jobs to each machine, but none of those people have got any experience in die-setting. We've got automatic clamping systems on the machines, so you put a die in, you clamp, you turn the key on or whatever, and these clamps come down. So you don't have to put bolts into the dies... their idea up there is quick die sets, what's what they want. They want a die set that takes twenty to twenty five minutes to do, and get up and running, and [with] the new machines that we've got, you can do that. But when they allocate a smaller job for a larger machine, then it has to be bolted in and you can't get [it] in, and sometimes that job won't run in the machine. There's a breakdown in communication there, 'cos they don't know, or don't understand, in the scheduling that why [would you] put that job in there, when it takes you three or four hours to get it going? ('wages' employee)

A second (though less widely shared) theme which emerged in the prompt data concerned the perception that there were some workers who were better suited than others (in terms of their interest, attitudes, and abilities) to participation in divisional planning activities. This theme is illustrated in the following excerpts:

Yes [I would involve workers in planning]. If people get interested in it. Like, as I said, you might go to a meeting and somebody's not bothered in what's going on. So I don't know... Yes, I'd say yes. To get people more involved and that. ('wages' employee)

Then again, it depends on the worker. I'm very picky as far as my work group goes. I'd never be a boss for a million years. I wouldn't have anyone working for me. Yes, it is important... being involved with the planning and everything. ('wages' employee)

Yes [I would involve workers in planning], but... If you're a supervisor, you've got to be a reasonable judge of character, so you don't pick the dickheads out on the shop floor 'cos every place has dickheads. But there's people out there that are reasonably sensible and they are not going to throw up stupid ideas... They should pick the cream of the crop really and get them involved. ('wages' employee)

And later in the same interview:

...you can't involve everyone [in job design planning] because people just... a lot of people just don't want to know. They're just there to make money, it's just a job.

Finally, the prompt data also contained references, by some respondents, to planning activities/decisions which respondents did not think it appropriate for workers to be involved in. In some cases, this information was provided in response to prompting about whether or not worker involvement in certain specific types of planning activities/decisions (in relation, for example, to equipment needs, training needs, work scheduling etc.) was considered to be appropriate; in other cases, it was provided in response to a more general prompt about whether or not there were any planning activities/decisions in which the respondent believed workers should not be involved. With respect to the former, there were two respondents (both 'wages' employees) who indicated that they did not think that it was appropriate for workers to be involved in planning related to the scheduling of work within the division. In the case of one respondent, her opposition to such a change arose from her view that work scheduling should simply be a matter of sharing the workload for a given area equally among the workers in that area. Then, through a system of job rotation, workers could gain experience in doing every job in their area. In contrast, the other respondent was opposed to such a change on the grounds that, if involved in scheduling activities,

workers would (at least as he saw it) inevitably allocate jobs in such a way as to minimise their individual workload. In this respondent's own words:

Workers are workers. They like to bludge if they can. If they can cut down their schedule they will... Workers are workers whichever way you look at it. So, no, I wouldn't necessarily [involve workers] in scheduling because they would cut it down, if they can. That's just a normal human reaction it seems. ('wages' employee)

With respect to the latter, there were three respondents (one senior supervisor, one first-line supervisor, and one 'wages' employee) who were asked specifically about whether or not there were planning activities/decisions which they did not believe workers should be involved in. Two of these respondents (the senior supervisor and the 'wages' employee) indicated that they considered it inappropriate for workers (and, in the case of the senior supervisor, also for supervisors) to be involved in planning activities of a more strategic nature. In each respondent's own words:

I guess there's the way the business is actually run, in terms of the financial side of it. I mean, obviously I don't believe [workers] should get involved in that, and neither should I. I think that's left to the bean counters to worry about... Then there's a whole load of other things. There would be market research and all that sort of stuff. I wouldn't really see shop floor operators getting involved in something that far up in the organisation, or forward planning, you know, like how the business saw itself running in four or five years time... (senior supervisor)

Top level [planning decisions]. That's completely, that's what [managers] get paid for. So you know, we keep out of that. ('wages' employee)

Finally, a third respondent (a first-line supervisor) indicated that, in his opinion, workers should be consulted about "every issue". There was no issue, debate about which could not benefit from some level of worker involvement.

Apart from the above sixteen 'change' respondents, there were two respondents (both 'wages' employees) from the production division for whom 'no change' responses were recorded (one respondent from this division was not asked about his views concerning the 'ideal' role for divisional workers with respect to 'Planning Meetings'). In the case of both of these 'no change' respondents, the reference was specifically to the respondent's attitude towards the involvement of divisional workers in planning activities/decisions of a more strategic nature. In each respondent's own words:

No, I don't think you can involve the ordinary people in that. I think that should be left to the people that know their job as regards that. ('wages' employee)

Oh, I don't think they have the knowledge, the background or the motivation for it. ('wages' employee)

Neither of the above respondents was asked about, or made spontaneous reference to, the desirability (or otherwise) of worker participation in other types of planning activities (the outcomes of which might be expected to have more immediate and direct relevance for shop floor workers).

Conclusion. On the basis of the above analysis of 'ideal' context data pertaining to the 'prompted' activity category 'Planning Meetings', the following concluding comments are offered regarding similarities and differences between the two divisions.

First, there was evidence to suggest that, as a group, respondents from the production division were more concerned about the issue of worker involvement in planning than were their counterparts in the tooling division. As indicated, there was a marked difference between the divisions in terms of the proportion of respondents from each who argued for some change in the involvement of divisional workers in planning (with 89% of production division respondents advocating change, compared with 55% of tooling division respondents). Moreover, this information was provided spontaneously by nine respondents from the production division (representing 56% of the 'change' respondents from this division), compared with only one respondent from the tooling division (representing 17% of the 'change' respondents from this division).

Second, the two divisions were similar in that all of the change respondents from each argued in favour of more involvement of divisional workers in planning. Moreover, there was general agreement among these respondents about how far workers' planning responsibilities should, ideally, extend. Specifically, it was felt that workers should have more input than they currently did into planning activities/decisions, the outcomes of which were likely to be of direct relevance to them. For example, respondents variously advocated more involvement of divisional workers in planning activities/decisions associated with (i) the design of their jobs; (ii) the layout and allocation of work in their area; and (iii) the purchase of tools and equipment for use in their area. It was generally considered inappropriate for divisional workers to be involved in planning of a more strategic nature (that is, concerning future directions for their division).

Third, the analysis of respondent elaborations on their responses revealed more common thematic content in the production division 'change' data than in the tooling division 'change' data. As indicated, a common theme in the former concerned the perception that, at the level of the shopfloor, there existed job knowledge and

experience which constituted a potentially valuable resource upon which to draw in relation to a range of divisional planning activities/decisions. A second (though less widely shared) theme which emerged in these data concerned the view that not all divisional workers could contribute equally to divisional planning and that, as such, only those workers deemed to have the appropriate level of motivation, interest, and skill should become involved. In contrast, for the tooling division, respondent elaborations on their responses were more varied in terms of their thematic content. For example, respondents differed in their views about why workers should become more involved in planning. Such a change was advocated on the grounds that: (i) it would serve to make workers "feel important" (one respondent); (ii) it would serve to make workers feel less "like mushrooms" and less like "they really have no say" (one respondent); (iii) since workers had to "do the job", they should be involved in decisions about "how it should be done" (one respondent); and (iv) it was "great to be able to go up and get [workers'] opinions" (one respondent). Interestingly, nowhere in these data was there an explicit reference to the idea that workers possessed valuable job knowledge and experience which could contribute to more effective divisional planning. With respect to the 'no change' data, a search for common thematic content in these data was not really warranted given that there were only two respondents from the production division for whom 'no change' responses were recorded, and given that only three of the five 'no change' respondents from the tooling division elaborated on their responses.

Perhaps the most plausible explanation for the above finding (pertaining to the 'change' data) is that the relative absence of consensual views among tooling division respondents, compared with production division respondents, may simply be an artefact of the smaller sample size for this division. In other words, if the sample size for the tooling division had been the same as that for the production division, there would have been more opportunity for consensual views (to the extent that these existed) to have emerged. The point should also be made, however, that as a group, the 'change' respondents from the production gave the impression of being more convinced than their counterparts in the tooling division about the desirability of more worker involvement in planning. In particular, they seemed to be better informed about the value of such a change and also more articulate in communicating their support for it than respondents from the tooling division.

A fourth concluding point concerns the analysis of demographic data for the 'change' and 'no change' respondents from each division. Two trends emerged which, though they cannot be statistically validated, are nevertheless worth commenting on. First, and as previously for the activity category 'Attend Training', supervisory staff were not represented in the 'no change' data for the production division, whereas for the tooling division, four of the six supervisory staff included in the sample for this division gave 'no change' responses. Put another way, all five of the supervisory staff from the production division sample argued in favour of change, compared with two of the six supervisory staff from the tooling division. The same conclusion can be drawn as previously, namely, that to the extent that one can demonstrate that there exists, among the more senior members of an organisation (in this case, supervisory staff), widespread support for, or alternatively resistance to, a particular change (in this case towards more involvement of divisional workers in planning), one may be better able to predict the likely outcome of organisational efforts to introduce that change. The point is that the attitudes of more senior (and hence, more influential) organisation members are likely to be more critical than the attitudes of less senior organisation members (for example, shopfloor employees) to the success of any organisational change effort. The analysis of demographic data also revealed that, for the tooling division, all of the 'no change' respondents were longer-serving employees (with between twenty five and thirty five years of service with the company). Not surprisingly perhaps, the two shorter serving employees included in the sample for this division (each with six years of service with the company) both gave 'change' responses. To the extent that this difference was to emerge in a much larger sample, it would perhaps provide support for the view that length of tenure may be an important factor influencing organisation member responsiveness to change.

In summarising the findings of the above analysis of 'ideal' context data pertaining to the activity category 'Planning Meetings', the reader's attention should also be drawn to an important methodological issue which arose during the course of administering this section of the interview. As interviewing proceeded, it became clear that the prompt question may need to be refined. While there were some respondents who simply talked about the desirability (or undesirability) of involving divisional workers in planning in general (the prompt did not require them to do any more than this), there were others who advocated (or argued against) worker involvement in specific types of planning

(whether in relation to job design, plant layout, equipment needs etc.). As this pattern emerged, my response was to extend the prompt question to ask respondents about these specific types of planning, if they had not already mentioned them. In some cases, I also asked respondents about whether or not there were certain types of planning which they did not believe workers should be involved in¹³². In view of the fact that more specific prompting of this kind did seem to generate more valuable data, it would appear that the present method could benefit from some refinement of this particular prompt. Of course, given a set time period in which to conduct the interview, this would necessitate some rationalisation of questioning in other areas (perhaps a reduction in the total number of prompts).

Finally, it became apparent during the course of analysing the above data set that respondent elaborations on their responses (in particular their comments about why they considered a particular change to be desirable or undesirable) constituted a potentially rich source of information about the group's culture. (For example, for the production division, these data provided evidence of a shared perception that shopfloor workers, because of their 'hands-on' skills and experience, could contribute to more effective operational planning within the division.) It would seem, therefore, that any revision of the present method could also benefit from the inclusion of specific questioning about why respondents consider the changes which they propose (or argue against) as desirable (or undesirable). We turn now to a consideration of how the above findings for each division can be interpreted within the broader context of respondents' experience of the role of workers with respect to the activity category 'Planning Meetings'. The results of this contextual analysis are presented first for the tooling division and then for the production division.

Contextual analysis of 'ideal' context data for 'Planning Meetings'

Tooling Division. As indicated, there was evidence from data pertaining to the past context that the tooling division had had a long history of little or no worker involvement in planning. Moreover, data pertaining to the present context provided no evidence to suggest that the traditional role of workers with respect to planning had changed significantly in recent years. The attitude continued to prevail that planning (whether operational or strategic) was primarily the domain of more senior divisional

¹³² Given that one of the aims of the study was to discover ways in which the present method could be refined, it seemed reasonable to occasionally trial different questions if these did not interfere too much with the broad structure of the interview.

personnel (supervisory staff and above). There was also little evidence of a perception that a more active role for divisional workers with respect to planning would be part of the division's future agenda. Where such a change was anticipated (in response to prompting there were four respondents, or 36% of the available sample, who indicated that they thought that there would be more involvement of divisional workers in planning in the future), it was seen as a likely response to external factors over which the division had no control (including pressure from the union, forces for change arising from the broader social context, expectations for change that would be imposed with the forthcoming relocation of the division to the company's main manufacturing and assembly plant etc), rather than as part of a conscious strategy by management to develop a different, perhaps more active, role for workers. There was also evidence of a perception that, if the traditional role of supervisors in the division (essentially a directing and controlling role) was to remain unchanged (this was seen by some as desirable and by others as undesirable), then the current role of workers with respect to planning would also stay the same. Finally, there was no evidence in the 'other' context data to suggest that divisional members had had experience of, or knew about, a role for workers – with respect to planning – that differed significantly from that which their current organisation supported.

Given this broader contextual information, the findings for the 'ideal' context are by no means inconsistent with what one might have expected. Perhaps one might have predicted that fewer respondents would advocate more involvement of divisional workers in planning than was in fact the case. The point can still be made, however, that there was not widespread support among respondents from the tooling division (as there was among their counterparts in the production division) for a change towards more involvement of divisional workers in planning. Moreover, where change was advocated (in five cases out of six, this was in response to prompting), the extent of workers' proposed involvement in planning was fairly circumscribed and there was a sense in which respondents lacked the knowledge and/or experience to be able to clearly articulate their support for the change. And finally, reference should also be made to the (perhaps not insignificant) finding that the supervisory staff from the sample for this division were more inclined to argue against change than to argue for it.

Production Division. In contrast to the tooling division, the links between the 'ideal' context data for the production division and data pertaining to the other contextual

domains of interest were less readily identifiable. Interestingly, the profile of respondent experience that emerged from the analysis of production division data pertaining to these other contextual domains was not dissimilar from that described above for the tooling division. For example, there was little evidence in data pertaining to the past and present contexts that the workers in the production division had ever had any significant involvement in divisional planning (whether of an operational or a strategic nature). It was also the case that respondents from the production division, like their counterparts in the tooling division, appeared to have no knowledge of other organisational contexts (whether acquired directly or indirectly) which had provided them with an alternative perspective on the role of workers with respect to planning. There were even similarities between the divisions in terms of respondent experience with respect to the future context. As for the tooling division, a minority of respondents only from the production division (three respondents, or 17% of the available sample) indicated that they thought that there would be more involvement of divisional workers in planning in the future. In all cases, this information was provided in response to prompting, rather than spontaneously. The change was variously attributed to the likely influences of technological change (one outcome of which would be a new generation of more highly skilled workers who would be better equipped than workers at the present time to contribute to divisional planning) and the current trend in industry towards organising work around self-governing groups. It can be seen, then, that there was little apparent difference between the two divisions in terms of the future context 'change' data.

An important difference did, however, emerge in the analysis of the 'no change' data for the production division. The reader may recall that there were a number of respondents from this division who indicated that, while they considered a change towards more involvement of divisional workers in planning to be unlikely, they nevertheless regarded such a change as desirable. There was no evidence in the tooling division data of the existence of positive attitudes towards this change. As indicated previously, a possible explanation for this difference between the divisions was that, as a group, the respondents from the production division appeared to have had more exposure than their counterparts in the tooling division to a number of different activities (such as group problem solving and information meetings) consistent with a more 'active' role for workers. It is possible, therefore, that the respondents from this

division had, in a sense, already been partially primed for changes (such as that described in relation to planning) not yet implemented.

In terms of the broader contextual analysis of 'ideal' context data for the production division, it can be seen, then, that there is a relatively clear link between these data and data pertaining to the future context. It might even be argued that the positive attitudes towards change that emerged in the latter may be seen as, in a sense, foreshadowing the widespread support for change that subsequently emerged in the former.