

VOLUME II

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PART III

CHAPTER 6

FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON CONFLICT



In this chapter, findings from the research already discussed, are first considered in respect of three models which have been put forward as heuristic devices to further understanding of conflict phenomena. In the first of these models, the 'football team' analogy is developed. A second model centres upon trust relationships between parties to conflict. The third model considered, deals with a series of events comprising a conflict sequence. Usefulness of these models as an aid to research is discussed. Attempts which have been made by a number of other writers to classify and describe conflict are then discussed. Where possible, this is done in the context of findings outlined in earlier chapters. Lessons from the study are then considered before a concluding section on causes of the strike.

### The firm as a football team

Ramsay (1975)<sup>(1)</sup> summarizes material from a number of studies which have used 'football team' questions in surveying the views of those for whom industrial relations is of practical concern. He considers that questions of this type, while differing in wording between studies are intended to obtain information on "conflictive" and "harmonistic" views of the firm.

In one study, he notes that researchers found 69% disagreement and 28% agreement among 289 young skilled workers in French steel-producing and iron-mining industry to the proposition that the plant is "like a football team". British researchers in a motor-car plant found two-thirds of their sample of manual workers in agreement with the statement that the firm is like a football team. Other researchers asking the same question among different occupational groups, obtained figures between 56% and 78% in agreement with the teamwork image. Research in the shipbuilding industry on this question revealed 79% agreement and 17% disagreement with the football team image of the firm. Asked about the way it worked in their own yard however, the agreement rate of respondents was 54% with 37% saying it did not work that way.<sup>(2)</sup>

(1) See this paper for details of research work referred to in this section. See also: Appendix note 45 for further discussion.

(2) Differences between summed percentages and 100 are made up by "don't knows" and other answers.

In his own research in an engineering plant and a chemical works, Ramsay divided the question to allow respondents to reply in either a "harmonistic" or "co-ordinative" manner, as well as in the "straight conflict" manner, and found that while 54% of the total sample agreed with the football team analogy, only 8% of these adopted the "harmonistic" viewpoint. Thus, in addition to the 41% who thought workers and managers were basically on different sides, another 46% agreed with the football team analogy *only* on the basis that people had to work together to get things done. Besides the 184 workers who took part in the survey, Ramsay also questioned 33 managers in the engineering firm and found 30% of them selected the "harmonistic" alternative, 51% held the co-ordinative view, and 15% "saw things in oppositional terms". Ramsay notes that in this firm: "...the industrial relations record was a good one by most standards, with no significant strike action in twenty years".

On the various research studies, Ramsay makes the following points: i) that early research which evoked only dichotomous "integrated" and "conflict" images of industrial enterprises was conceptually limited; ii) that respondents answering such questions may be expressing a pragmatic view of the employer/employee relationship within their own enterprise rather than supporting a universal harmonistic view of management-employee relations; iii) that "co-operation" need not be a synonym for "harmony" or "integration"; iv) that it is necessary to consider the validity of the "integrated" view at different times and under different conditions, suggesting that when a wage claim is in the offing, awareness of conflict is brought to the fore; v) that a "unitary" view of the firm

has fewer adherents than suggested by the usual interpretation of the football team question, and that a co-ordinate view holds sway, closely followed by an oppositional image. He concludes that:

"The view of the employment relationship is thus not one of normative integration of the employee, but rather a chiefly pragmatic acceptance by employees who accept that one way or another the current relation has to be lived with. Co-operation is offered on a negotiated basis...Even in situations of overt conflict. a large "opposite sides" score need not result, as the "co-ordinative" image allows for such conflict".

The 'football team' question asked of respondents in the present study differed from those used in previous research in one important way. It did not specifically ask respondents to agree or disagree necessarily with a football team image of the firm, although a few chose to answer in this way. The question asked for respondents' views on the statement that a firm is like a football team. Although the sample size was smaller than in any of the other studies referred to, deeper analysis of replies was possible by this more open-ended approach. It was possible for example to identify a number of themes characterizing respondents' answers.

These are discussed in detail in an earlier section and summarized in Table 5.10. However, it may be fruitful to re-examine these findings in the light of the other studies mentioned. One confounding problem in such an exercise is that responses were analysed for total content, and it was not considered inconsistent or in any way unreal for a respondent to express more than one view of the issue raised.

Indeed, on the grounds that the work of Ramsay has revealed that the "harmonistic/conflict" dichotomy is an over-simplification of parties' views, it might be considered surprising if a complex of views from at least some respondents were not obtained.<sup>(1)</sup>

Thus in this research, a theme emerging in a position of some prominence corresponds to the "oppositional" or "conflict" category of earlier studies. Nine out of twenty managers (including supervisory staff) indicated this viewpoint, as did five out of ten shop stewards. Two themes may be combined to give a "harmonistic" viewpoint: those indicating that people *are* striving towards a common goal and those agreeing that the firm is like a football team. Together, these give eight out of twenty management and five out of ten trade union responses<sup>(2)</sup> in favour of such a perspective. The second and third themes on the list could be combined to give a "co-ordinate" perspective on the firm, and these are: that as an ideal, people *ought* to strive to the same goal (implying that they do not always do so in reality), and that interests do conflict, but can be co-ordinated to benefit everyone.

- (1) Mann (1973) suggests that industrial workers are likely to have beliefs in harmony and co-operation existing alongside beliefs in inherent opposition of interest. Hill (1974) explains that the concept of the work group emerged as a basic unit for analysis on the assumption that the interests of different workers in the same workplace are not homogeneous but sectional. Hill notes that workers have dualistic social consciousness of teamwork and conflict images, reflecting workers' experience of both phenomena in the same relationship. He terms this a realistic response to the employment relationship, maintaining that which of the two aspects come to the forefront depends on the context in which workers find themselves.
- (2) *Not* the same as respondents. Because of the form of the analysis, some respondents could have contributed to both these categories through their replies.

These themes obtained support from seven out of twenty managers in each case, and from three and two out of ten shop stewards respectively. Table 6.1 summarizes the response categories considered so far.

TABLE 6.1      Perspectives on the firm

	managers <u>N = 20</u>	stewards <u>N = 10</u>
"conflict" perspective % of total responses	9 28%	5 33%
"harmony" perspective % of total responses	8 25%	5 33%
"co-ordinative" perspective % of total responses	14 43%	5 33%
	—	—
Totals	31	15

- N.B.    i) Percentages are rounded;  
          ii) Percentages refer to total *responses*;  
                 (not necessarily respondents)  
          iii) Totals are base for percentages in each case.

The interesting picture which emerges from this admittedly fairly scanty data is that of shop steward responses divided equally between the three perspectives, and of management responses favouring the "co-ordinative" perspective with the "conflict" and "harmony" perspectives at an almost equal distance behind. Obviously, a number of respondents indicated tendencies towards more than one perspective, highlighting a point made by both Hill and Ramsay of the need to take account of particular conditions in a workplace and elsewhere when considering replies to such a question.

The three other themes which emerged in the earlier analysis are somewhat different in substance and thus have not been included in the discussion above. They appeared to be derived from responses coming mainly from managers and supervisors. Those responses which indicated (8 in all) that: "this Firm is better than most", suggest that respondents can readily interpret and answer the 'football team' question in the context of their own workplace, even when this is not asked for or prompted. Those responses (6 in all) suggesting that "individuals are out for *themselves*", is different from the idea that the interests of *groups* conflict. It is suggestive of an ideology whose adherents maintain that the basic unit for reward is the individual, and is somewhat antithetical to the rationale behind collective bargaining. Finally, there is the suggestion from two respondents that whatever the nature of relationships between parties within the Firm, there are liable to be supportive attitudes on the part of all those from within the enterprise with regard to outside parties. The existence of this theme reinforces the suggested predisposition for some respondents to consider the general question in terms of their own enterprise.

In this section, it has been shown how respondents' views of the firm may accord to one or more perspectives. Perspectives of 'conflict', 'harmony' and 'co-ordination', have been shown to feature as key elements within a complex array of views on the firm. It has been suggested that such views and perspectives are likely to change over time under the influence of factors impinging upon those holding them.

It may be that such perspectives and views form the base from which attitudes towards other parties to industrial relations in the workplace are formed. In the next section, possible implications of this suggestion are examined within the context of another model.

### Relationships and trust

A detailed theoretical perspective on industrial relations has been devised by Fox, author of a number of books and articles on frames of reference in industrial relations. This account is restricted to some of his work in Fox (1974,b)<sup>(1)</sup> The title describes the conceptual framework within which Fox considers relationships between employers and employees in industry. While there is not the space to do justice to the complexity of his approach here, a few points will be selected for their relevance to the present study.

Fox characterizes a "high-trust" relationship as:

"...one in which the participants share certain ends or values; bear towards each other a diffuse sense of long-term obligations; offer each other spontaneous support without narrowly calculating the cost of anticipating any equivalent short-term reciprocation; communicate freely and honestly; are ready to repose their fortunes in each other's hands; and give each other the benefit of any doubt that may arise with respect to good will or motivation". (Op.cit. p362)

Conversely, the author notes that in a "low-trust" relationship:

(1) *Beyond contract: work, power and trust relations.* Faber, 1974.



"...the participants have divergent ends or values; entertain specific expectations which have to be reciprocated through a precisely balanced exchange in the short-term; calculate carefully the costs and anticipated benefits of any concession; restrict and screen communications in their own separate interests; seek to minimize dependence on each other's discretion, and are quick to suspect, and invoke sanctions against illwill or default on obligations." (p362)

Evidence from earlier chapters describing events at the Firm in 1970, before the new job assessment, joint liaison, and negotiating machinery had been established, would suggest that relationships between parties were to some extent characterized by phenomena under the low-trust syndrome outlined by Fox. Evidence from Chapter 5 on events six years after the strike seems to point towards elements from the high-trust syndrome as characterizing relationships. This is not to say that in 1970, relationships between parties in the Firm exhibited *all* the elements of low-trust, or that all relationships in 1976 exhibited *all* the elements of high-trust. However, the general postulate may be forwarded that in the six years between the studies the Firm has moved from being an organization characterized by predominantly low-trust relationships to one where high-trust relationships are more in evidence. This postulate provides a backcloth for further analysis.

Fox considers the role of trust and power in the context of three frames of reference through which industrial relations may be observed. Of the unitary frame of reference for example, he notes:

"The charge that trade unionism introduces distrust into the work situation implies that none was there before. This means that the charge has to be supported by an ideology which presents the 'true' picture of the work situation as characterized by harmony and trust. Thus comes to be propagated a view of the organization as a unitary structure. Emphasis is placed on the common objectives and values said to unite all participants..." (p249)

There are parallels between elements of the unitary frame of reference and a conception of the firm as a football team, the latter being one possible 'operational' view of the former. Fox continues by describing the emergence of a pluralist perspective and notes the confluence of government departments, with the hitherto unreconcilable standpoints of managerial prerogative and employee rights, to form a mutually acceptable working definition of "good industrial relations".

Fox considers that:

"The involvement of all these three groups in what practical men current saw as 'problems' led, in its major emphasis to a convergence upon a pluralist perspective which legitimized intergroup conflict in industry and sought its institutionalization through collective bargaining." (p257)

A central assumption of pluralism is that a rough balance of power exists between principal interest groups in society, and:

"Those holding the pluralistic perspective...are committed to the view that a certain amount of conflict is structured into the situation by virtue of the coalition nature of the organization." (p271)

A less obvious parallel may be drawn between Fox's conception of the pluralistic perspective (or frame of reference) and Ramsay's notion of the co-ordinative perspective held by some respondents to the football team idea of the firm, i.e. that co-operation between parties is essentially dependent upon acceptance of basic conflicts of interest. In relation to the perpetuation of managerial power in the context of a pluralistic perspective, Fox has this to say:

"Pluralism could be presented...as the far-seeing manager's ideology for a future in which those in positions of rule come increasingly under challenge, have to seek new legitimations, and must turn intelligence and patience towards the growing task of winning consent. It becomes the recommended frame of reference most likely to enable managers to pursue their purposes successfully amid the multiple values, the shifting power relations of a complex society undergoing an accelerating rate of economic and social change." (p282)

Fox derives a third frame of reference which he terms "The Radical Challenge" from a Marxist perspective and of it notes that:

"Central to this alternative is the belief that industrial society, while manifestly on one level a congeries of small interest groups vying for scarce goods, status or influence, is more fundamentally characterized in terms of the over-arching exploitation of one class by another, of the property-less by the propertied, of the less by the more powerful. From this view, any talk of 'checks and balances', however apt for describing certain subsidiary phenomena, simply confuses our understanding of the primary dynamics which shape and move society..." (p274)

This perspective does not correspond with the "conflict" view of the firm described by Ramsay, which might be more appropriately considered as one end of the spectrum of views on the pluralistic perspective. Essential elements of the radical viewpoint are that parties to conflict (in industry or elsewhere) are not equal, and that in their relationships, one party holds power consistently over the other (assuming the simple case of only two parties). Fox notes that: "...it is in precisely those power relationships where the power disparity is greatest that its active exercise is least necessary."<sup>(1)</sup> After describing each of the perspectives on industrial relations including history and implications of each, Fox considers how the macro-model might operate in individual workplaces. He summarizes:

"...in some work organizations both management and employees were divided among themselves as to the pattern of relationships they preferred; the former looking to both unitary and pluralistic models, and the latter perhaps not only to these but also to the radical model. Given three possible frames of reference, two parties, and the possibility that either or both may be divided in standpoint, there are many conceivable patterns of management-employee relations which can emerge." (p296)

Fox next directs his attention to six possible patterns of management-employee relations which he calls: Traditional, Classical Conflict, Sophisticated Modern, Standard Modern, Sophisticated Paternalist and Continuous Challenge. As brief summaries as possible will be given here of what Fox refers to as the "briefest of delineations" to describe each of these patterns.

(1) Op.cit. p276

The Traditional pattern is characterized by unitary perspectives on the part of both management and employees. Management's prerogative is not contested and its definition of roles and rewards is fully legitimized by all who see these definitions in high-trust terms.

Fox records development from the Traditional pattern thus:

"As employees acquired this consciousness they confronted unitary-thinking employers with pluralistic type demands to be allowed a voice in the making of certain decisions bearing on terms and conditions of employment. Thus, the Traditional pattern passed into the Classical Conflict pattern. In terms of the analysis developed here, trade unionism and collective bargaining appear as low-trust responses by employees to what they perceive as low-trust work situations created by management...No more than they perceive management as trusting them do they feel able to trust management." (pp298-9)

Fox considers that it is more likely for employers to come to see in high trust terms what they previously saw in low-trust terms than it is for employees to do so. He gives the example of collective bargaining, benefits of which management came to see with regard to "market regulation" and "industrial peace". Thus, in the Sophisticated Modern (or Mutual Accommodation) pattern, management and employees share the pluralistic ideology. Management in these circumstances, legitimates the union role in some areas of joint decision-making because to do so helps management in certain of its own interests such as: stability, gaining consent, regulation of the organization, communicating effectively, and handling change.

Fox cites the Glacier Metal Company as an example of the Sophisticated Modern pattern, although he stresses that "pluralistic forms carry no guarantee of pluralistic attitudes". He considers that this pattern is:

"...only a marginally more sophisticated version of the unitary human relations approach which has at its core the assumption that co-operative harmony based on common interests can always be constructed on the present division of labour given the right leadership, psychological insight, and organizational methods." (p304)

Fox concludes his discussion of the Sophisticated Modern pattern by claiming that it is highly unstable and in major crises is liable to revert to Classical Conflict, although is more likely to be transformed into the Standard Modern pattern. This is the fourth of Fox's patterns, which he thinks is "possibly the largest single category" and the one into which many organizations move from either the Traditional or Classical Conflict forms.

In the Standard Modern pattern, there is ambivalence within management towards the pluralist ideology which may take either or both of two forms. Some members of management may hold a unitary and others a pluralistic perspective, or individual managers may fluctuate between the two, according to mood or circumstances. At times of crisis, for example, it is likely that unitary attitudes and policies will predominate among managers. Fox notes possible confusions and uncertainties at all levels of management which can arise through the mixture of unitary and pluralistic perspectives, with the expectations of

each group being confounded by those holding a different perspective. For example, he writes:

"A foreman who practices an autocratic style based on unitary convictions may prejudice the operation of a grievance procedure which embodies pluralist principles. A departmental manager bent on a reorganization scheme may drag his reluctant senior colleagues willy-nilly into a bitter dispute with shop stewards as a consequence of his neglect of the expected communication, consultation and negotiation processes. A plant or divisional executive may stumble into conflict with the union hierarchy from which he had to be rescued by embarrassed seniors, or more probably, by the hapless Personnel Department. 'Line and staff' complications between production management with unitary convictions and personnel departments operating with pluralistic assumptions are hardly rare. Finally, boards of directors may have their 'doves and hawks', with either group carrying the day according to weight of personality, verbal fluency, current fashion, or the prevailing mood of colleagues". (p308)

These examples are from the "Management-Divided" aspect of the Standard Modern pattern, of which there may also be "Employee-Divided" aspects. Workgroups of different occupations may divide along unitary and pluralistic lines. Fox gives as examples, semi-skilled women production workers who accept management prerogative and skilled male craftsmen who do not, as typical of groups holding unitary and pluralistic perspectives respectively. He points out that a management with a unitary bias might meet sympathy from the former group, but encounter suspicion from the latter group, thereby engendering distrust between the workgroups. A pluralistic management he records:

"...conversely, may receive positive responses from some groups but a mixture of disparagement and envy from others who do not themselves aspire to such treatment and react sourly to seeing it offered to others. Such cross-currents are not confined to rank and file level. There may be technical, supervisory, and perhaps in large organizations, even some middle management groups who hold unitary attitudes themselves yet feel neglected by top management and jealous of the studied care with which the representatives of lower rank groups are consulted". (p309)

Fox records the existence of two further patterns, one of which he notes may seem improbable but cites as an example, Lane and Roberts' study of the 1970 strike at Pilkingtons. This Sophisticated Paternalist pattern combines a wholly or partly pluralistic management and a predominantly unitary-minded labour force, which is passive and throws up little or no assertive leadership of its own. According to Fox, organizations in this category usually graduate from the Traditional Paternalist position.

The final pattern delineated by Fox is the Continuous Challenge (or Non-Accommodative) pattern, which resembles the Classical Conflict pattern with the positions reversed. Thus the work-group does not legitimize management's claim to assert and pursue objectives which are seen as overriding their interests, practices or values. As in the Classical Conflict pattern, perpetual mutual distrust prevails.



Concluding his analysis of these types, Fox stresses that the various patterns are in no way to be regarded as fixed states persisting over long periods of time, nor is there a sequence of linear progress through which management-employee relations move towards a state of stabilized maturity. The overall picture he suggests is one of varied possibilities and mixed patterns, rather than a logically unfolding trend towards a common variety.

Having outlined this theoretical position on patterns of relationships characterizing management-employee relations, what may now be said about the Firm which has been the subject of this study, and the possible pattern or patterns which may be ascribed to it? The history and strength of the unionization of the workforce, together with the high level of representation, exclude both the Traditional and Sophisticated Paternalist patterns. High-trust responses noted from both management and employee respondents in the interviews; for example in the mutual perceptions of "good industrial relations", suggests that the Continuous Challenge and Classical Conflict patterns are also not appropriate descriptions of the Firm in 1976. However, there is the possibility that in 1970, some relationships within the Firm were more typical of those described by Fox as characterizing the Classical Conflict pattern. Data from the interviews suggests that trust between the parties increased in the years between 1970 and 1976, although this is not to say that all relationships between parties in 1970 were in the mode of the Classical Conflict pattern. For example, it could be argued that at this time there were manifestations of Employee-Divided (and less obviously,

Management-Divided) aspects of the Standard Modern pattern.

The Sophisticated Modern pattern is considered inappropriate, because responses to the question on the firm as a football team, suggest that management and employees do not share an exclusively pluralistic perspective. Their views are more characteristic of those described by Fox as being of the Standard Modern pattern. Thus, this is the pattern which it could be said approximates most closely to the state of relationships within the Firm in 1976.

There are indications that there is ambivalence among both management and employee respondents, between pluralistic and unitary perspectives. There are also suggestions that the type of issues arising within this pattern described above, do occur within this Firm. Examples of these would be: perceptions of communications, doubts expressed about the value of joint consultation committees, and the occurrence of small disputes. Thus, while the Firm may not exhibit exclusively the totality of characteristics of Fox's Standard Modern pattern, it may be said that if a pattern were to be sought for this Firm, this would be the best contender.

In this section, it has been suggested that relationships between parties in the Firm may be described in terms of high- and low-trust. It has further been suggested that when considered with frames of reference held by members of parties to industrial relations, a number of possible patterns may be distinguished. These patterns describe types of behaviour which may be expected to be exhibited by parties to industrial relations. The Firm which was the subject of this study was identified as corresponding to the Standard Modern pattern described by Fox (1974b).

### Applying a conflict model

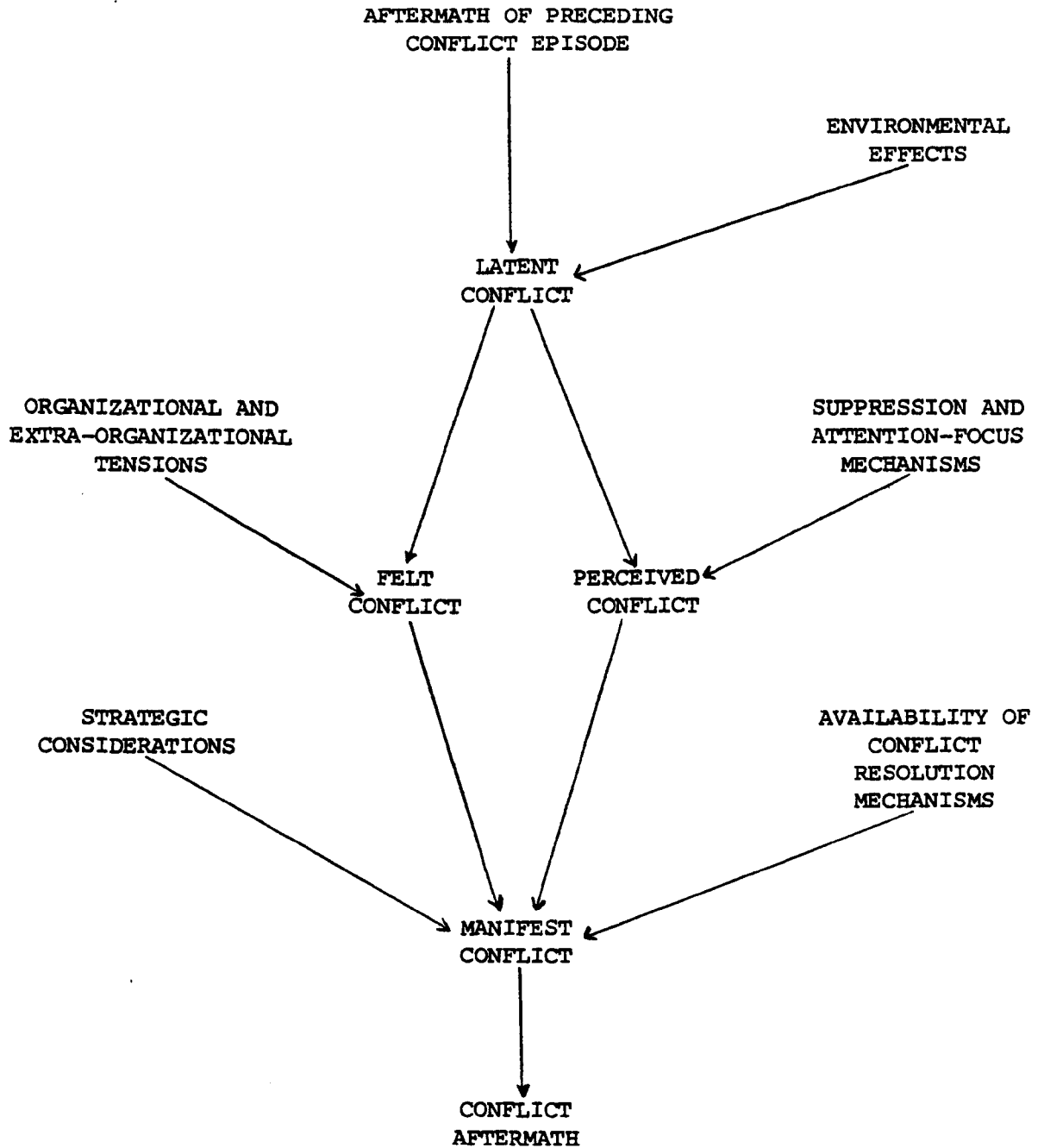
The exercise attempted in this section is to examine the conflict described in terms of a 'non-evaluative' model.<sup>(1)</sup> An attempt is made to fit a theory to the data by reconstructing an existing conflict model. A number of models have been devised for the purpose of representing the occurrence of conflict. The model chosen is that from Pondy (1967). Pondy's view of conflict is of a dynamic process which can be analysed as a series of conflict episodes. He maintains that his model is an attempt to classify relationships between what were previously classes of events used to portray conflict. These included: antecedent conditions, affective states, cognitive states and conflictful behaviour. From these elements of conflict, Pondy proceeds to identify five stages of a conflict episode, these being: latent conflict (conditions), perceived conflict (cognition), felt conflict (affect), manifest conflict (behaviour) and conflict aftermath (conditions). A diagram summarizing the dynamics of a conflict episode is reproduced in Figure 6.1.

- (1) The word 'conflict', represents an emotive stimulus for many people (for example to directors of the Firm studied), particularly when applied to aspects of their personal environment. Boulding (1962) remarks upon the evaluation bias in both language and experience of the concepts of conflict and harmony. However, in a number of theories on conflict, it is implicitly or explicitly maintained that conflict is as 'normal' (i.e. common) as peace, non-conflict, co-operation or integration. Cooley (1918) for example points out: "...conflict and co-operation are not separable things, but phases of one process which always involves something of both".
- (p39)

Figure 6.1

THE DYNAMICS OF A CONFLICT EPISODE

(after Pondy 1967)



A question which now arises is: can the events relating to the conflict described be subsumed into the conflict model developed by Pondy? In this context, the first point to make is that for each identifiable party, a series of events comprising its own conflict sequence may be described. Tables 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6 outline the stages in the development of the conflict from the point of view of the four principal parties, namely the Road Branch, Personnel Department, Inside Branch and Minority Unions respectively.

Table 6.2

Aftermath of preceding conflict episode, environmental effects and latent conflict for four parties.

ROAD BRANCH                      PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT                      INSIDE BRANCH                      MINORITY UNIONS

<p>Previous dispute with Personnel Department.</p>	<p>Disputes with Minority Unions. Earlier dispute with Road Branch.</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>Struggles over job evaluation system with Personnel Department. Relations with Inside Branch.</p>
<p>Disputes procedure. Job evaluation system. Physical location and history of Road Transport Department and Road Branch.</p>	<p>-</p>	<p>Physical work location of membership.</p>	<p>Vicarious challenge to Personnel Department and Inside Branch via another party.</p>
<p>Underlying authority relations. (1) Relations with Inside Branch.</p>	<p>Underlying authority relations. Differential union/management relations.</p>	<p>Underlying authority relations. Relations with other union parties.</p>	<p>Underlying authority relations. Management Branch. Dissatisfaction with job evaluation system.</p>

AFTERMATH OF PRECEDING CONFLICT EPISODE

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

LATENT CONFLICT

(1) i.e. management/trade union.

Table 6.3

Organizational and extra-organizational tensions and felt conflict for four parties.

	ROAD BRANCH	PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT	INSIDE BRANCH	MINORITY UNIONS
ORGANIZATIONAL AND EXTRA-ORGANIZATIONAL TENSIONS	Blame apportionment. Requirements of legislation. Pressure from rank and file. Weather.	Expectations of directors, staff and other managers. Blame apportionment.	Lack of communication with full-time officials. Relations with management as perceived by other union parties. Relations between members and shop stewards.	Sanctions from Management.
	Strain of negotiating (for shop stewards). Arguments used in negotiations. Existing and desired pay differentials.	Frustration and strain of negotiations.	Hostility from other union parties.	Relations between union parties. Antagonism from Personnel Department.

FELT CONFLICT

ORGANIZATIONAL AND  
EXTRA-ORGANIZATIONAL  
TENSIONS

Table 6.4

Suppression and attention-focus mechanisms and perceived conflict for four parties.

ROAD BRANCH                      PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT                      INSIDE BRANCH                      MINORITY UNIONS

<p>Pressure from Personnel Department to join job evaluation system. 'Differentials' arguments. Grievance and disputes procedures.</p>	<p>Arguments over 'differentials'. Grievance and disputes procedures. Job evaluation.</p>	<p>'Differentials' arguments. Grievance and disputes procedures.</p>	<p>Pressure from Personnel Department to join with other union parties. 'Differentials' arguments. Grievance and disputes procedures.</p>
<p>Threats from other parties</p>	<p>'Moderates' and 'militants' in Road Branch.</p>	<p>Lack of communication with other parties.</p>	<p>Road Branch and job evaluation system in 'win-lose' situation. Dominance/authority of Inside Branch.</p>

SUPPRESSION AND ATTENTION-FOCUS MECHANISMS

PERCEIVED CONFLICT



Table 6.5

Strategic considerations, availability of conflict resolution mechanisms and manifest conflict for four parties.

MINORITY UNIONS

INSIDE BRANCH

PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT

ROAD BRANCH

ROAD BRANCH	PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT	INSIDE BRANCH	MINORITY UNIONS
Picketing. Relations between negotiators and members. Not being paid. Alternative forms of industrial action. Escalation. Support/reactions of other parties. (Un)official nature of strike. (1) Full-time officials' support.	Reactions of other parties. Preparations. Loss of trade/production. Seasonal demand. Relations with full-time union officials.	(Un)official nature of strike. Support for Road Branch. Effects of any unconstitutional action. Interests of members. Involvement of full-time officials.	Physical location of shops. (Un)official nature of strike. Reaction of Inside Branch. Unity within Minority Unions. Unconstitutional nature of any action. After effects of industrial action.
Third party intervention. Communication breakdown. Disputes procedures.	Disputes procedure. Third party intervention.	Communication breakdowns. Job evaluation for all parties. Disputes procedures.	Disputes procedures.
Strike. Picketing. Personal animosity. Increased communication.	Strike. Picketing. Increased communication. Production disruption. Polarization.	Strike. Polarization. Increased communication. Pickets.	Strike. Support for Road Branch action. Increased communication. Polarization. Picket lines.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

AVAILABILITY OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION MECHANISMS

MANIFEST CONFLICT

(1) Maintaining flexibility in what is normally an either/or aspect of a strike was important and related to the strategic dilemma of the full-time officials.

Table 6.6

Conflict aftermath for four parties.

ROAD BRANCH                      PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT                      INSIDE BRANCH                      MINORITY UNIONS

<p>Bitterness towards Inside Branch. Relative improvement in status and position, Improved relations with Personnel Department. New union liaison and improved relations with Inside Branch. Increase in participation.</p>	<p>Worked piled up. Time pressure for effecting changes in disputes procedure. Mediator role. Increased activity over 'industrial relations problem'. Improved relations with Road Branch and Minority Unions.</p>	<p>Personal animosity. Blame apportionment. Relative decrease in status and position. Withdrawal from job evaluation system. Improved relations with Road Branch and Minority Unions. New union liaison. Increased participation.</p>	<p>Continuation of earlier disputes pattern. Settlement of differences with Personnel Department. Consolidation of ties with Inside Branch and Road Branch. New union liaison. Increase in participation.</p>
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CONFLICT AFTERMATH

The major stages in the conflict described are subsumed under the various headings of Pondy's model describing the dynamics of a conflict episode. In examining the appropriateness of the model, a number of points are pertinent for discussion.

not

(i) The model (and perhaps no model) can<sup>not</sup> effectively transmit the *flavour* of a particular conflict. It is not intended that it should do so. A schematic model may be useful as a supplement to conflict narrative or analysis. It is an attempt to abstract and generalize conflict from individual instances. How effective Pondy's model is in this regard would be dependent upon what proportion of all conflicts could be subsumed within its framework, and what would be acceptable limits of flexibility in placing events under the various categories.

(ii) One shortcoming of a model such as that of Pondy, is that it cannot adequately describe *all* events relevant to a conflict episode. Historical and other links between individuals within parties for example find no place in this model. The model would also become cumbersome, and lose its virtues of simplicity and clarity if all parties involved in a conflict such as the one described were included in it. Among the parties omitted from the conflict episode as portrayed in tables 6.2 - 6.6 are: union full-time officials, other managers, directors, and foremen. Neither can the model adequately convey details of conflict within parties.

(iii) There is not an entry under every heading, so in a few cases there are blanks in tables 6.2 - 6.6. For example, there is no aftermath of a preceding conflict

episode given for the Inside Branch. However, the main conflict sequence is complete for each party.

(iv) A number of features of the conflict are common to two or more parties, for example, the Road Branch and Personnel Department both experienced strain in negotiations. Some elements of the conflict appear under different headings depending upon the stances of the parties involved. For example, the dominance of the Inside Branch is cited as part of the perceived conflict for the Minority Unions, and the Inside Branch's relations with management as perceived by other union parties is subsumed under the heading of 'organizational tension' for the Inside Branch. Elements included under the various categories may be either positive or negative in valence, depending again upon the relationship of any given party to the total conflict sequence. For example, the 'conflict aftermath' heading includes positive and negative features for all parties.

(v) Only *known* or *observed* features can be included in the conflict diagrams. Other features could be speculated upon, but not included unless there is adequate empirical supportive evidence. For example, pressure from the Personnel Department upon both the Road Branch and the Minority Unions to enter a new job evaluation scheme may well have been paralleled as a feature of the relationship between the Personnel Department and the Inside Branch. However, because this was not directly observed, it could not be included in the conflict episode for the Inside Branch. Completion of all stages outlined in the model is therefore dependent upon what can be independently ascertained by whatever research methods are available.

(vi) Among other problems of employing the Pondy model are: deciding which data is important for inclusion, and knowing what we wish to explain. Pondy did not intend that his model should be used as an explanatory device, and thus it might be preferable to design a model which is more specific to the data obtained.

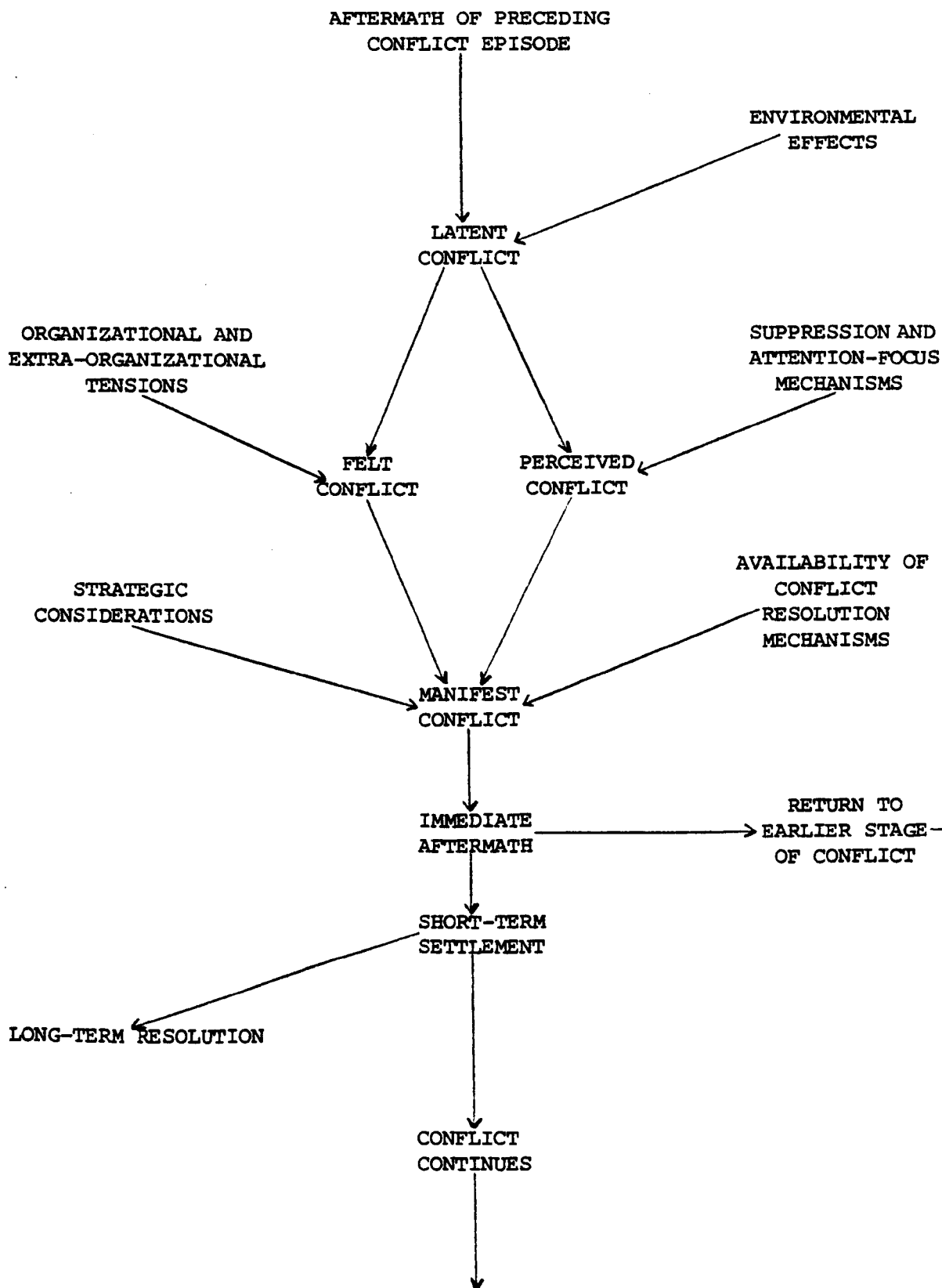
(vii) A serious shortcoming of the model is that no comprehensive category or series of categories exists to describe the resolution stage or stages of a conflict. As a result, the 'conflict aftermath' category must include all events which occur after the 'manifest' stage of the conflict, no matter how diverse these may be. In the case of this conflict, it includes items ranging from those with a negative valence: for example 'personal animosity', in table 6.6, to items with positive valence: for example 'improved relations with Road Branch and Minority Unions'.

(viii) The model outlined provides a useful, if somewhat inflexible summary of events comprising the conflict described earlier. The least satisfactory aspect of the model is the final 'conflict aftermath' category which is inadequate in its lack of differentiation between different possible outcomes of conflict and the absence of separate identifiable categories to describe these. The following suggestions for improving the model are offered. That the final category in the model be replaced by an 'immediate aftermath' category, followed by either a 'long-term resolution' category, or a return to an earlier stage of conflict, or to a 'continuing' category. This would help to convey the 'dynamic' aspects of conflict more adequately than the existing model. The revised model would be as shown in figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2

THE DYNAMICS OF A CONFLICT EPISODE

(revised from Pondy 1967)



What may be learned from the three models discussed in this chapter so far? The first model, if it may be termed such, derived from a number of empirical studies which considered perspectives of actors in industrial relations. Findings from this study were compared with those from other studies. It was suggested that conflict, harmony and co-ordination perspectives may constitute a basis for attitudes which in turn exert some influence upon motivation and action in relation to other parties.

A second, and more theoretical model suggested that different combinations of trust and frames of reference as features of employer/employee relationships give rise to distinct patterns of relations between parties. The possibility of categorizing enterprises on the basis of these patterns of relationships is noted, and the Firm studied in this research was found to exhibit many of the features of what according to Fox is the most common pattern for present-day enterprises. Such a model might be a useful tool in the examination of other case studies, for example those listed in Chapter 7. Answers to questions as to whether elements of this model could have predictive value, or be used in explanatory fashion cannot be given on the basis of evidence from this study alone.

The third model purported to show in general form, the dynamics of a conflict episode. It was found that events observed and discussed in Part I could be subsumed under the various headings suggested by the model, although once again a repeat of this exercise for other case studies would be a more rigorous test of the accuracy of the model.

A question raised in relation to this model concerned the part of the sequence dealing with transition from conflict to resolution. An extension of the model was suggested, although the usefulness of subsuming a long-term resolution sequence within the model may justifiably be queried.

While the model appeared to provide a framework for summarizing important events and factors relating to conflict, no predictive or explanatory value was claimed for it. It may be concluded that such models as those outlined have limited use in developing understanding of case study material relating to industrial conflict.

#### Other attempts to classify and describe conflict

In this section, the efforts of a variety of authors to analyse conflict will be considered, particularly when this is in an industrial relations framework. Wherever possible, material from this study will be related to findings and theoretical positions of other writers.

In terms of resolution or 'ending' conflict, one dimension to consider is whether or not bargaining leads to agreement. Boulding (1962) notes that conflict may be ended by avoidance or by procedural resolution. He describes three types of each for two-party conflict: avoidance; i) conquest, ii) one party removes itself from the field, or iii) both parties remove from field: procedural resolution; i) reconciliation, ii) compromise, or iii) award (from third party). Pondy (1967), while noting that a bargaining model of conflict is particularly apt for industrial relations, also describes bureaucratic and systems models.



A distinction has been drawn between conflicts over scarce resources and those which are 'vertical' or 'horizontal' in respect of an organization. Hartman (1974), in a study of managerial employees as new participants in industrial relations, advocates a pluralistic view of the enterprise. Hartman expresses regret that such studies as those of Dalton (1950), on line and staff, and Gouldner (1957), on 'cosmopolitans' and 'locals', have been ignored at the expense of hierarchical views of firms.

Another possible approach might be from analysis of work groups. Since a four-fold classification of work groups was devised by Sayles (1958), there have been a number of analyses based upon work groups. Hill (1974), in a review of some of these, notes the difficulty of defining work groups. In the Firm studied in this research, there did not appear to be any trade union groups corresponding to Sayles' notions of either apathetic or conservative work groups. However the research generated little data on work groups within the Firm, compared with data collected on parties to conflict. Thus, while the Inside Branch might be said to display some characteristics of a strategic group, as a party it would be too large and diversified to be described as a work group. Similarly, the Minority Unions could be seen as a number of erratic groups, and the Road Branch as changing during the course of the study from an erratic to a strategic group. Marchington (1975) develops a scheme for describing work groups in terms of such characteristics as: substitutability, dependency, vulnerability, and disruption, noting that groups in a strategic position tend to receive more favourable treatment from management.

However, apart from the dubious validity of describing either of the Majority Union branches as work groups, and the absence of data on individual groups within the Minority Unions, analysis of conflict employing only work groups cannot give a complete picture for the organization.<sup>(1)</sup> Marchington (1975), in discussing the dependency of groups upon one another and their potential for disruption, notes that the relations of different groups to management is important, for this may determine their relationships with each other.

Another possible way of analysing the conflict is in terms of power and power relationships; for example the 'power' of shop stewards and their relation (or that of their members) to the production process. Hinings et al. (1974), in a study of breweries, found production to be the most critical function and 'coping with uncertainty' the variable most critical to power. Marchington (1975) also notes that production operatives have the greatest 'power' of shop floor groups over management. During conflict, actions of the Road Branch could be interpreted as a reaction to the 'power' of the Inside Branch, which in the past had been derived from the Inside Branch's reaction to the power of management and of the Minority Unions. However, it is important to note that in this study no significant change in the overall power structure was observed. For example, the Personnel Department was at least as powerful at the end of the study, if not more powerful in relation to the trade union parties, than at the start.

(1) Paterson and Willett (1951) employ impressimistic observational data in discussing work group cohesion and social pressure upon work groups to join the strike they study. They make no attempt to study the total organizational framework in which the strike takes place.

Thus, an important aspect of the conflict described in this study, was that the sequence occurred within a value-framework imposed and fairly well controlled by senior management, i.e. mainly directors. At no time during conflict (or any other time) was management's position seriously threatened, and never was the legitimacy of their authority questioned, as happened for example in the cases of all the trade union representatives within the Factory at some time or another during conflict. Among the most notable examples of the influence of management control was the operation of job evaluation for the workforce. Management were determined to impose a job evaluation system - by whatever name - for the whole Factory. Among effects of such a system would be increased management control over manual employees. Through historical precedent and direct pressure, employees were encouraged by management and to a lesser extent by each other, to adopt a frame of reference which was centred upon job comparisons among themselves. The right of management to attempt to impose such a frame of reference was never to my hearing questioned by shop stewards or by any employee.

At the start of the fieldwork period, there was little doubt that from their statements, many employees, particularly members of the Minority Unions and the Road Branch, did not like or want job evaluation. This however, is not the same as saying that they questioned the right of management to operate a job evaluation system, merely that it was not for them. Management wished to formalise the mechanism of the comparison process within a system of job evaluation or job assessment.

They were eventually successful in achieving this aim and the workforce accepted the new job assessment system which their representatives helped to devise.<sup>(1)</sup>

A comprehensive account of bargaining behaviours is provided by Walton and McKersie (1965). These authors review tactical and other aspects of bargaining under four headings which they claim include almost all bargaining behaviour. In the first of these, 'distributive bargaining', competitive behaviour by the parties is geared to affecting a division of limited resources. The subject-matter of distributive bargaining they define as 'issues'. This type of bargaining corresponds to 'pure' (or zero sum) conflict. 'Integrative bargaining', is characterized by problem solving behaviour aimed at increasing the joint gains of the parties. The subject-matter of this type of bargaining is 'problems' and outcomes are 'positive-sum'. Three important stages in integrative bargaining are: 1) maximum information exchange between parties, 2) examining alternative courses of action, and 3) parties identifying total utilities. Walton and McKersie note that the most common type of bargaining encountered in industrial relations is a mixture of distributive and integrative types, hence 'mixed bargaining'.

(1) A few years before the fieldwork for this study was completed, research undertaken for the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations (The 'Donovan' report, 1968) revealed that the use of comparisons, both internal and external to the place of work were foremost among the arguments used by trade union negotiators (Workplace Industrial Relations, 1968). Comparisons arguments may however be used by either side in negotiations (Glendon et al. 1975). Job evaluation imposes a framework for institutionalizing and controlling this particular facet of trade union bargaining strength. Both unions and management in this Firm appeared to regard the new wages structure as satisfactory.

Besides types of bargaining, 'attitudinal structuring' is also examined by Walton and McKersie, while their final heading is 'intraorganizational bargaining'. In this type of bargaining, negotiators attempt to get consensus within their own party. In this case study, it may be seen that this was one aspect of bargaining over which the Road Branch negotiators experienced difficulty. Walton and McKersie explain that intraorganizational bargaining can interfere with integrative bargaining and consider role conflict among negotiators at the boundary between two parties. They note that the union negotiator is generally subject to more constraints than his management counterpart, for example being subject to re-election in the case of lay officials.

Conflict experienced by the parties in this study seemed to act as a 'steam valve' in a system of group relationships that was developing within an over-constrained framework. Avoidance of overt conflict in the four years prior to the study seemed to have proceeded along lines of compromise, meaning that a problem-solving approach had not been possible before. The strike served a function of making conflict manifest. Bitterness between parties which arose as an immediate result of behaviour during the strike, was not due to the claim of the Road Branch, which acted only as a precipitating agent, but to the complex of circumstances which comprised industrial relations within the organization. Open conflict revealed inadequacies in the system, particularly of communication between parties as well as misperceptions which resulted. Dilemmas faced by individuals, ambiguities in information content, together with communication lapses, were among the factors which apparently served to heighten conflict.

Simmel (1955), and Coser (1956), explain that conflict fulfills positive functions in that it helps to re-establish unity and maintain social balance. Simmel (1955) for example, considers that: "Conflict...is a way of achieving some kind of unity, even if it be through the annihilation of one of the conflicting parties...Conflict itself resolves the tension between contrasts". Coser (1956) refers to Simmel's view of conflict as an outlet for the release of hostilities as, 'safety valve theory'. Strasser (1976) is critical of Coser's own functional analysis, which he (Strasser) alleges tacitly assumes logical and practical criteria for determining the functional or dysfunctional nature of conflict. Strasser explains that the crucial point is; 'functional for whom?'

Management were able to make conflict functional for themselves by applying skills of conflict management. Fiedler and Chemers (1974), reviewing empirical evidence for the Contingency Model of leadership style and interaction with conditions, note that task-motivated leaders function more effectively if they have either a great deal or very little control and influence. Relationship-motivated leaders tend to be more effective when control and influence are only moderately high. Before the strike, no single party had high control over conditions and the Contingency Model would lead to a prediction that effective leadership at this time would have been relationship-motivated. Different relationships which existed between the various parties, particularly management *vis à vis* the union parties before the strike, suggests that this was largely the case. Management for example, were not able to lead effectively on

a task basis, but were obliged to negotiate on the basis of their relationships with other parties. During the strike, no party had great influence over the others because each was important in their own way to the chain of events. Relationship-motivated leadership was necessary in this case to bring the organization through a period of acute change. After the strike, members of the Personnel Department acted as mediators, again in a relationship-motivated approach to other parties. Once the seeds of resolution had been sown between the parties however, it became possible to adopt a task-motivated leadership style for the introduction of the new job assessment and wages structure. This style continued at least up until the time of the follow-up study six years later.

Authors of other case studies have recorded similar effects. Karsh (1958), in a 4-years-after study of a strike, notes that conflict had been "dissipated". Donaldson and Lynn (1976) describe a period of change corresponding to the arrival of a new manager at a small plant. When previously, small grievances could spark off disputes due to underlying dissatisfaction, the new management style brought a more flexible payment system and what the authors describe as "quasi-resolution". Warner and Low (1947) noted three phases in a strike which resulted in unionization: organization, struggle, and mediation. These authors re-checked their data after 12 years. Reviewing a case study in which he was involved, Miller (1959) noted four stages to a labour-management conflict. At first, social conflict and disruption of the established bargaining pattern occurred. Then key participants analysed the problem and examined possible actions. The action taken led to

immediate outcomes and resolution of conflict which was consummated by a new labour contract.

Miller notes that: "social relations were crucial to resolution of conflict", and he notes the particular importance of beliefs and sentiments of actors, group norms, sanctions, systemic linkages and system boundaries. A year later, the author records that the contract was highly satisfactory to all members of the established bargaining system, and the industrial relations director considered labour relations to be more 'harmonious' than at any previous time in his ten-year term of office. Miller concludes that: "...attitudes of satisfaction reflect an institutionalization of a set of role expectations."

The role of expectations in influencing behaviour has been investigated in a variety of fields in the social sciences (e.g. psychology, sociology, economics). For McGrath (1970), a psychologist: "...expectation is father to perception..." (p77). However, perceptions are also liable to influence expectations, and therefore 'expectation' of itself cannot be forwarded as a precipitative factor in either causation or resolution of conflict. Where positive expectations (i.e. an atmosphere of optimism) exist for resolution of conflict for example, it may be that resolution will be more likely than where positive expectations do not exist. It is more useful from an analytical point of view however, to explain the origins of appropriate expectations. In this context, it is therefore important to find out whose behaviour is



responsible for changing expectations. The behaviour of management, through their controlling and co-ordinating functions and their power over other parties to industrial relations, is likely to be of considerable influence in this regard. While it is difficult to generalize from case study findings, there are a number of features of conflict observed here which might be applicable in other conflict situations.

Among the effects of polarization which accompanied conflict in the Firm, was a restriction in the mobility of action for the parties, and also for the organization as a whole. One effect of polarization upon decision-making was to reduce alternatives for action and to impose an order to priorities so that short-term issues had to be cleared up before long-term problems could be dealt with.<sup>(1)</sup> These features correspond to the 'tunnel vision' phenomenon sometimes characteristic of conflict situations.

There seemed to be no simple conflict gradient existing within any one party in this Firm. For example, the shop stewards always acted as representatives of their members, whether they were pursuing short- or long-term goals. The full-time officials of the Majority Union, being further removed from the focus of conflict, were able to prepare a certain amount of ground for resolution through the report of the Majority Union Inquiry. Directors expressed

(1) Flanders (1964), at one point in his productivity study, considered the unions to have taken a 'short-run' view. However, under some circumstances it may be unrealistic for an outsider to expect any other viewpoint to be adopted.

their viewpoint through the mouthpiece of managers who were responsible for negotiations, although directors were in direct contact with the full-time officials at the time of the dispute. Shop floor workers were better able to participate in the long-term resolution strategy than they were in the settlement stage of conflict, mainly because of the influence and speed of communication within the trade union parties at the time of settlement. The speed of events during the strike meant that communication channels which were generally able to cope adequately were not always able to process new information as rapidly as it emerged. During the resolution however, there was sufficient time for at least nominal participation in decision-making by shop floor workers through shop or branch meetings and discussion. The resolution sequence therefore involved a much greater degree of participation than the settlement to the dispute.

Blake and Mouton (1962), in their studies of union-management relations during problem-solving collaboration and win-lose conflict, note the incorrect attribution of interpersonal or group behaviour to personalities of individuals. They term this, the "psychodynamic fallacy". Sherif and Sherif (1965), similarly note that the situation is more important than individuals in inter-group or inter-personal behaviour. Druckman (1971), in a review of experimental literature on dyadic inter-action between 1965 and 1970, concludes that a: "...large number of situational variables affect dyadic conflict behaviour: communication - seeing and hearing; information on opponents' choices; knowledge of opponents' intent; prior experience; role

or aspects of role." In instances where groups are involved in conflict in the field, it would be expected that the number and intensity of influential situational variables would increase considerably. In such a context, Brotherton and Stephenson (1975), considering misapplications of psychology in industrial relations, note that there has been inappropriate limitation of the field, exclusive emphasis on individual differences and a neglect of social context.

That there subsequently existed amicable relationships between the trade union representatives within the Firm, indicated that it was the roles which each was obliged to play because of their positions and those of their respective groups, which was effectively responsible for generating strain and personal animosity between them. One aspect of polarization was movement by all parties towards adopting more extreme positions than during times of 'low' conflict. There was also greater commitment by all sides to their respective positions. Individuals therefore tended to get 'swept along' by the state of affairs prevailing, apparently having diminishing control over their positions as conflict intensified.

Blame apportionment by one party of the behaviour of another may be a characteristic of a certain stage of conflict, and may be functional for one or both parties. For example, that Road Branch members blamed the Inside Branch for their stance during the strike seemed to serve a unifying function for the Road Branch. Blame apportionment may thus be seen as a 'necessary' aspect of conflict, where a

party feels a need to justify its position. Other things being equal, the passage of time may see the emotional content of blame apportionment diminish, and residual feeling may then act as a stimulus to bring parties together. There is a possibility that the two branches of the Majority Union found their respective positions untenable within the spirit of trade unionism, and felt obliged to come together to discuss their differences. Integrative outcomes may in such ways result from aspects of conflict which have a negative value loading, depending upon whether the long- or short- term is being considered.<sup>(1)</sup> Similar cases might be made out for the short-term use of: scapegoating (e.g. Shop Stewards' Committee using the Company),<sup>(2)</sup> passing the buck of responsibility (e.g. management to full-time officials), or shielding behind another party (e.g. Minority Unions behind Road Branch). Resolution in the long-term will not necessarily be hampered by these behaviours so long as the parties have adequate opportunity to come together and integrate their respective feelings upon their positions at the 'right' point in time.

- (1) A definition derived from economics of long- and short-term may be a useful guide to these relative terms. The short-term is a period of time over which at least one factor may change, and the long-term is a period of time over which all factors may change. (See for example, Lipsey, 1963, p175).
- (2) In Karsh's (1958) description of a strike at a mill, "The Company" was used as a referent term to mean different things to different people. "The enemy" became the millowner only once the strike had begun. A similar observation was made by the University of Liverpool research team (1954) where the Area Labour Manager became 'enemy' as part of the polarization during a strike.

When effecting a resolution, parties may need to become aware that there is likely to be a need for other parties to save face, if for example they have been subject to directives of guilt during conflict. In the case of resolution between the union parties, the Inside Branch representatives were able to save face when their Senior Steward was made Chairman of the newly constituted Joint Union Negotiating Committee. Parties which are prepared to use a 'cleft stick' against other parties must also be prepared to withdraw whatever sanctions they may be applying, so that another party's representatives may move towards a position which is acceptable to their own membership. For example, management showed understanding in this regard by not penalizing Minority Unions' members over their action during the strike.

Douglas (1962), in an analysis of bargainers and mediators, records three stages in meaningful negotiations. First, in 'establishing the range', parties set limits upon their demands and engage in acts of institutional hostility and disparagement of others' institutional position. The second stage, 'reconnoitering the range', consists of personal interaction, and the parties probing and modifying others' and their own positions respectively. Finally, a 'decision-reaching crisis' leads to impasse or to formal agreement, at which stage the parties may either revert to institutional positions or be forced to find a mediator. On collective bargaining, Douglas considers it untrue that the possibility of a strike is essential to resolution. Kahn-Freund (1954), in his examination of inter-group conflicts and their settlement, considers how to combine

planning policy with freedom of collective action. He notes the role of conflict as a factor in group formation and in crystallizing inter-group relations, distinguishes between conflicts of right and conflicts of interest. He discusses the role of third party intervention in the form of arbitration, conciliation or mediation, and inquiry, as well as negotiation within what he sees as the central problem of inter-group autonomy and the role of collective bargaining and state legislation.

A number of authors' descriptions of conflict stress the role of conflict in processes of change.<sup>(1)</sup> Whether or not conflict is necessary or desirable as an element of social change, it may be seen as inevitable on many occasions where change is introduced, and when values of parties are threatened to some extent. In such cases, it may not be possible to avoid conflict in perceived and manifest forms, and the best the parties might achieve is to protect themselves against what for them are the worse effects. Even in a 'well managed' organization, the possibility of conflict exists independently of the intentions of any party, because of social and technical change. Situations 'produce' conflict, rather than individuals.

(1) Lasswell (1963), for example regards it as: "...a truism that social conflict is a mode of registering, and often a mode of consummating, social change". (p195). Dubin (1957), considers that: "resolutions of group conflict determine the direction of social change".

At least two ways of conceptualizing conflict may be said to exist. Firstly as a sequence of events such as described in the Pondy model discussed earlier, and secondly as underlying conflict which is latent between any parties whose interests or values are potentially in conflict.<sup>(1)</sup> Underlying conflict can continue even after 'resolution' in the sequential process as long as the parties retain their respective value systems. Even after the dispute examined in this study was settled and some fundamental issues between the parties resolved, management remained in control of the Firm and the union representatives continued to speak on behalf of the manual employees. Little of the parties' value systems, based upon their respective relationships to the means of production appeared to have changed. Boulding (1962) distinguishes between "core" and "shell" values in conflict. Donaldson and Lynn (1976) explain differences between basic structural conflict and manifest conflict in terms of a 'two-factor theory'.

(1) Boulding (1962) draws attention to two important elements distinguishing conflict from competition. For competition between parties, knowledge of the other party's existence is not necessary. For a state of conflict to exist between two parties, incompatible desires and awareness of another party's opposing position are both necessary.

Theories of conflict and conflict resolution have been discussed by a number of writers,<sup>(1)</sup> and it is not my intention to consider theories of conflict in detail. Fink (1968) examines the need for a General Theory of conflict and considers classifications of conflict put forward by Galtung, Boulding and Dahrendorf. Fink looks at various approaches to the analysis of social conflict and at three models of conflict dynamics, noting problems of conceptual and terminological confusions including many overlapping conceptions involving different words (e.g. competition, opposition, etc.). Fink considers broad (e.g. Dahrendorf) versus narrow (e.g. Mack, Snyder) definitions of conflict and their respective motive and action-centred orientations, before expressing himself in favour of a Broad Theory and a definition of conflict involving antagonism and interaction. On social conflict, Coser (1967) demonstrates the inadequacy of harmony and equilibrium models in dealing with contemporary societies.

- (1). For example: Lasswell (1963) considers that: "...social conflict results from the conscious pursuit of exclusive values." For Coser (1968), social conflict is: "...a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values, but also to neutralize injure, or eliminate their rivals...". Loomis (1967) writes: "...almost all social action may be analysed in terms of conflict. It is not so much an unhealthy state needing treatment as it is a common state of affairs...". Among its positive functions, Coser (1968) notes that: "...social conflict may contribute in many ways to the maintenance of groups and collectivities as well as to the cementing of interpersonal relations". Coser makes an important distinction: "...Conflict and hostile sentiments, although often associated, are, in fact, different phenomena." Coser (1967) considers international violence as a mechanism for conflict resolution. He notes functions of social violence as a danger signal, as a catalyst and as achievement. Dubin (1957) notes that: "conflict between groups is a fundamental social process", and "conflict between groups becomes institutionalized."



Stein (1976) examines a body of literature from: sociology, anthropology, psychology and political science. He concludes that there is clear evidence that external conflict does increase internal cohesion of a group under certain conditions. Important intervening variables relating to conditions are: the nature of the external conflict and the nature of the group. Thus, Stein notes that the external conflict has to pose some threat to *all* of the group. The group needs to be an ongoing group, needs to be able to deal with the external conflict, have an accepted leadership, and be able to offer support to its members. The joint union machinery established in this study fulfilled these characteristics to a much greater extent after the strike than it did before. Thus, it may be expected that conflict external to the new joint union group, which posed a threat to all members of the group, would tend to increase its cohesion.

Georg Simmel considered conflict as a topic apart from any wider subject. His central idea was of conflict serving an integrative function for parties as well as being an agent of change. Talcott Parsons, and other structural-functionalist theorists in sociology, stress functional integration of parties into a system which has an underlying value-consensus. Under such a scheme, conflict is viewed as deviant or abnormal. Durkheim for example, emphasized elements of social cohesion rather than conflict. Schelling (1960) describes two main categories of conflict, either as a pathological state, or as taken for granted.

Coser (1967) notes the function of deviant behaviour in strengthening group norms, as well as the 'criss-crossing' of conflicts over basic consensus and the role of conflict on non-fundamental issues. Angell (1965) describes a 'threshold phenomenon' where parties in conflict have no doubt about their ultimate cohesion. Angell favours ambiguity of position for parties to a conflict for resolution, disagreeing with Simmel and Coser who prefer clear-cut positions. Dahrendorf finds himself at variance with Coser's view of conflict as a tie between parties. Dahrendorf considers that a major contribution of conflict is to stop a system from ossifying.

A comprehensive analysis of types of sociological theory according to their placement upon an 'order/conflict' and a 'progressive/conservative' dimension is provided by Strasser (1976). Strasser distinguishes between four major types of sociological theory according to these dimensions. Under the 'conservative/order' heading are listed structural-functional theorists, of which the principal capitalistic proponents are given as Durkheim, Parsons and Merton. The 'conservative/conflict' heading includes Simmel, Dahrendorf and Coser. The 'radical/conflict' school includes Marx, Wright Mills, Gouldner and Horowitz. The fourth heading is 'transitional system theory', and includes Burke and Saint Simon. The model matrix and a more adequate description is given in Strasser (1976: 20).

Strasser considers the contributions of a number of authors to the study of conflict, showing that the uses and functions of conflict have intrigued scholars for generations. Strasser highlights the social and political contexts in which theories of conflict are formed. Coser (1956) notes the importance of 'social audience' in shaping images of society, which determine what views or theories of conflict or order will be acceptable at any given time. Strasser points to a number of social influences upon Coser's own work in the form of the 'McCarthy era' in the U.S.A., and of his tutor, R.K. Merton. Of the latter's particular influence, Strasser notes that: "Merton's inspirations seem to have guided Coser to emphasize the unifying aspects of social conflict and to reject any assumption that the conflict model was superior to the order model in sociological inquiry...". Coser (1953) considers that the maintenance of open channels for social conflict is essential to a healthy society. Among the integrative functions of such conflict upon certain groups which he elaborates upon are: establishment of boundaries, assessment of power, establishment of relationships and creation and modification of norms. These functions assist the continuation of society according to Coser.

Besides general theories of conflict, a number of authors have paid attention to strikes and industrial conflict. In Dahrendorf's conflict-type matrix, management/union conflicts are subsumed under a 'class conflict' heading. Other authors have considered strikes as an indicator of industrial conflict.

Hill and Thurley (1974) for example, in proposing an industrial conflict cycle in the U.K., examine institutional, political, psychological and economic explanations for patterns of conflict revealed by strike statistics. They consider each explanation to be inadequate alone for various reasons.

Williams and Guest (1969) define industrial relations in terms of the study of conflict between management and worker, why conflict arises, why it takes certain forms and how it can most effectively be managed. This study is concerned with aspects of the first three of these four elements.

It is debatable whether strikes and industrial conflict may be simply equated. Boulding (1962) notes that a strike may be an agency of conflict resolution which releases tensions, although remarks that there may be unresolved bitterness afterwards. Boulding (1962) notes the 'drama' function of strikes and a continuous trend against militancy because it cannot win or retain what it has won, without being transformed into diplomacy. Coser (1968) considers that in: "...modern management-labour conflicts, the antagonists may harbour only a minimum of hostile emotions towards each other." (p233). Mack and Synder (1957) appear to favour ambiguity as a contributory factor in resolution when they remark that: "Misunderstandings and misuse of words often contribute to lessening conflict between labor and management". (p217). Their proposition supportive of this view is that if each party knew what the other *really* intended, conflict would be worse.

Another of Mack and Synder's propositions is that: "As unions gain power, the duration of strikes decreases" (p215). They do not define power in this context however. Bernard (1969) asks rhetorically: "...why one wonders, is industrial management so far ahead of most labor unions in finding ways to deal with intraorganizational conflict?" (p114), although offers no evidence that this is the case.

It will be seen from some of the above quotes that there is a tendency among some writers on industrial conflict to include a strong value-element in their analysis. Consider for example the following passage from Mack and Synder (1957):

"In considering conflict resolution, the distinction between violent (or aggressive) and non-violent modes provides another way of classifying systems. Wars, strikes, riots, armed rebellions, and physical assaults are all violent or aggressive modes. From many points of view the chief problem is to channel conflict resolution into non-violent, non-aggressive modes"

(p240)

Mack and Synder lump together such 'aggressive modes' as wars and physical assaults with strikes. This is at best an inaccurate classification. They also express a strong value-judgement in the form of a preference for 'channeling' conflict resolution into what they regard as 'non-aggressive modes'. They thus assume that strikes are *ipso facto* aggressive in nature and that for some parties at least it would be desirable that they should not be so. Issues of values are dealt with at greater length in Chapter 9.

Fox<sup>(1)</sup> argues for excluding value-connotations from perceptions of conflict, although notes that conflict is not all 'bad' and that stagnation could occur without it! Fox suggests that the main question concerning conflict is: "how much conflict is desirable?" A sequel to this question is a consideration of objectives which differ according to parties to industrial relations.<sup>(2)</sup> Fox argues that the issue then becomes one of conflict management, and proceeds to examine the case for education or training in industrial relations. In advocating use of official disputes procedures, Fox points out that absence of manifest conflict may not necessarily be satisfactory for management, for discontent may be represented by labour turnover, absenteeism, bad timekeeping, or other manifestations of individual action. Action taken by employees may be on an individual or on a collective basis or both. Fox suggests that research indicates that type of action taken is related to morale of different work groups and that this in turn relates to their use of disputes procedure. He notes that groups which make frequent and effective use of disputes procedure tend to have more 'constructive' and 'positive' attitudes to work. Boulding (1962) cites a function of grievance procedures as allowing gradual release, rather than build-up of tensions.

- (1) A. Fox, "Adult education values", *New Society*, 30.9.1965, pp13-14
- (2) Albrow (1968), in a critique of the "goal model" of organizational structure, considers that structure depends upon things other than goals because these differ between groups. He notes however that within an organization, groups may co-operate or form coalitions to achieve their goals.

Conflict itself may often provide a potent learning experience, and in this way be functional for the participants in 'occupations', 'work-ins', and other forms of industrial action, who may see relationships and social structures in a different way after being involved in such 'conflict' episodes. The resolution process in this study appeared to act as a powerful learning experience, particularly for the trade union representatives. Pondy (1967) advises caution in approaching conflict resolution which, he notes, may be functional or dysfunctional for the individual or the organization.

Training may be seen as a concentration of experience into a small time period. Training may facilitate confidence and make an individual a more competent performer in his or her role. A number of publications outline the importance of training and facilities afforded to shop stewards in particular.<sup>(1)</sup> The shop steward's role is subject to pressure for change, and it may be necessary for shop stewards to approach the degree of professionalism currently enjoyed by officials in some personnel departments in British industry, perhaps to the extent of becoming more specialised in joint negotiations.

(1) See for example: Commission on Industrial Relations. *Facilities afforded to shop stewards*. CIR Report, No. 17, Cmnd 4668, HMSO, 1971. Trades Union Congress. *Facilities for shop stewards: a statement of policy*. Workers' Educational Association. *Shop stewards' and representatives' training: teaching manual*. (Revised edition), Twentieth Century Press, 1973.

Hyman and Fryer (1975), quote Kerr (1964) on forms of industrial conflict besides the strike. These include both individual and collective forms, such as: peaceful bargaining, boycotts, political action, restriction of output, sabotage, absenteeism and labour turnover.

Hyman and Fryer are critical of a systems approach to industrial relations such as that of Dunlop, on the grounds that it ignores the possibility of conflicting interests. A systems approach to industrial relations might be paralleled by the approach of structural-functionalists in sociology discussed earlier. Hyman and Fryer are similarly critical of the assumptions of pluralism, and note that: "Industrial relations for the pluralist thus represents a process of antagonistic co-operation."<sup>(1)</sup>

(1) A similar expression, "co-operative antagonism" dates back at least to Sumner (1906). One or other of these terms are also cited by Coser (1956), Hartman (1974) and Hyman (1975).



### Lessons from the case study

Even with a view conferred by hindsight, it is not easy to pronounce lessons from the study. For example, it would not be difficult to assert that parties should be brought together before a state of conflict exists between them on perceived and manifest levels. However, where interests are perceived to conflict, then to bring parties together might be a move that would intensify conflict between them. The timing of communication between parties in conflict might be a crucial factor. Considerable foresight may be needed to avoid or manage conflict, and there may be no guarantee that a party is in a position to avoid conflict. Even the indefinable quality of experience within one party may have little influence upon events if other parties' representatives are inexperienced, or wish to exploit their positions.

This study has shown the importance of union liaison between branch and local office. This is a crucial link in trade union communication, where close ties should be maintained for the benefit of trade union parties. The union hierarchy need not be restricted to day to day assistance for lay representatives, but can act as a guide in furthering long-term improvements in the position of rank and file trade unionists. The Union Inquiry in this case study demonstrated one way in which this could be achieved. Shop floor representatives might be taught that mutual fear and distrust can be overcome by a rational approach to each other's problems and positions. Trade unionists who are able to act in concert, may take an initiative in situations where this would be to their advantage.

Problems of the foremen were to some extent highlighted through improved liaison between unions and higher management. (1) Changes in the Foremens' Association noted in the follow-up study, particularly their moves towards attaining trade union status could be interpreted as a reaction to their feelings that they were being left out under new arrangements and being excluded from important aspects of industrial relations. Foremen, although mainly from working class backgrounds, tend to adopt a middle-class management reference group, and many perhaps aspire to membership of such a group. Their upward social mobility can exacerbate problems they encounter on the shop floor. (2)

Improvements in interaction between management and union representatives may be a sign of a breaking down of some traditional barriers. Growth of white collar unionism among staff and foremen may be seen as another indicator of such change. (3) Alternatively, growth of white collar trade unionism may represent an attempt to preserve and restore pay differentials and thereby retain or re-erect what are seen as traditional barriers. (4)

- (1) A feature of the conflict studied by Oppenheim and Bayley (1970).
- (2) For further analysis of these issues, see for example: Dunkerley (1975).
- (3) See for example: Bain (1970).
- (4) See for example: Bamber et al. Paper to British Sociological Association Annual Conference, 1975.

Where mergers between firms occur, such occasions could be taken as opportunities by management to encourage trade union groups from the merged organizations to form whatever liaison machinery may be necessary to communicate adequately among themselves. This may be as true for multinational scale organizations as for small scale amalgamation. A policy of 'divide and rule' can backfire on managements who attempt to operate such a system. Once a workforce begins to realize its collective strength, frustrations which can build up through manipulation and absence of information about events which control their working lives, may be manifested in industrial action.

It may be unwise to concentrate power over relationships in one part of an organization, as occurred in the Personnel Department in this Firm. Industrial relationships embrace all those who work in industry, and to exclude parties indefinitely from decision-making processes affecting them can be tantamount to neglecting others' interests. A personnel department cannot be the sole authority on industrial relations, even from a management viewpoint. One important factor to consider in this regard is the distinction between, and use of, processes of negotiation and consultation.

Clegg (1960), notes that the 'old view' was that negotiation and consultation were considered to be different, pointing out that:

"...Collective bargaining was appropriate in the narrow area in which the interests of management and workers conflict. Joint consultation was to be used in the middle area in which these interests coincided."

Fox (1974a), similarly explains that:

"...Whereas bargaining focussed on the issues that divided the parties, joint consultation was to promote constructive co-operation on the issues presumed to unit them..."

It became accepted by some parties that joint consultation should be kept separate from collective bargaining machinery. One aim of supporters of joint consultation is to achieve 'industrial harmony'. This relies upon a conceptual framework where individuals within the industrial enterprise are unified by common purpose - as in a mythical football team. To adopt a unitary frame of reference is to ignore conflicts of interest which always exist between groups in an enterprise. J.C.C.'s in the Firm appeared conceptually inadequate to deal with many issues of factory life, and could even have helped to 'concentrate' conflict within the narrow area between the Personnel Department and senior union representatives. This effectively deprived a large number of shop stewards of authority, and placed extra burdens upon the senior shop stewards, who were responsible for all major negotiations.

The negotiating and consultative machinery within the Firm was therefore based upon a premise that all negotiations should be channeled through senior shop floor representatives. Because these representatives are subject to re-election, there is always the possibility that relationships have to be re-established with members of the Personnel Department. To spread the effective power base among all elected union representatives might have gone some way to overcome problems occurring in this area. To a limited extent, this did happen under the system which emerged after the strike, although power remained concentrated in the hands of senior representatives of the unions.

The Personnel Department wanted to deal with shop floor 'leaders', although this is but one aspect of the function of senior lay officials. It places an added burden upon them and there may be a risk of splitting their loyalties and obliging them to decide for one side or the other on issues. Consultation between the Personnel Department and senior shop stewards may be satisfactory as a communication channel, but may falter as a tool of negotiation. The individuals involved in producing the new system in the Firm had invested a great deal of emotional and practical experience in operating the system, and as long as they remained, there was likely to be adequate machinery for overcoming minor problems arising. The Personnel Manager at the end of the first study<sup>(1)</sup> expressed the view that the machinery would operate well as long as those currently involved remained so, but made known his fears in the event of a "joker in the pack" appearing.

(1) There were three personnel managers during the timespan of the research.

In the longer term therefore, there could be no guarantee that the position would remain 'stable'.

In the longer term, one possibility might be to revise and merge the existing machinery of consultation and negotiation. Joint Consultative Committees could be replaced by departmental machinery for negotiation where this is felt necessary by members of a department, while the status of the Works Committee could be changed to include matters of joint negotiation between all parties. Communication, consultation and negotiation, are part of a whole process of information flows,<sup>(1)</sup> and distinctions made between them may be theoretical rather than empirical. Where a distinction exists in practice, it may be arbitrary and imposed and not necessarily based upon every day needs of the parties. The idea that 'consultation' is a worthwhile exercise of itself can be rejected on the grounds that it may not be the most appropriate way to proceed because it is based upon an inadequate view of parties' interests within the organization.

It could be argued for instance that there was insufficient participation in the job evaluation system prior to the strike and subsequent re-organization. Amounts of money that individuals are paid, and how this figure is arrived at, are important issues for them. In this area alone, what is an optimal level of participation, involvement or consultation may vary depending upon: the nature of the task undertaken, the work groups concerned, views of the parties and relations within the organization.

(1) It may be useful to subsume all these forms of interaction under the heading of 'collective bargaining'.

Situations between different firms and factories may mean that it is not possible to lay down universal guidelines.<sup>(1)</sup>

One future research need may be to seek common factors between different situations.<sup>(2)</sup> This study has given some indication of a number of factors which might have to be taken into account. At least two parties must be considered in any industrial relationship. Issues within the general framework of industrial relations are almost certain to change. Given a permanent state of change, can a basic model of conflict such as the one described, stand up? Will resolution sequences be comparable across different situations of conflict? Study of conflict in any of its forms involves study of many other subjects, and it is not possible to discuss all of them in the depth required in a study such as this.

That conflict may be functional for one or more parties to it, is a point of view supported by events described in this study. Research in another firm<sup>(3)</sup> included investigation of productivity bargaining, and its use in converting a potential zero-sum situation<sup>(4)</sup> where the gain of one party corresponds to the loss of another party, into a positive sum position from which both parties gain.

- (1) Like the individual in psychology, each situation is unique, although also like some other situations and all other situations of involvement in industrial relations machinery. The issue is often one of pinpointing the relevant variables.
- (2) A list of case studies of strikes, together with some of the characteristics which make them similar and dissimilar is given in Chapter 7.
- (3) Oppenheim and Bayley (1970).
- (4) Schelling (1960), terms this: 'pure conflict'.

In this study, a recurring pattern of conflict was observed coming to a head and leading to a strike. The functional value of this conflict to the parties was demonstrated in the resolution sequence, which could not have been expected to occur without the conditions of conflict experienced.<sup>(1)</sup> Three important facets of resolution which could serve as guides to behaviour on other occasions are: communication, shared perceptions and positive-sum bargaining.

That communication between parties to the 'primary' conflict (i.e. the Road Branch and the Personnel Department), did not break down, was probably a contributory factor in the settlement between these two parties. Communication breakdown had occurred elsewhere (notably between the Road Branch and Inside Branch), and there were a number of outward expressions of conflict between them. Positive value in communication was shown as resolution progressed, and continued improvement in communication between all parties, and subsequent improvements in their inter-relationships was a further vindication of its value. Communication within each party was also important.<sup>(2)</sup>

(1) Coser (1967) cites a number of sources to demonstrate the importance of industrial conflict as a stimulus for technological innovation (p21). There is no evidence to suggest that conflict observed in this study provided any such stimulus.

(2) Walton and McKersie (1965) refer to this as: 'intraorganizational bargaining'.



As is frequently the case during manifest conflict, there was a marked increase in volume of communication within parties to conflict at the Firm. However, representatives of two of the parties 'in conflict' discovered that they came nearer to agreement with each other than a close adherence to their respective 'sides' positions would have implied. (1) These findings might have general relevance in industrial relations and elsewhere with respect to communication links between representatives of parties and those whom they represent, particularly when conflict is overt.

Communication could be put forward as an important factor in resolution of the conflict. Absence of, or poor communication between parties may be a contributory factor to conflict which develops between them. This is not to suggest that communication is a panacea for conflict resolution, merely that it may assist in resolution. (2)

Timing of interaction or communication may be crucial to integration. As was observed in the conflict between the trade union parties, interaction at a time when overt conflict was already intense, appeared to aggravate conflict and precipitated the break-up of the Shop Stewards' Committee.

(1) A phenomenon noted by other authors, see for example: Brookes (1957), Dalton (1962).

(2) The University of Liverpool research team (1954) regarded 'bad communication' as central to two strikes they studied.

Communication during formative or resolution stages of conflict on the other hand probably served to increase the likelihood that perceptions of the parties converged to the point where more intense conflict was avoided and resolution accelerated. Of the stormy meeting which set the trade union parties on the road to reconciliation, one shop steward noted the results of inadequate communication in the past, when he remarked that:

"...I think a lot of what came out of it was the reasons for the stands that each party had taken up at one time or another...from outside you say, 'well what a load of bastards'...and then when you hear their side of the story...they've got their reasons..."

Another shop steward added:

"...you might still not agree with what they've done, but you can accept why they've done it..."

Elements of the second factor, shared perceptions and attitudes are linked with communication and interaction between parties. At the start of the fieldwork period, the two branches of the Majority Union had similar 'negative' perceptions of the power structure of the other party. Each branch's representatives saw the other's membership being 'led' by a small clique. Perceptions, in this case of a 'mirror image'<sup>(1)</sup> variety, hampered moves towards avoidance of conflict. The Road Branch Chairman drew attention to lack of communication between trade union representatives when he noted at the first feedback session that:

(1) See for example: Whyte (1961).

"...most of the conflict...from my point of view was purely on hearsay. Because I think Benny would agree, I don't think I'd spoken to Benny three times before I was elected into the position I'm in. I didn't even know Benny Turner. The only thing I knew about Benny Turner was that he ran the Inside Branch, and he'd done this and he'd done that, and obviously I had to go by what I was told..."

Benny (interrupting) "...and that he was a bastard!"

(laughter)

John "...yeah, well we've had all that out...but most of what I knew about him was hearsay, and as far as Harold Dickson was concerned, I can honestly say that until the day we were on strike outside the gate, I didn't even know who he was. Is that true Harold?"

(Harold agrees)

An essential feature of the third factor, positive-sum bargaining is that it should create a situation from which all parties can gain. Ralf Dahrendorf, from a position of self-confessed participant observer when a recent immigrant to the U.K. notes in *The Observer* (4.1.1976) a 'zero-sum mentality' in an analysis of "The British Disease".

He writes:

"...most of the time, social contests are not, or do not have to be zero-sum games...It is perfectly possible for both sides to win, even though one may win more than the other..."

However, for one party to "win more than the other", may not be so very different from the party who 'wins' a lesser amount being the loser, for the *relative* positions of the parties are paralleled after conflict to those positions that would result from a 'pure' zero-sum game.

If the subordinate party wins more, then the dominant party may feel threatened, while if the dominant party wins more, then the subordinate party will see a larger difference between them. In either case, the possibility of conflict re-emerging may be present. If two parties begin on a more or less equivalent footing, then a result which gives a greater gain to one over the other will create a differential which did not exist before and the possibility of competition and subsequent conflict may persist. Even to talk in terms of 'winning' may be to invite a 'zero-sum mentality'. The term 'resolution' as applied to a final stage of conflict allows for a less circumscribed and unpolarized set of outcomes for parties, yet still has positive value connotations.

Dahrendorf considers that rather than seeing society in terms of a football match, it should be seen as a game in which: "...many take part, some reach the final line earlier than others and are rewarded for it, but all get there in the end." (loc.cit. p7)

Dahrendorf appears to value positive-sum outcomes, but seems to neglect or consider unimportant, relative positions of parties after conflict. A conflict which resulted in a relative gain to <sup>a</sup> subordinate party would require some security on the part of a dominant party in order for the latter to tolerate or accept without reservation, the change in relative positions after a conflict episode.

Positive-sum bargaining has achieved notoriety in the industrial relations field as a description of productivity bargaining. However, the gains of one party to a productivity bargain are often long-term (generally those of the employer in the form of lower manning levels and reduced costs for example), while the gains of other parties (generally trade union members) are often short-term in nature (for example: immediate increases in pay, but with no subsequent increases resulting from concessions made in the 'bargain').<sup>(1)</sup>

Positive-sum bargaining requires not only that parties to conflict appreciate its advantages over zero-sum bargaining, but also that there be real gains made by all parties in the long-term. Near-equivalent outcomes may be more likely between parties (e.g. work groups) who share a similar relationship to another party (management), than between parties who have fundamentally different perspectives resulting from their relationship with the means of production (i.e. employers and employees). This study shows how the coming together of all sides is necessary in resolution (long-term), as opposed to settlement (short-term) of conflict. One might usefully describe disputes as being settled and conflict as being resolved.

(1) The first major work on productivity bargaining in the U.K., was Flanders (1964). For a radical perspective on pitfalls of productivity bargaining for a weaker party, see for example: Cliff (1970).

In this case, two parties were involved in settlement (the Personnel Department and the Road Branch), and at least four were involved in resolution.<sup>(1)</sup> Conflict, in this case, as Lasswell (1963) notes, can act as a precipitating agent of significant social change.

Boulding (1968) makes a point which is pertinent to this discussion, when he notes that:

"...the distinction between constructive and destructive conflicts is not necessarily the same as the distinction between those which are resolved and those which are not. Conflicts are sometimes resolved in ways which are highly undesirable for one party if not for both..."

This passage might serve as a reminder that if conflict is to be viewed, or examined as a functional phenomenon, it must be made clear to which party or parties it may be functional, and under what circumstances. For example Kuhn (1961), in evaluating effectiveness of grievance procedures in maintaining 'industrial peace' from a management standpoint, notes that functioning of such procedures may be endangered by fractional bargaining by work groups using extra-legal disruptive tactics to force their demands. Kelly, a writer on organizations, notes that: "...conflict is only likely to produce constructive change where there is a rough balance of power between the parties to the dispute." (1970).

(1) Mack and Snyder (1957) hypothesise that: "The larger the number of parties, the more difficult it will be to discover a common solution, in which all parties can achieve at least some gain over previous power positions...There is a persistent tendency to reduce multiple-party conflict to two-party conflict via coalitions and blocs."

What constitutes "constructive change", or what a "rough balance of power" might be, is not made clear. Kelly, in an attempt to overthrow what he sees as the 'old human relations view' which portrays conflict as 'good', sets up an Aunt Sally model of conflict before proceeding to make a number of announcements about it. For example he writes: "...conflict is the central problem of organizational life." (1969). Kelly seeks to examine different levels and conceptualizations (semantic, personal, structural) of conflict, before noting once again that: "...conflict is endemic, inevitable and necessary to organizational life..." (1969). More specifically, Kelly (1970) notes that:

"...What causes conflict is the fact that the organization exists in a social environment which may be thought of as a turbulent environment...the rate of change in the environment inevitably outstrips the rate of change in the organization, thus leaving the organization in a maladapted state...change is endemic to any organization due to the fact that the less powerful members in it have a vested interest in recognizing that the organization is a phase behind its environment, while the more powerful members have a vested interest in denying this phase lag. This introduces an element of inevitability into organizational conflict and change."

In his attempt to establish a set of simple values for managing conflict, Kelly makes a number of apparently unsupported assumptions and presents 'facts' for which no evidence is cited. His simplistic view of strikes is indicative of the extent of his analysis, when he writes:

"...the act of striking has many anthropological rituals reminiscent of primitive tribes...(it is) ...realistic to regard the contemporary strike as a ceremonial social crisis whose function is to transmit the signal of dissatisfaction from the shop floor to a wider public." (1969)

Kelly's generalized and ambiguous view of conflict and strikes does not appear to be supported by such evidence as is produced by Paterson and Willett (1951) for example, whose account of a strike bears none of the characteristics cited by Kelly in the somewhat unanalytical passage above. Neither does this research study reveal features supposed to be present in Kelly's view of strikes. Kelly suggests that shop stewards are either: 'agitators', 'advocates', 'constitutionalists' or 'nondescripts',<sup>(1)</sup> and is supportive of management in his advice that:

"...conflict properly handled, can lead to more effective and appropriate arrangements (for management)...The way conflict is managed - rather than suppressed, ignored or avoided - contributes significantly to a company's effectiveness." (1970)

The views of Kelly have been portrayed as an extreme example of a writer adopting a stance favourable to the management side in industrial conflict.<sup>(2)</sup>

- (1) Other classifications of shop steward 'types' have been forwarded. The 'Donovan' Commission viewed them as 'lubricants' rather than 'irritants' in industrial relations, (op.cit.) See also for example, Batstone et al. (1977) on 'leaders' and 'democrats'.
- (2) This theme is amplified in Chapter 8 and in Appendix note 46.



Concluding comment

This somewhat untidy chapter has used material from the case study to examine theoretical contributions from a variety of writers who have discussed issues relating to industrial and other types of conflict. In attempting to draw together some of these elements with findings from the study, what may be stated about causes of the strike which was observed? It seems clear that no single factor may be identified as even the major cause of the strike and it would be analytically incorrect in the light of the data to suggest that this was the case. The causes of the strike may be identified under four headings: underlying, historical, contemporary and complicating factors.

This study has had little to say about underlying factors in industrial conflict. Nevertheless, struggles of the various parties for limited resources cannot go unrecorded as a feature behind the events described. It is not necessary to posit a 'class' model to suggest that representatives of employers and employees were operating from different standpoints based upon their relationships to the production process. This feature of their role behaviour however cannot tell the whole story about the observed conflict.

A second set of factors under the 'historical' heading relates a little more about causes of the strike.

Under the historical factors heading therefore would appear: past features of relationships between the various parties, the developing links between some of the parties, and the shifting power balance between them. Also included under this heading would be the merger into the Firm of the Road Transport Department.

Contemporary factors which had a bearing upon the strike included: pay differentials existing between groups of workers at the time of the strike, and the different grievance and negotiating procedures which each of the trade union parties had with management. Radical changes in all these features after the strike help to highlight the significance of each. Finally, there were a number of 'complicating' factors peculiar to this strike which included: the relationship of the full-time officials to each of the Majority Union branches, incompatible short-term interests between parties, changes within the Personnel Department and different interests within the Road Branch.

Even this relatively simple four-fold classification of 'causes' of the strike may not do justice to the full complexity of circumstances surrounding the observed events. It does however suggest that 'causes' of strikes which are recorded in official statistics<sup>(1)</sup> may be inadequate as a guide to understanding industrial behaviour.

(1) For example at the Department of Employment.

CHAPTER 7

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION  
AND CASE STUDIES

The chapters comprising Part III developed from writing up the research and from considering issues raised in Parts I and II. In writing Part III, I have been greatly influenced by my reading since completing the fieldwork, and have tried not to appear original where I am aware of influences.

Explanation and interpretation of research findings must be based at least in part, upon what is already known, for otherwise there can be no frame of reference for others to judge what has been recorded. A researcher who wishes to accord credit for every idea or insight which he uses has an impossible task and sometimes what I thought was original turned out to be a replication of other s' ideas or findings. There is no shame in such discoveries, for independent replication may be important in research validation, and can be particularly valuable among findings from studies employing participant observation.

In this chapter, issues of reliability and validity are discussed and there is a summary consideration of case studies of strikes. Participant observation is compared and contrasted with some other research techniques, as well as being considered as a research method in its own right. Issues of reliability and validity recur through these later sections.

Many aspects of the participant observer role are dealt with in the Appendix notes, which relate to specific sections of the study, and the points dealt with there are not intended to be duplicated here. This chapter deals briefly with some of the issues raised under the headings mentioned above, and is not a deep excursion into the methodology of participant observation.

Many of the most important works in this area are listed in the bibliography, or are referenced in the text.

### Reliability and validity<sup>(1)</sup>

Participant observation may be regarded as a primary method which may be employed in the study of human behaviour. Galtung (1967) makes the pertinent point that observational data is more valid than interview or questionnaire data because of its more basic origins. He notes that human beings start observable behaviour as soon as (even before) they are born. Later, most develop speech and some later learn to write. Interviews and questionnaires are ways of eliciting these latter forms of behaviour, although as techniques, they are relatively immature in setting a context for behaviour. In using them, a researcher may take for granted what a respondent says, and forget that the researcher's structuring of the stimulus biases the response perhaps even more than does a respondent's knowledge of the presence of a participant observer. A problem for the researcher is to be aware of this factor when analysing his data.

Research methods which seek to reflect behaviour are thus on an increasing scale upon the sophistication of respondents, from observation through interview to questionnaire. Observation is more protean<sup>(2)</sup> than interview or questionnaire because it can start from less pre-structuring of what the researcher expects to see.

- (1) A number of questions concerning validity of participant observation as a research method are considered in the Appendix notes. While reliability and validity are not covered exhaustively here, they are dealt with at length in other works referred to.
- (2) Vidich (1955) describes the central nature of participant observation in the social sciences.

From initial observation of behaviour may emerge hypotheses and ideas which can be tested by more systematic techniques.

Issues of reliability and validity, are more intertwined in participant observation than is generally the case with other methods. This is to some extent because many issues are focussed upon points of contact between respondents and investigator. For research to have meaning as a reflection of behaviour, certain criteria must be seen to operate in this relationship. This is true to a greater extent with participant observation than in other research methods. This is because the study of events as they occur is fundamental to research. Weick (1969) maintains that a participant observer can view the 'whole situation', and hence see things which are not accessible to interview, described by Pearsall (1965), as 'vicarious observation'. Merton et al. (1956), advocate 'affective detachment' for an interviewer. Cohen and Taylor (1972) note the inappropriateness of using questionnaires in some situations, and of the use of structured interviews, they point out the unwarranted assumption of knowledge of areas which are meaningful to respondents. (1)

- (1) Other authors who have discussed interview and questionnaire data include; Gadourek (1972), who points to the limited predictive or explanatory power of interview of questionnaire data, and Eysenck (1952), who also attacks the questionnaire as a valid predictor. It is not my intention exhaustively to consider all aspects of critiques of other research methods. Details of the debates on interviewing may be found for example in Hudson (1966, p24 ff), and summaries of evidence against experiments and surveys in Becker (1970), and on surveys and interviews in Phillips (1971). An attack on abstract empiricism on the grounds that there is no scientific method in surveys and interviews may be found in Wright Mills (1959).

The technique of participant observation may have become undervalued because of the prevalence of an argument maintaining that social phenomena to be studied, necessarily require analysis through experiment or survey. By the nature of its enquiry, participant observation is often the most appropriate method by which to study a social environment. Perhaps due to development of more detailed and focussed research methods, the methodology of participant observation is not a greatly researched subject, compared for example with the dynamics of interviewing or issues of reliability and validity in experimental research.

Friedrichs and Ludtke (1975) describe participant observation as the research method which depends most upon the researcher. Issues of validity in participant observation may therefore often be seen to hinge upon the researcher's role. To a large extent, a researcher is allowed to see only what his respondents wish him to see. A trained social scientist should however be able to deduce more from events appearing 'on the surface' than would an untrained observer. <sup>(1)</sup>

One aspect of the fieldwork in this study may have some relevance in this context. 'Random observations' were carried out on the shop floor by members of the firm's Work Study Department. Because of the nature of their role, work study men are recipients of highly censored information on behaviour. Workers' representatives acknowledged that the observers were doing their jobs to the

(1) One need not accept, as Becker (1970) states, that training of the observer should guarantee objectivity in the research role.

best of their ability, but contended that they were not competent as laymen, to assess the nature of skilled jobs of which they had no direct experience. One implication of such a viewpoint for perceptions of a participant observer by respondents in a complex social or industrial context such as a factory, is that a participant observer should be known to have direct experience of a similar environment to be acceptable to those he is observing.<sup>(1)</sup> The 'need for experience' argument is often important from a political viewpoint, although it may be impossible to combine with other requirements. Direct experience can be very valuable although it may also blind a researcher to the familiar. A more crucial need for an observer may therefore be for humility and a readiness to learn.

Bruyn (1963) writes that participant observation has less need to be concerned with reliability and validity than have other research methods, while Weick (1969) suggests that some aspects of reliability may have to be sacrificed in participant observation. Criteria for reliability and validity in participant observation are however based upon different assumptions from those of other research methods. Sayles and Strauss (1953) note that participant observation raises questions rather than providing proof. Homans (1949), and Lipset et al. (1956), describe the method as exploratory rather than confirmatory.

(1) This accords with certain of the professional skills seen by respondents to be necessary for a researcher. See: Chapter 5.



These distinctions may exist in practice rather than in principle. Blau (1964) considers that research methods cannot be classified into hypotheses-testing and insight-supplying, and that these only represent extremes. Thus, while fieldwork often appears to be research of the 'insight-supplying' or exploratory variety, the participant observer may be continually seeking and testing hypotheses.

Bruyn (1966) lists six indices of 'subjective adequacy' of participant observation. The first is time, the greater the length of time spent in the field, the more accurate is interpretation of events likely to be. The second is location, the closer the investigator to his findings, the more accurate they are likely to be.<sup>(1)</sup> Third, the more varied the social circumstances in which respondents are observed, the more accurate are findings likely to be. Fourth, the more familiar the observer is with the language of his respondents, the better are interpretations likely to be. Fifth, the greater the degree of intimacy of encounter (notwithstanding over-rapport?), the more accurate the interpretation, and finally consensus; the more the observer confirms directly or indirectly his interpretations, the more accurate they will tend to be. Bruyn adds that the first five to some extent act as a check on the sixth, although the last might also be considered to be a check upon the other five. The first five of these indices may appear obvious, but are sufficiently important to merit continual awareness by the field researcher.

(1) Alternatively, some researchers argue that greater distortions thereby result (private discussions).

The final index may be more accurately described as checking in terms of confirming what has been discovered, rather than as consensus. Consensus of views in respect of everyone thinking the same way is not necessarily adequate as a criterion for accepting a finding as valid.

Bruyn (1966) describes validity as the researcher's own conclusions and respondents' interpretations having the same meaning. This is contentious viewpoint. Rex (1974) raises a crucial phenomenological question in this context, of whether an observer accepts actors' definitions of situations or not. This issue raises complications for which there is not the room here for discussion, and has generated a whole school of study of its own. Ethnomethodology takes the individual as prime agent of his behaviour, seeking to explain this in terms of his aims and understanding of his environment. Methodologically, 'ethno' researchers allot central importance to accounts given by individuals of intentions underlying their behaviour. Discussion of ethnomethodology may be found in Cicourel (1964), Garfinkle (1967), and other texts.

A participant observer might in any case expect to find actors with quite different definitions of social conflict, and it may not be possible for a single field worker to present a study of views from all parties. His interpretations, like those of his respondents, will be based upon his own intentions and understanding.

Vidich and Schapiro (1955) point out that internal consistency of reports from participant observation studies is not so difficult to check. Ianni (1972), who spent three years in the field, saw no chance of deception by respondents. He used informant reliability scores and double-checking, although noted validity problems in seeing the environment through the eyes of one person. He used a scoring system for data sources: i) observation when a participant - seeing and hearing, ii) observation when not a direct participant, iii) interviews and documents, and iv) data from one source only. However, problems of 'internal' or 'face' validity of his findings may haunt a participant observer. One way of testing validity of observations is by retrospective feedback from respondents, for example by circulating copies of a draft report. In this study, feedback was obtained on three separate occasions to correct 'factual' mistakes and to provide further information.

An example of the dangers of not showing a draft copy of findings to respondents emerged from one published account of a field study (Patrick, 1973). The published work was repudiated in a local television news programme by the 'principal character', who sponsored entry of the participant observer into an emotionally volatile area of research. Where information from respondents is not obtained through feedback, there may at best be ambiguous cues as to what material is liable to be controversial. Respondents may 'agree to differ' upon their respective interpretations of events, both among themselves and between interpretations that they and a researcher put upon their observations of

those events. Respondents may accept a researcher's authority as valid by virtue of his outsider role. Barnes (1963) alternatively notes, that the researcher may be a disappointment to his respondents. Ambiguity which can exist in respondents' perceptions of a researcher could be summed up by a respondent - I quote - who said at the end of the fieldwork for this study: ".we love you, but we'd love to lose you!"

More substantial problems may arise in checking 'external' validity of participant observation studies. An important issue may be the representativeness of a sample of behaviour from the environment which is the subject of observation. Thus, to generalize findings from a single study may be a problem. Broad parallels may exist between studies, although there are also likely to be important differences. To determine which variables are important in creating similarities and differences between cases is a task for comparative study. This task is begun in the next section.

#### Case studies of strikes

Criteria for evaluating case studies would more appropriately be derived from findings from such studies than from comparison with findings of a different nature from other techniques. Evaluation of case studies is likely to depend upon factors which are intrinsic rather than extrinsic to their subject material. However, while a participant observer might aim to gain depth insights through using this method, this does not preclude him or others making

comparisons with other studies. In order to generalize from case studies, one might begin with systematic comparisons between studies when sufficient of these become available. If such an exercise were considered possible and desirable, problems of comparing and contrasting independent bodies of data would remain.

The list of case studies of strikes in Table 7.1 is incomplete.<sup>(1)</sup> However, those included are among the best documented and well-known accounts of individual strikes which exist in the literature and papers within industrial relations and related subject areas in the United Kingdom and the United States of America.<sup>(2)</sup>

- (1) Other case studies have been written but not published for example.
- (2) Individual strikes have been reported which are not included in Table 7.1. For example, Selekman et al. (1958) document 70 case studies from 29 companies, a number of which are concerned with strikes. However, although interviewing and examination of records are mentioned, methods of data collection are not explained. These case studies are intended as bargaining exercises where emphasis is upon the strategy and tactics of negotiators, rather than the behaviour of parties in dispute.

Table 7.1

Documented case studies of strikes: 1947 - 1977

	<u>Author(s)</u>	<u>Year*</u>	<u>Industry/product</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Access before Strike?</u>	<u>Access to more** than one party?</u>
1	Warner & Low	1947	Shoe	USA	Yes	Yes
2	Paterson & Willett	1951	Mining	UK	Yes	No; worker only
3	Gouldner	1954	Mining	USA	Yes	Yes
4	University of Liverpool	1954	Docks	UK	Yes	Yes
5	Karsh	1958	Soft goods	USA	No	Yes
6	Miller	1959	Not given	USA	Yes	No; management only
7	Clack	1967	Engineering (Motor)	UK	Yes	No; worker only
8	Taylor	1969	Textiles	UK	Yes	No; worker only
9	Arnison	1970	Engineering	UK (US firm)	No	No; worker only
10	Oppenheim & Bayley	1970	Consumer durables	UK	Yes	Yes
11	Lane & Roberts	1971	Glass making	UK	No	No; worker only
12	Mathews	1972	Engineering (Motor)	UK	No	No; worker only
13	Beynon	1973	Engineering (Motor)	UK	Yes	No; worker only
14	Beck	1974	Engineering	UK	No	No; worker only
15	Johnston	1975	Engineering	UK	Yes	No; worker only
16	Batstone, Boraston & Frenkel	1977	Engineering	UK	Yes	No; worker only
17	Glendon	1977	Consumer product	UK	Yes	Yes

\* Year of Publication (in some cases, the strikes studied occurred some years prior to publication of the study)

\*\* i.e. management and trade union parties.

Table 7.1 shows that engineering was a common industry for the subject-material of case studies. However, the studies exhibit a good deal of variation in their broad approaches, which could make serious attempts to draw together common strands premature. Some studies concentrate upon 'worker viewpoint(s)' only (2, 7, 8, 9, 11-16), while one is written exclusively from a 'management viewpoint' (6), and others attempt to sample behaviour from at least two 'major party' viewpoints (1, 3, 4, 5, 10, 17). Some researchers were unable to obtain access to more than one party, while others did not attempt to do so. Some authors were 'fortunate' enough to be in situ before strikes occurred (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17). One pair of researchers began their fieldwork when a strike had begun (11). Another pair record that they: "knew a strike was imminent" and when the "action threshold" was thought to be near, one or the other kept a daily watch (2). Other accounts were reconstructed after the event (5, 9, 12, 14), for example through interviews and non-reactive measures (5). Some researchers employed participant observation techniques as outsiders (1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17), while other authors were employed at the location of strike activity and thus acted in a 'participant-as-observer' role (6, 8, 15).

Such factors as these make it difficult at this stage of our knowledge to probe case studies of strikes for common and distinctive features. More case studies are required before this can be achieved.

The reservoir of case notes on strikes collected by the former Conciliation Service of the Government Department of Employment and by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, could provide valuable case material. Perusal of the case studies listed in Table 7.1 gives some indication of the possible different aims and conceptual frameworks of the various authors. One obvious common theme of these studies is the complexity of strike activity. The various ways in which personalities, work activity, and social situations combine at the focus of strike activity seem to defy simple analysis. In view of the comments made at the end of the last chapter on causes of the strike, perhaps it would be naive to expect strikes by different groups at different times to be similar.

Lipset et al. (1956) explain that the fundamental type of generalization from case study material is based upon internal, rather than comparative, analysis. There may still be a dearth of reliable instruments by which internal variables can be measured. Conclusions drawn from case studies therefore depend to some extent upon the confidence which a researcher has in his findings, together with their 'credibility' or face validity to other researchers. Some case studies were part of a broader research programme (1, 3, 4, 7, 13, 16), and the following section continues the discussion of participant observation and other research methods.



## Participant observation and other research methods

Methods of verifying research may be available besides that of direct feedback on preliminary findings. Bruyn (1966) states that the only satisfactory way to verify is to check through different sources of knowledge. An alternative for participant observation might be to place additional observers in the field of study. Weick (1969) considers inter-observer reliability to go hand in hand with validity. Researchers are a scarce resource however, and there may only be a single part-time observer available for fieldwork. Where there are more plentiful resources, greater penetration may be possible, although as Dalton (1950) points out, however large a research team, there is no hope of covering all aspects of behaviour within an organization.

Some of the discussion so far would imply that a duality, or even a multiplicity, of ways of studying and gaining perspectives on a particular phenomenon (such as industrial conflict), is desirable to maximise research information. Denzin (1970) and others term this: 'triangulation' (of data, method, etc.) Scott (1963) provides advice to observe social situations as whole entities, while Becker and Geer (1958) record that many social scientists have too narrow a conception of participant observation, which as McCall and Simmons (1969) point out, is not a single method, but involves social interaction as part of the data-gathering process.

Diesing (1972), an advocate of methodological pluralism, makes a plea for giving participant observation equal status with the experiment and the social survey. Bruyn (1966) calls participant observation the research method which breaks from traditional empiricism. While it might be desirable to replicate findings of Sayles and Strauss (1953), that different techniques gave the same result from different researchers, a programme such as that suggested by Kennedy (1955) involving techniques of laboratory experiments, small-group work, and field intervention, might be usefully adopted to research some areas. Research without methodological triangulation may be restricted, for there are possibilities of not eliminating interpretive errors by checking alternative data sources. Participant observation may be seen as methodological triangulation when it involves for example: interviewing of various types, social interaction and recording, examination of documents, observation, and testing of interpretation of events amongst other social scientists. In this context, principles such as those provided by Bruyn above, may give few clues to the relative importance of factors in various circumstances. They might however provide a basis for appraising different pieces of research. These appraisals may then be compared using the principles as criteria of worth.

A common factor in all research methods is the human investigator. In postal survey research, his direct influence upon respondents is minimal. His influence at the point of contact between respondent and research instrument increases through various types of research: simulation exercises, experimental work, structured and unstructured interviewing,

to the various styles of participant observation. Participant observation may be described as the most 'labour intensive' research method, for the research role is at its most central to the study area, and only a minimum of 'props' are available to the investigator. Resources devoted to improving the role performance of the participant observer may therefore be wisely allocated.

Because there exist many parallels between the participant observer role and that of being an individual in society, participant observation may be seen as the most 'natural' way of conducting research. The participant observer can adopt a role which is the least removed of any research role from social interactions of everyday life. Interviews, surveys, simulations and controlled experiments, are all examples of social situations which do not generally attempt to study directly the conditions of life as it happens. Each aims to reproduce or 'tap' certain aspects or elements of human behaviour, but each tends to give a less complete picture of events in one setting than participant observation can. Nevertheless, participant observation shares many problems with other research methods.

Glaser and Strauss (1965) make the point that qualitative research should not be seen merely as a preliminary to quantitative research, but as a theory generator in its own right: creating new theory as well as testing current theory. Fletcher (1974) is critical of both quantitative and qualitative research, and favours critique. Referring to the 'exhaustion' and 'destruction' of theories, Bensman and Vidich (1960) stress that the field worker uses heuristic theories

and must be prepared to consider *all* available theories. This approach would not be amenable to experimental and survey work, where it is assumed that hypotheses can be put forward in advance of the research instrument. Silvey (1975) notes that "...the nature of coding biases may be part of the reason why social surveys rarely produce unexpected findings...". Judgements of a participant observer are more likely to be based on a 'total impression'. Pearsall (1965) indicates that revisions in methodology are made in response to interplay between 'fact' and theory. Sommer (1971) points out that in comparison with a field worker, only rarely does a laboratory researcher come up with unexpected findings regarding society's norms - citing experiments conducted by Asch and by Milgram as rare exceptions.<sup>(1)</sup> Sommer argues that in such cases, a field worker may experience pressure to become an advocate for the underdog.

Orne (1968) explains a need for subjects in psychological experiments to ascribe meaning and purpose, while Vidich (1955), considers that an overview of a total environment by a researcher goes some way towards avoiding the type of errors which place alien meanings on actions of respondents. Such considerations help to make participant observation an exciting research method, but by the same token, a method which is most obviously prone to error.

(1) It could be pointed out that it is difficult to operationalize and therefore study many of 'society's norms' under laboratory conditions. It is important therefore to be aware of constraints upon techniques.

This is mainly because of the direct and intimate involvement of the researcher, the high degree of 'visibility' of the research process, and problems such as those discussed earlier under the heading of reliability and validity.

Bulmer (1974) contends that Phillips is attempting to do for sociology what Orne, Rosenthal and Friedman have done for social psychology. Phillips (1973) considers respondents' definitions of their situation to be important, along with the biasing factor of expectations in interviews and questionnaires. Phillips questions the validity of data from such sources as a basis for knowledge and argues that sources of bias probably account for considerably more of the variance than do independent variables in research.

Filmer et al. (1972) note that most practitioners of participant observation become defensive because they attempt to justify their method in terms of conventional methodology, rather than make out an independent case for it. They argue against misguided attempts to apply natural-scientific modes of investigation to the social world. Doubting the ability of a participant observer to reconstruct for the reader what he actually did, as opposed to reconstructing procedures, they maintain that the researcher must go beyond the expressed experiences of his respondents in order to gain knowledge. They note that rather than impose his own frame of reference, the researcher should seek to interpret the frames of reference of the participants of his study.

A participant observer should also be aware that he is employing a penetrative research tool. Respondents are more likely to feel threatened, antagonistic or insecure as a result of being studied by a participant observer than in other research situations. Interviews may be forgotten, questionnaires thrown out and experiments devalued by participants, but the direct observation and analysis of their social behaviour by another human being is more difficult to ignore. Investments of respondents in participant observation are greater than those of respondents in other types of research. This tends to make all problems for the researcher, from entry onwards, more difficult. Diesing (1972) indicates that there is correspondingly greater indebtedness to those studied in participant observation.

An example of a research study which considered and then rejected participant observation is that of Wright and Hyman (1964). The grounds of the rejection were: a supposed decrease in objectivity due to socialization of the researcher(s) into the environment, and the obtrusiveness of the research. Diesing (1972) considers weaknesses and problems of case study methods such as participant observation. He remarks that not only is an observer biased, but he remakes the subject matter in his own image as he studies it.

Diesing notes paradoxically that to minimise bias in participant observation is to destroy the method, which to an extent depends on the creative use of bias to see things otherwise unobservable. Cicourel (1964) lists disadvantages of participant observation and remarks upon the importance of the research situation to the participant observer as data in itself. Myrdal (1944), and Redfield (1960) among others, suggest using at least two field observers to help correct bias. Diesing distinguishes between: i) observer bias, which he claims distorts reports, and ii) participant bias, which allegedly changes the subject studied. To counteract the latter type, Mannheim (1936) suggests checking compatibility with subjects. Diesing criticises Festinger et al. (1956) on the grounds that theirs was not a participant observation study but a field experiment employing deceptive techniques. Diesing (1972) claims that deception is especially harmful in field research because it sets up a barrier, as well as being ethically questionable. The high visibility of possible error in participant observation however does not necessarily mean that this is the method most prone to error. (1)

Argyris (1958) points out that in an experiment, the researcher controls others, and that the same investigator may become anxious in the role of action researcher where his results are more open to direct scrutiny.

- (1) Hamblin (1966) for example, considers that statistics and/or more data have little explanatory or predictive power, while Winch (1958) argues that improved interpretation is required before statistics or empirical research. See Appendix note 48 for a consideration of some evidence on the errors of published journal articles where quantitative techniques are used.

If a researcher is anxious, he may feel insecure in his role. Blau (1964) points out that feelings of insecurity are a major source of blunders.

Fichter and Kolb (1953) make the point that statistical analysis, being less personal than anthropological analysis is thereby likely to be less harmful. This superficial analysis appears to presume that the lie that harms many people doesn't matter, while hurting an individual does. It may therefore become a question of what ethical criteria a researcher is prepared to adopt in relation to what he will study and how he will present his findings. Colvard (1967) is of the opinion that ideally, full disclosure of all identities is required for critical interpretation and replication. However, by the nature of fieldwork, precise replication is not possible, and full disclosure of identity may not be necessary for many aspects of interpretation and evaluation.

In the experimental approach, an individual researcher brings his own experience to the situations he studies. This means that no two experiments can be performed in identical circumstances, as even the same investigator may change his expectations and attitudes towards the results of his experiments after the first or subsequent trials. This criticism is expressed by Bergmann (1957), and Kaplan (1964). They point out that there are no a priori rules to determine which are the relevant and which the irrelevant variables for deciding when 'true' replication has occurred.



Rosenthal (1966), in research on observer-effects amongst behavioural scientists, shows that psychologists' expectations influence not only the interpretation, but also production of data, even when rats are the subjects! Rosenthal and Rosnow (1969) consider various authors' attempts to deal with sources of bias in experimental work. Turner (1975) reviews some experimental evidence on observer effects. Findings of Rosenthal and others have important implications for research, because it is generally assumed without evidence to the contrary, that experimental design eliminates extraneous variables, leaving 'pure' scientific method. As Zetterberg (1966) explains, measures are only valid to the extent of being accurately reported.

Stansfield (1975) reports an interesting experiment in which physical science students are given the task of observing a dripping tap. Many were found to report what they 'knew' (from their scientific training) they 'should' have seen, and not what it was possible for the naked eye to observe. If replicated, this finding might have many implications for scientific observation. In the case of participant observation, one may be caught on the horns of a dilemma: should an observer be given a grounding in social theory in order that he may develop some framework for observing behaviour, with the risk that this could prejudice observation and description by encouraging the observer to report what he thought he 'ought' to see?

Kruglanski and Eilam (1974) attempt a 'critical' examination of some methodological suggestions advanced to meet difficulties of 'subject artifacts' in experiments in psychological research. They attempt to answer the serious criticism of the dubiety of much psychological research based solely upon data on the behaviour of psychology undergraduates. They argue that enhancement of sampling representativeness is founded in unreasonable notions of the nature of scientific enterprise, drawing upon inappropriate remarks by an anonymous reviewer who makes an analogy with finding livers! The analogy is inappropriate because apart from the fact that to an expert on livers, each person's liver might be different, it cannot be assumed that everybody has make-up, background and characteristics similar to that of psychology students.

It may be that because so much effort has been invested in traditional empiricist approaches to psychological research that such apologist and conceptually inadequate articles as that of Kruglanski and Eilam are published. Feyerabend (1975), accepting that *all* methodologies have limitations, argues that empiricism takes it for granted (or rather its adherents do), that sense experience is a better mirror of the world than pure thought.

Holistically, an experimental approach may be seen as basically phenomenological. Certain of the middle stages of the process are made to conform to particular criteria, for example those of reproducibility, 'objectivity', and accuracy of measurement. Friedman (1967) explains that the "...psychological experimenter...like this counterparts in the other social studies...is a *participant* observer...", in the context of experimenter bias, standardization myth, and social interaction in the psychological experiment. Harré and Secord (1972), in a critique of experimental psychology, also view the psychologist as a participant observer and argue that human and natural sciences should employ the same methods. Within a broader research context, the extreme care and precision which may be lavished over these middle stages is remarkable. Such an approach to research may be that which prompts Hudson (1972) to ascribe to psychological experiments more the properties of a stylized art form than a science. Burgess<sup>(1)</sup> points out that the controlled experiment is not central to science. Introspection and observation may follow each other, or may proceed simultaneously, and there is a greater interdependence of behaviourist and phenomenological schools of thought than is suggested in experimental research.<sup>(2)</sup>

(1) Article in *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 26.4.74, p15. Feyerabend (1975) develops arguments about the 'anarchistic' accumulation of knowledge. Many 'scientific' discoveries arise 'accidentally' rather than by design. The study of many phenomena (such as the weather) is not primarily dependent upon experimental research.

(2) For more detailed consideration of this relationship, see for example, Bruyn (1966).

'Non-objective' criteria may be employed in establishing research projects. Results of research may be used for 'political' ends.<sup>(1)</sup> Nevertheless, within empiricist terms of reference for research, a researcher may disclaim responsibility for all but adherence to 'scientific' criteria for his work.

There may a few encouraging signs among psychological texts of the 1970s that the social context of experiments is at least being given some consideration, (see for example: Miller, 1972; Tajfel and Moscovici, 1972). However, emphasis in the U.K. still favours advancement of 'empiricist' psychologists in the positivist mode, through academic channels which continue to dominate and determine the state of the discipline.

Compared with other research methods, participant observation techniques can give greater, though by no means total recognition to circumstances outlined above. In experimental or survey work, much time and effort is devoted to developing research instruments, which subsequent to their completion tend to be rigid in the possible range of their application. This may be true also for the few apparent opportunities which arise for experiments in field setting (e.g. Lofland and Lejeune, 1960).

(1) An advertisement for British Rail 'used' results of research on stress undertaken at The University of Leeds. See for example: *The Financial Times* 18.4.77; *The Sunday Times* 1.5.77.

Phillips (1971) quotes a number of studies indicating that over 90% of findings in leading sociological journals are based on interview and/or questionnaire data. Phillips bemoans the fact that most sociological knowledge is based upon people's *reports* of behaviour, rather than upon observed behaviour. Practical considerations such as that of cost may however largely determine which methods are available.

Other problems associated with experimental work relate to the use of human (or animal) subjects. An experimenter might perceive that he must continually 'create reality' within an experiment. Design 'gimmicks' may have to be introduced into experiments which might otherwise be dysfunctional (for the researcher, e.g. boredom in subjects). Counteracting boredom in such a case might be considered as a need in the experimental design. In participant observation, information suggesting boredom in respondents would be considered as valid and possibly important data, perhaps providing clues to the social context in which this occurred. If during interviewing, a researcher sees boredom of a respondent to be a problem which must be overcome, this has to be accomplished through use of *ad hoc* skills. Jourard and Friedman (1970) show that experimenter disclosure produces disclosure in subjects. The researcher might be required to engage a respondent in 'normal conversation' in order to retain the respondent's interest and co-operation.

In interviewing there is thus more likely to be continuous testing of a researcher's skills over a period of time, rather than a test of a researcher's ingenuity in producing novel devices to maintain interest in his subjects. (1)

- (1) Distinctions are rarely drawn in research between the terms, 'informant', 'respondent' and 'subject'. Some researchers appear to favour one term, while others may use them interchangeably or make no distinctions between them. Platt (1976) suggests that informants in research employing interviews were, "providers of objective information to be taken at face value", while respondents were, "providers of raw data to be interpreted" (by the researcher). Bamber (private communication) indicates that for him organizations are the *subject* of research. The term, 'respondent' has connotations of being routine, perhaps randomly selected, while an 'informant' is someone special, perhaps a key actor who has significance due to his role or who is particularly friendly or helpful. Descriptions which might be usefully adopted would be that 'informant' implies some form of active assistance in research, while 'respondent' implies a more passive type of assistance. The term 'subject' is more suggestive of a manipulative relationship between researcher and researched individual. The following taxonomy might be put forward for general use: for participant observation; 'informant' or 'respondent', depending on the style of research: for interview and survey; 'respondent': for experimental research; 'subject'.

Other authors deal with relationships between participant observation and other research methods. Deutscher (1965), and Phillips (1971) expose the inadequacy of survey data to uncover essential elements in the well known psychological area of the disparity between attitudes and behaviour. When experimental and field studies yield contradictory results, Deutscher (1965) suggests that choice of method may not be unrelated to the outcomes of different research findings. An S.S.R.C. report (1964, USA), containing discussion of the gap between field research and laboratory experiments, points to the degree of control exercised over the subject material as being the major difference. The report states that such studies are incommensurable rather than contradictory, and that there is a different orientation towards theory from the two research types. Deutscher (1965) suggests that there is a substantial difference between a quantitative and a qualitative adoption of the scientific method. In a collection of readings described by the editor as a provocation to those who: "measure everything and understand nothing", Filstead (1970) points to the inappropriateness of the natural scientific method to the empirical social world.

Summarizing so far, participant observation can be a more self-adjusting method than any other type used in research. It may be developed along lines not all of which are dictated by the original research conceptions, and as noted by Diesing (1972), in a sense is 'never finished'. Flexibility over time for a programme of participant observation may however be built in from the start.

In some cases, participant observation may be the only method which is available for the satisfactory study of certain social phenomena. There may also be severe disadvantages to the method, such as that noted by Selltitz et al. (1966), of dire consequences for a whole study if a faulty approach is made to a key respondent; or by Sommer (1971) who explains that unlike the survey,<sup>(1)</sup> one can lose more than one respondent, indeed possibly all of them, if a member of a group one is studying turns against the researcher. Coleman (1964) delimits some problems connected with using qualitative research in the study of the social system. There are also various inherent contradictions in the method, well expressed by Pearsall (1965), who explains that: "Paradoxically, the participant observer must believe everything he sees and hears at the same time that he doubts the truth of everything". However, as the same author states, most research into social relationships involves participant observation, even if this is by unconscious intent, and in the research context as a whole, participant observation should still be regarded as complementary to, rather than in competition with, or in opposition to, other research methods.

(1) This is not necessarily the case. Where surveys are conducted among members of a group it may be possible to lose a number of respondents when feelings of opposition to the survey are discussed and shared by that group.



Face validity of participant observation stands or falls according to features which are intrinsic to the method, to a greater extent than do other research methods. Becker (1970) argues that respondents to participant observation are less likely to lie than in an interview or questionnaire, for fear of being discovered later in the research.

Participant observation normally entails person to person contact over a much longer period than do interview or questionnaire methods, and it is more difficult for a respondent to maintain a 'lying' front for this longer time.

Becker also suggests that as a result of 'normal' social restraints operating upon respondents, and because they are less sure of what an observer 'wants' to see in this type of research, there is less opportunity for 'socially desirable' responses from respondents in the field. There may be less opportunity for a researcher to influence field events by expectation, and volunteered information which is not contaminated by questioning may have high validity (Becker, 1970). However, there may be as much, or even more opportunity under some circumstances for a researcher to influence events in the field, and volunteered information may be very biased. Some advantages which are claimed for this method may therefore have to be examined carefully.

Participant observation is however a method which can be used to study what is of interest to respondents, rather than what is of interest to the researcher (Becker, et al. 1966; Cohen and Taylor, 1972), or what the researcher thinks is of interest to respondents.

Participant observation can also provide before and after data (Becker and Geer, 1958) on an event such as a strike, particularly when used in conjunction with interviews and/or questionnaires. Where there is already considerable background information collected on a topic, then survey methods may be more appropriate. Vidich and Schapiro (1955) note that survey data can be used to test hypotheses from participant observation. The manner in which different research methods may be best combined to provide the greatest possible coverage of subject areas is important. Sullivan et al. (1958) for example, consider that questionnaire responses in their research 'made sense' in the context of field reports, and confirmed participant observation findings in quantitative terms. For Sullivan and his colleagues, participant observation was employed as a technique for getting at certain information after all others had been tried.

Junker (1960) mentions changes in the observer during the course of participant observation, and Bruyn (1963) too, points out that the observer is changed as well as being an agent of change in such research. Schwartz and Schwartz (1955) stress the need to investigate the social interaction of the researcher, Hutte (1949), the need to study influences of the social field upon the investigator, while Gullahorn and Strauss (1954) state that the researcher's own behaviour is as much data as is that of his respondents.

Gouldner (1970), in his discussion of a Reflexive Sociology, remarks upon sociologists being changed by others in the course of studying them, and calls for a greater awareness of this process. This may be akin to 'reactive effects' of participant observation referred to by McCall (1969). Interactions between a researcher and his research environment have produced in many instances, important additions to knowledge.

One aspect of the researcher's role of some importance already mentioned, concerns attitudes and reactions of parties, particularly parties in conflict, towards him. Reactions of parties to the researcher may have decisive consequences upon his effectiveness as a research instrument. While an observer always needs to be sensitive to reactions to his presence, during conflict, when emotive content of interaction increases, and attitudes and behaviour are polarized, a participant observer must be highly sensitized to possible reactions to his behaviour. It is at such times that he is liable to be excluded from proceedings and to miss important events relevant to the behaviour he is studying. A participant observer is likely on other occasions to be denied access to rule breaking or corrupt practices. More study is required of circumstances under which respondents will reveal important information and when they will not.

From a research viewpoint, it was probably fortunate that conflict in the Firm studied did not reach 'crisis' proportions. Operational ability of a field researcher can be limited by physical and emotional features of conflict.

Physically, he cannot be in more than one place at a time, and there is thus a continuous possibility that he may miss important events during conflict. The introduction of more researchers at a time when conflict in an organization is reaching a peak, might alter the situation significantly. Limiting research activity to a single role minimises this risk, even if it has its own disadvantages. That I was already known in the Factory when the strike began, proved crucial in facilitating access to all levels during the period of overt conflict. While it may be true that many participant observation studies do not exhibit the degree of conflict encountered in this study, it is possible that my experiences in this research may highlight problems which every fieldworker encounters to some extent.<sup>(1)</sup> Some of the lessons from this research may therefore be transferable to other studies.

Issues of validity, while common to all research methods, exist in a peculiar way with respect to participant observation, differing qualitatively from those encountered in other methods. Bruyn (1966) considers that there are no absolute methods for checking validity of findings from participant observation, because one studies directly the reality, while Polsky (1967) stresses the importance of looking at people in a natural environment. A question which then arises concerns the appropriateness of the same type of criteria which an individual employs for validating his own life, in validating findings from participant observation work.

(1) Wax (1971) notes that the fieldworker should expect to encounter factions in any environment.

If a person considers his life to be 'validated' through his own experiences, it might be that such validity, conferred by an individual's learning and evaluation of experience, is central to participant observation. In employing participant observation as a method for studying others' behaviour, is a researcher observing the 'reality' of events in the field as a true participant, or despite accepting his own criteria for validating everyday life, does he acquire as a participant observer, extra dimensions of 'objectivity' and detachment which he can apply through his technique?

Such questions throw up a further issue; could such traits, held to be desirable for participant observation, be measurable in any meaningful sense, for example as an 'empathy' item on a personality questionnaire?<sup>(1)</sup> Could learning be transferable, whereby a participant observer's appreciation of his everyday environment is enhanced through experiences in his research role? Transference of 'lessons' learned from participant observation to interaction in everyday life might be cited. Examples from the fieldwork role in this study might include: suspicion of the researcher being spread around; the importance of a single inopportune remark or action and its adverse influence upon a relationship; antagonising respondents and subsequently failing to gain co-operation from them; or being associated with another party.

(1) See Appendix note 42 for elaboration of personality characteristics and the participant observer.

There may be a number of parallels between observed characteristics of field work relations and traditional 'sayings'. For the examples given above, equivalent sayings may be quoted: 'you never know where a bad word will end up'; 'silence is golden'; 'do as you would be done by'; and 'you can always tell a person by the company he keeps'. Such examples, which could be added to, indicate that what may be accepted as 'rules' of participant observation, have been maxims for social interaction perhaps for as long as there have been social observers to record them. My own experience confirms that social knowledge gained during fieldwork is transferable to social situations facing a researcher in his non-research roles. A field researcher does however attempt to treat his data systematically, while as Selltitz et al. (1966) point out, much of the observation of everyday life is haphazard.

Validation and reliability have been cited as the two strands of verification. A study should be capable of replication and interpretation in the same way by another independent investigator (Bruyn, 1966). However, a crucial issue is the adequacy of description of the study. Problems arising from descriptive inadequacy of research are more acute in social than in physical science. Apart from such problems, there are great differences in the way in which research even on similar topics is undertaken. Reference to the section on case studies of strikes is evidence for this.

Recreation of events in their settings for recording and interpreting (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955), is not possible in participant observation. Strictly speaking, it is not possible in any type of research, for as Kaplan (1964) notes of experiments, one can never replicate exactly the conditions in every respect. Even in a physics experiment, time and place differ between measurements. For researchers in the social sciences, 'replication' consists of re-study and is mediated by social change. If this change can be accounted for, then its possible influences may be determined.

Observation has been described as a continuous process of evaluation (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955), and Mann (1951) cites three aspects of observation needed to balance and support the role of the researcher: range, relevance and reliability. Becker and Geer (1958) list: completeness, validity, reliability, relevance, feasibility and economy. Such mnemonics may appear to have little application to the practical side of participant observation, although they may be used as checks at various stages of the research.

Insights conferred by hindsight reveal many things which have been approached in the wrong way during such a study. Nevertheless, there is no other completely satisfactory way of researching the social environment of a factory. Participant observation is a research method which permits the study of a 'closed' environment like no other method can.

Changes in strategies and concepts are possible (Geer, 1964). Mensh and Henry (1953), compare its relative flexibility with the 'standardised eye' of the projective test which, like many such instruments, is one-dimensional. The balance between flexibility and quantification of data has also been considered as a question of strategy by Homans (1949). Like any other, participant observation is a method liable to error. However, the loss of potential information which might occur through using other methods can justify its use in this, and in other cases. If one particular aspect of behaviour is the subject of study, then interview methods alone may suffice. Participant observation can however add a new dimension by providing opportunities for studying phenomena which cannot become obvious in the survey, nor be articulated in even the most searching depth interview. As Becker (1970) notes, an investigator can truly *experiment* in data gathering in participant observation, using deceitful interviewing and trying to catch respondents out, for example, in other words by breaking the 'rules' of 'normal' interviewing practice (and risking sanctions). One instance of such practices is the interviewing of respondents before their emotions have had time to cool.<sup>(1)</sup> This may not be 'traditional' interviewing practice, but apart from ethical considerations, why should one not do it?<sup>(2)</sup> Different approaches to interviewing may be employed.

- (1) I am reminded here of one manager whom I interviewed during the strike at the Factory, and the added insight and sensitivity in my perception of the conflict which resulted. See also Appendix note 34.
- (2) This not to denigrate the status of such considerations which may pose genuine problems, and impose severe constraints upon what data may be collected. Glazer (1972) notes the 'almost insoluble' and inherent conflict between probing, yet safeguarding respondents' rights. On sensitive issues, Glazer considers it a 'major challenge' to pay regard to competing value systems of researcher and respondents.



Fieldwork in the form of 'going and looking', can confer a depth of experience upon a researcher which would not be available to him through other research methods. It helps to make him aware of the whole environment in which behaviour takes place, and not merely segments of it which might otherwise appear unrelated to social behaviour. A number of writers explain advantages of participant observation and only a few can be mentioned here. Dean (1958) cites its use, together with questionnaires, as the 'safest' data-gathering method. Dean et al. (1967) list further advantages of fieldwork over survey work including: flexibility, continuous restructuring throughout, diminished likelihood of asking meaningless questions, selection of informants likely to throw light on the problem, greater depth of material, adjustment to pace and time of entry, and less commitment to one line of approach. Dalton (1964) also lists advantages of this technique, and Diesing (1972) supports participant observation as a way of developing 'pattern explanations' for phenomena.

Strauss (1952) suggests that participant observation is a valuable check on other information-gathering methods, with a chief advantage being the ease with which 'crude but useful' data can be obtained. Becker and Geer (1960) add that research aimed at discovering problems and hypotheses requires data-gathering techniques which will maximise chances of finding unexpected data (Becker and Geer, 1960). Interviewing may fall short here, for as Kolaja (1956) points out, the "...interviewer is informed about the event only indirectly, symbolically"; whereas the

participant observer observes directly what "...is performance or concept of performance; a more adequate method of gaining knowledge about human behaviour". Strauss (1952) refers to this more succinctly as "observing people acting out answers to questions", and Kaplan (1964) places the participant observer in a favourable position to get information as "...act meanings are more accessible because he shares them".

It might be possible to take advantage of the participant observer role as an 'extraneous variable' which is added to an environment experimentally, and observe changes from such a perspective. For example, it may be possible to note how individuals cope with the entry of a newcomer, and subsequent interpretations may revolve around what may be deduced about their role performance as a result of changed social interaction. As Erikson (1967) points out, one cannot know the real meaning unless the differences in a group's behaviour with and without an observer can be accounted for.

Because of the greater flexibility of participant observation, into which other techniques may frequently be incorporated, possibilities for misinterpretation of data are arguably greater than is the case with other methods. Dalton (1964) lists shortcomings of participant observation, although he concludes that the merits still outweigh the defects, especially when combined with other methods.

## Participant observation as a research method

As a research method, participant observation can appear as a mixture of the traditionally scientific and the unscientific, or as Bruyn (1966) expresses it, anti-scientific and scientific. That it aims for 'objectivity' puts it on the side of scientific research. The notion that it may continue successfully without developing testable hypotheses perhaps makes it appear 'unscientific' (although not necessarily 'anti-scientific'). Becker (1970) however, points out that there are in participant observation many more opportunities for testing *and* disposing of hypotheses than in other types of research because of the very rich data available. Insofar as a central aim is the minimisation of bias and distortion of research data, it may be placed again in the scientific camp. Yet, statistical data are rarely derived from participant observation studies, and although Becker (1970) stresses the importance of quasi-statistical inference, few participant observation studies have developed this aspect of the research method. A general absence of quantitative data might again indicate that true scientific inquiry is not here. These features suggest that the precise 'scientific' status of participant observation as a method of research remains ambiguous.

Problems associated with participant observation are shared with methods used in social science generally. Redfield (1948), on the nature of inquiry in the social sciences, writes:

"...with half his being the social scientist approaches his subject matter with a detachment he shares with the physicist. With the other half he approaches it with a human sympathy which he shares with the novelist ...It is certainly needful to be precise, but it is quite as needful to be precise about something worth knowing."

Kaplan (1964) argues that: "...the work of the behavioural scientist might well become methodologically sounder if only he did not try to be so scientific." Carter (1967), in a discussion of various social science projects and their role in the 'politics of science', describes the social sciences as "...primitive but important"

My own view is that some researchers of social science have become over-concerned with the 'scientific' aspects of various methodologies. They seek to ape the methodology of natural science, testing for statistical 'significance' rather than for what may be meaningful. This may be seen for example in a concentration upon experimental empiricism, or in comparatively large amounts of time spent collecting and re-arranging data. Ignoring the great variety of our potential subject matter may result in a pseudo-scientific approach and effectively reduce material available.

As long as research design allows only for mutually exclusive outcomes (say H1 and H2), then advancement of knowledge may occur only on an analytical level. Statistical manipulation may serve as little more than a re-arranging function for the data.

Theoretical comparison with other empirical findings is then the prerogative of the researcher. Kaufmann (1958) expresses this process as hypotheses for experiment based on results of introspection, and bears out what Hudson (1972) states, regarding the psychologist being part of his data. If progress is to be made through empirical research, there must be opportunities for arriving at unexpected results. Because no experiment can be perfectly constructed, possibilities for unexpected discoveries do exist by default, and hunches often form the basis for experimental design. More positively, this is a plea for greater flexibility to be built into experimental work, and more importantly, for increased use of field data in experimental manipulations. Bickman and Henchy (1972) edit 46 studies of social psychological field experiments under nine headings. They see field research as the technique best answering problems posed by exclusive reliance on laboratory research.

Researchers in the social sciences should pay regard to the social side of their subject, and be prepared to learn from techniques used by writers in other fields. This should be done not only to improve expression, so that social science becomes more interesting for audiences, but also to enrich the social scientists' approach to life. Like a novelist (painter, musician, etc.), a researcher should aim to immerse himself in his experiences. Roe (1961), discussing the 'psychology of the scientist', considers that while an artist expresses himself in his work, a scientist hides in his. She continues:

"...only a man who is passionately involved in his work is likely to make important contributions, but the committed man who knows he is committed and can come to terms with this fact has a good chance of getting beyond his commitment and of learning how to disassociate himself from his idea..."

A social scientist should be able to seek out experiences and use knowledge which he gains in the laboratory, arm-chair or field, to interpret and arrange his experiences so that he can transmit them meaningfully and systematically. Glaser and Strauss (1965), comparing the researcher and the novelist, point out that for the former, the conveyance of credibility must be made more explicit. The importance of reportorial ability of the participant observer is noted by McCall (1969). If social scientists cannot communicate their subject-matter, it is as though their research had never been.

Data from participant observation studies are sometimes held in comparatively low regard, perhaps due to conspicuous absence of quantification and statistical inference. Tabular elegance and numerical sophistication are not however the only outcomes of research. The premise that forms of data other than that which is quantifiable are lacking in validity in terms of inference and proof, should be rejected. In a sense, other methods of inquiry in social science are derived from participant observation, being developments or 'refinements' upon this method. Vidich and Bensman (1954) point out that the same basic errors arise and the same problems exist in the analysis of other techniques.

This issue crystallizes out in the 'rigour versus vigour' debate, which has been continuing at least since Redfield wrote the comment quoted above.<sup>(1)</sup> Kaplan (1964) reveals that if forced to make a choice between 'riches' and 'rigour', he would choose the former, although the choice on many occasions may not be clear cut. Discussion on this issue has often thrown up rather cynical caricatures of extremes, for example that the qualitative approach is 'interesting but not true', and that the quantitative approach is 'true but not interesting'. Kelman (1966), in a discussion of various approaches and the interplay between them, considers the 'rigour versus vigour' debate comprises spurious arguments. This point of view is shared by other social scientists who have surpassed levels of thinking demanded by a strict adherence to their own training, in perceiving the world of research as a whole.

Interaction effects of a researcher within an environment he is studying are important in participant observation. Also crucial are questions relating to values of a researcher in terms of his motivation, and other attributes which may have a bearing upon his research. Conflict, strains and dilemmas of a researcher may need to be considered, as they can affect quality and validity of research. Glazer (1972) regards role conflict to be an integral part of a researcher's life; a researcher has to live with conflict, tension and anxiety.

(1) See also for example: Homans (1949).

It may be useful to analyse role behaviour in participant observation, for the incumbent is likely to be highly sensitised to behaviour while playing this role. Awareness and sensitivity, together with professional knowledge and training of a skilled observer, may be put to good use in analysing the research method itself. Roles and relationships in the field can provide insights into phenomena such as role conflict, ambiguity, strain and coping behaviours.

Participant observation may be seen as more than a simple method of research. It is more than a process of registering, interpreting and recording (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955). It involves operationalizing many concepts of symbolic interactionism, involving at least a temporary re-socialization of the researcher. This process has been described in various ways, many of which portray the life-history of the role from its incumbent's viewpoint. When writing up research based upon findings from participant observation, an author generally adopts his own chronology of events, although there are common elements among apparently various case studies.<sup>(1)</sup> Perhaps because it is less 'tidy' than other methods from a writing-up point of view, a researcher can often present a more 'honest' exposition of his work than when recording studies employing other methods, where some pre-determined pattern for writing-up may be demanded.

(1) Friedrichs and Ludtke (1975) list 85 studies using participant observation under 20 or so different headings. Glazer (1972), analysing experiences from a dozen participant observation studies, notes the great uniformity of problems and experiences of researchers using this method. There are many points of contact between different participant observation studies, and it can be encouraging for a novice to discover similar approaches employed, and similar problems encountered, by the most seasoned researchers.



A number of authors have suggested ways of classifying the participant observer role over time. Wax (1957) describes three stages for the role: insecurity, gradual definition and validation. Olesen and Whittaker (1967) define it in terms of four overlapping phases of role-making: i) surface encounter, ii) proffering and inviting mutual exchange of definition, iii) selecting and modifying a reciprocal selection of meaningful parts of roles, and iv) stabilizing and sustaining. Janes (1961) delimits the role in terms of five stages of acceptance: newcomer, provisional acceptance, categorical acceptance, personal acceptance and imminent migrant. A comprehensive account of interaction processes in field research leads Weinberg and Williams (1972) to summarize perceptions of fieldwork by respondents, others and self. Their classification is reproduced in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2     The fieldworker as perceived by subjects, others and self, as related to the stage of the research.

<u>Stage of the fieldwork</u>	<u>Viewed by subject as:</u>	<u>Viewed by others as:</u>	<u>Viewed by self as:</u>
Application	Interloper	Voyeur	Salesman
Orientation	Novice	Inside dopester	Stranger
Initiation	Probationer	Pseudo-professional	Initiate
Assimilation	Limbo member	Public defender	True believer
Cessation	Deserter	Expert	Worker who has finished his job

Source: Weinberg and Williams (1972;167)

Others concentrate on process rather than role in participant observation. Strauss et al. (1964) note three research phases: i) where there are a large number of hypotheses, hunches and guesses, ii) making sense of the mass of material, and iii) pinpointing hypotheses. Whyte (1960) points out that when indexing a large amount of data, it is best to wait until after the start of the study, and McCall (1969) suggests a data quality profile and index. Becker and Geer (1960), and Becker (1970), describe three stages of field analysis as: i) selection and definition of problems, concepts and indices, ii) checking on frequency and distribution of phenomena, and iii) incorporation of individual findings into a model of the organization under study, adding finally the problems of presentation, evidence and proof. Pearsall (1965) considers two overlapping phases of: i) selecting problems, concepts and behavioural indicators, leading to ii) an explanatory model in a theoretical framework. Friedrichs and Ludtke (1975), applaud Denzin's (1970, p194) procedural steps, which they list:

- i) formulation of rough definition of the phenomenon to be explained,
- ii) hypothetical explanation of the phenomenon,
- iii) examination of case in light of hypotheses,
- iv) if the hypothesis does not coincide, either reformulate hypothesis or re-define phenomenon to exclude case,
- v) check small number of cases for practical reassurance, but reformulate if explanation is refuted by negative cases,
- vi) check cases, re-define phenomenon, reformulate hypothesis until a general relation is found - all negative cases bring revisions.

(after Friedrichs and Ludtke, 1975, p8)

Other authors give practical advice on how to record data, such as the comprehensive scheme outlined by Becker et al. (1961), or that suggested by Wolff (1952) involving topics, diary and envelopes. As Guest (1960) explains, many types of classification are possible, and details of these may be obtained from a number of studies. Many writers do not seem to consider recording data to be an important feature of their research, evidenced by no mention of this aspect of method being given in their accounts. An alternative explanation might be that they regard it as so important as to be taken for granted and not worthy of description.

There are different modes which a participant observer's role may take, and stages through which the role passes may differ between studies. It may be some time before an 'agreed' role paradigm for participant observation emerges, and which of the above sequences, if any, a researcher adopts as the life-history of his field role, may be a matter for personal preference and the nature of the environment studied.<sup>(1)</sup> The above formulations may be too rigid for an all-embracing description of the role as it changes over time.

(1) In the present study, major role changes for the participant observer are denoted by chapter headings.

One may suspect that many reports of participant observation and other types of research, are ideal presentations of what *should* have happened. The 'real' course of events may be masked, and 'successes' of a study emphasised over its 'failures'. In participant observation, observations are valid in the context in which they are made. They are subject to errors and inaccuracy, but this is not the same as to say that a method produces failures. More may be learnt from what are seen to be failures or shortcomings than from perceived successes. If a method is seen as successful, then its repetition may ensue,<sup>(1)</sup> even if it is not the best way of going about the research. If on the other hand, a tactic is tried which is found to produce poor data, then there will be a strong incentive to discover improvements. Frequently, research is labelled 'successful' only insofar as it 'proves' (confirms etc.) what is already 'known' or suspected. In such circumstances research findings may gain ready acceptance. However, a researcher may learn less from pursuing such research than from that which allows for, or results in some degree of 'failure'. Blau (1964) among others, notes the importance of future researchers learning from earlier mistakes.

(1) There is a body of literature on 'set' in the performance of experimental tasks.

Researchers should be in a position to benefit from mistakes made by others, and there should be no shame involved in admitting to one's mistakes. A report need not dwell upon mistakes for their own sake, but should note them for the purpose of learning and discovering their implications for the study and for the method. Many things can go wrong in any research project which runs over a long period of time, and researchers are often obliged to improvise. Ways in which mistakes can be avoided or even turned to advantage may lead to techniques which will serve field researchers well. Errors which are beyond the control of the investigator can be adapted to, although luck cannot always be relied upon to point them out. If one is aware of how they can occur, then a well-equipped researcher is in an advantageous position to adapt to them.

Failure of researchers to record their mistakes is itself a big mistake, for it makes the task of those who would seek to repeat research studies more difficult. This maxim applies to all research. Frequently, 'research method' refers to a particular way of writing up experiments or other pieces of research, when this may not be a true reflection of what was done. This negates rules of true inquiry, and may be rather a product of rules for publishing material when there may be no room for exposing perceived faults which are thought to devalue the work.<sup>(1)</sup> In publishing material minus 'mistakes', the pegs upon which future research may hang may be lost.

(1) James-Roberts (1976a, 1976b) discusses 'scientific dishonesty' in the light of a number of cases of deliberate deception in research.

## Summary

A number of issues on the nature of participant observation have been raised and discussed in this chapter.

It was established in the first section, that criteria for judging a research technique such as participant observation are not necessarily the same as those adopted for assessing the worth of other techniques.

The usefulness of collecting case study material on the subject of strikes was discussed in the context of published case studies, a number of which involved participant observation as a data-collection technique.

In the next section, the importance of verification from different data sources was noted. In this context, the appropriateness of combining research techniques as well as comparing and contrasting these, was noted.

It was suggested that more research in natural as opposed to laboratory settings was required, perhaps in the form of field experiments.

Finally, some material was presented to show that participant observation has a methodology of its own, quite distinct from those of other research techniques.

CHAPTER 8

RESEARCH, MANAGEMENT,  
AND TRADE UNIONS.

"...to some people...research...you're just management in another form..."

In this short chapter, some implications of this quote by a shop steward at the first feedback session will be explored.

### Sponsorship

One aspect of a researcher's role which might influence attitudes towards him, is his sponsorship. Attitudes which exist, or are formed towards a sponsoring organization, may also be important in determining behaviour of respondents towards a researcher. Future co-operation and trust from respondents may depend upon such attitudes. In the case of this research, the sponsoring body was probably unknown to most respondents. In larger research projects this might be a more important factor to consider. This issue is aligned with a researcher's autonomy. Sjoberg (1967) documents a celebrated case of social scientists perceived by would-be respondents to be part and parcel of the U.S.A. administration, to the detriment of their proposed research.



Large amounts of research are directly or indirectly sponsored by funds supplied by the management of firms. Many firms directly sponsor research and development work within their own organization. This Firm was no exception, devoting resources to research and development of their product. From a knowledge of their own firm, trade unionists might therefore associate the term 'research', with one function of management.

Large industrial organizations also sponsor research indirectly through trusts, examples being: Ford, Nuffield, Rowntree and Leverhulme.<sup>(1)</sup> Trade unionists might also perceive a link between management sponsorship and university research work from this broader context. Alternatively, they might consider 'research' to be part of the general function of various authorities in collecting information about themselves and their families to assist in the control of their lives. It is true that most of the larger trade unions have research departments, but these usually comprise only a small staff and are located at union headquarters.<sup>(2)</sup> If their existence is known to union members, research departments may be seen as remote institutions whose precise service to the membership is unknown. They may even be seen as an aspect of control over the membership exercised by the union hierarchy and perhaps resented on occasion by rank and file members.

- (1) Use of the term 'sponsorship' in this context may be misleading. Trusts select projects for funding with little or no influence from the organizations supplying the money.
- (2) 'Research' in this context has two identifiable meanings: a) exploring the unknown, and b) searching out existing knowledge to put into a convenient form. Trade union research departments are almost exclusively engaged in the second of these functions.

There is no reason to suppose that shop floor union members would have encountered 'research' which had produced results seen as favourable or useful to themselves. They would be more likely to have grounds for associating 'research' with management, or with parties whose interests did not coincide with their own.

A participant observer should be aware therefore that while 'research' has many positive value connotations to him (it may well represent his livelihood), there is no reason to suppose that it has similar connotations for all or any of his respondents. Their experiences may relate different stories about uses to which 'research' might be put.

#### Academic links with management

Schmid (1970) makes some pertinent contributions in the field of 'Peace Research' in industry and elsewhere. In a critique, Schmid maintains that so-called Peace Research is no more than a 'technology for pacification', that is to say, a method of maintaining the status quo of traditional power relationships, either in industry, or in the general political field. (1)

- (1) A similar view is expressed in a booklet 'Rat, Myth and Magic'. This work calls into question functions of the industrial psychologist, for example in helping management to end strikes or keeping innovation under management control. Psychology in its various guises is accused of political involvement in upholding power relationships in capitalist society.

Schmid argues from evidence cited from three empirical studies that 'peace researchers' are tools of such a system, presenting a management perspective on substantial issues, seeing manifest conflict as undesirable, blaming conflict on the weaker party, (i.e., in this case the workers) and wrongly assuming community of interest between employers and employees. Rex (1961) echoes this latter point in a discussion of industrial sociology, whose practitioners are accused of ignoring differences of opinion between management and workers and the contract between them, assuming a value framework which is accepted by both sides. In industrial relations, this is referred to as adopting a Unitary frame of reference, as opposed to a Pluralist framework which admits to different interests between parties, or a Radical perspective which admits also to stronger and weaker parties (Fox, 1974).<sup>(1)</sup>

In support of Schmid's third point on the adoption of a value stance by the researcher on the desirability or otherwise of conflict, Hyman (1972) suggests that it is difficult to break down the idea that 'peace' is the norm, rather than 'conflict'.<sup>(2)</sup> On the apportionment of blame for conflict on the weaker party, Hyman terms this the 'approach from above', where the weaker party is seen as the aggressor.

(1) Frames of reference were discussed in Chapter 6.

(2) Merely to employ the term 'conflict' may pose difficulties for researchers who wish to obtain co-operation from management or other parties in industry to whom this is a negatively value-laden term. Top managers of the Firm studied objected to the use of this word by the researcher.

Brown (1954) expresses this as a responsibility on the higher strata in the firm, putting in a plea not to blame the workers. In a review of Argyle (1972), Daniel <sup>(1)</sup> notes a 'growing irrelevance' and 'intrinsic weakness' of psychological analysis. Locating the author among the powerful, the reviewer notes his attempts to remedy problems of management (including 'conflict') while ignoring those of workers. Daniel notes the author's discussion of the possibility of support for research as a tool of capital, with management as the agent.

Brymer and Farris (1967) mention discrimination in information gathering between powerful and powerless groups. Co-operative biases can exist in all types of social research, and for industrial relations researchers, managers may be more co-operative, at least superficially, than trade unionists. A researcher faced with such circumstances may gravitate, perhaps unintentionally, towards a management standpoint in order to make his own job easier, in the extreme perhaps to the extent of accepting only a management viewpoint. This process tends to reinforce or confirm trade union suspicions about the neutrality of a researcher.

Becker (1970) suggests that the favouring of consensus theories over conflict theories by social scientists is strongly related to the factor of relative ease of access.

(1) W.W. Daniel, review of M. Argyle, *The Social Psychology of Work*, New Society, 25.1.73, p198.

According to this position, research undertaken in industrial relations would tend to be conducted in firms where management experienced little conflict and who would therefore be more willing to permit research than would management who felt threatened by what they saw as a conflict-ridden firm for whose state they were responsible.<sup>(1)</sup>

Overall, there would be a tendency for researchers to be drawn towards firms where access was easiest, that is where management saw their firm as being 'conflict-free' or towards firms whose management saw their enterprise as being in a relatively peaceful state. Thus, notwithstanding the 'problem-solving' role adopted by social scientists on behalf of management, researchers who indicated that they wished to pursue independent research would need to be able to reassure management that they would pose no threat to their position.

A 'reinforcement cycle' might be established, where researchers would be more willing, or even feel some obligation, to accept a management viewpoint, or perhaps a 'passive' union or worker viewpoint, to ease the process of research. Beynon (1973) was informed that his presence in a factory he studied was indicative of a new approach by management, being told by a convenor that he was the workers' reward for being 'good boys'.

(1) That it is possible for the same firm to exhibit either of these types of behaviour, may be seen from the waiting time which was necessary before I was able to gain access to the Firm at a time considered suitable by its management.

There is a strong possibility that a general bias has existed in the area of management/worker research, and is now being recognized by some researchers, who may be striving to correct this bias.<sup>(1)</sup> Further explanation is required as to why researchers should fall into traps of 'non-objectivity'. This is important to the issue of validity, perhaps not merely in participant observation where its effect may be most readily seen, but in other research where its influence may be much less in evidence.

A researcher may find it difficult to escape from traditional links between management and universities,<sup>(2)</sup> an historical alliance which may militate against an 'objective' view of industry and its constituent parties. Miliband<sup>(3)</sup> argues that political and ideological views of teachers are inevitably communicated through their teaching. He notes that for teachers of politics this process may be "explicit, direct and specific", while in other fields it may not be "conscious...coherent, or persuasive", although it nevertheless occurs. Hyman (1972) notes the many links that academics have with industry as consultants, and records that many senior industrial relations academics have contributed to sponsored studies where bias tends to be against the interests of trade unionists.

- (1) Evidence for the existence of such a trend would require analysis of past studies by content and political standpoint. There is also a need to initiate research, findings from which would be capable of disconfirming researchers' explicitly stated prior assumptions.
- (2) A THES article of 2.7.76 argues for greater co-operation between university and industry (i.e. management of industry). More university graduates become managers than become shop floor workers, and more managers than workers sit on university courts.
- (3) R. Miliband, "Teaching politics in an age of crisis, THES, 19.3.76, p17 (revised from Inaugural Address, University of Leeds, 1974, also published in University of Leeds Review, 1974).

Hyman considers the case for management bias in research in some detail<sup>(1)</sup> and I do not intend to duplicate his arguments. He also considers suppression of publication of material which is distasteful to employers. Merton (1968) mentions explicit or implicit management bias in research, Brown (1954) notes the management bias of industrial psychology which helps to manipulate workers. Bingham (1952) suggests that industrial psychology is directed towards aims other than its own. Tajfel and Moscovici (1972) consider management as the gainers from research, and Sanderson (1972), identifies historical links between universities and industry. In 'Warwick University Limited', Thomson (1970) investigates close ties between the University (claimed to be typical) and local business interests, and considers a number of consequences of such ties. A sequence is traced from the promotional committee letter sent to all sections of the local community except trade unionists, to the interests of industrialists being well-represented on policy-making bodies of the University and subsequent issues. Baritz (1960) notes managements' use of social scientists to increase profits and obtain greater control over their workforces. He considers that an inability to grasp political problems leads social scientists to share management's viewpoint. Taylor (1975) considers the 'non-neutral' role of the university in capitalist society and its involvement in the military-industrial complex.<sup>(2)</sup>

(1) Op. cit. pp158-160.

(2) Other evidence for biased links of universities towards the management side of industry is set out in personalized form in Appendix note 46.

Kornhauser (1947) may have been the first to record the use of psychology as a management technique rather than a social science. Lupton (1966) attempts to interpret findings from the social sciences, highlighting their possible relevance to management 'problems' among which he considers industrial conflict. Wilson et al. (1971) edited a comprehensive listing of government research departments and university social science departments, giving details of their work and liaison with industry together with a guide to their 'approachability' for managers. This was based upon their willingness to undertake research in conjunction with industry. Colleges, polytechnics, independent institutions, firms and consultants are also detailed and a short list of trade unions appears at the end.

Payne<sup>(1)</sup> in a review of Argyris (1972), considers knowledge applied (unintentionally) "to maintain the status quo conceived by scientific management". He notes that a lack of concern about creating applicable knowledge combined with a concern to be rigorous, may cause research subjects to react defensively.

(1) R. Payne, review of: Argyris, The applicability of organizational sociology. *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 13, 1, 104-105 1974.



In an inaugural lecture, Vic Allen said that academic social scientists perform the highly political function of reinforcing the status quo in the United Kingdom. He said that assumptions conditioned research, which in turn resulted in assumptions being confirmed.<sup>(1)</sup> This view, like most of those referred to in the above paragraphs, is contentious. It is not easy to find empirical evidence that social scientists support the status quo to any great extent. It is not necessarily true for example that all those not committed to a certain political persuasion reinforce the status quo. Change may be gradual, and social scientists and their work may be at least as significant as <sup>other</sup> agents and initiators in changing the social system.

Frequently, academic publications are said to contain implicit bias towards the ideology of management rather than that of trade unions. Schneider (1950) considers 'industrial society' to be biased in the interests of management. Occasionally, authors are quite open in their support for one side or another. Imberman (1950) admits to the prevalence of an 'employer society'; Taft (1946) gives general advice to management in dealing with trade union officials, and Kelly (1970) advises management on how to make conflict work to their advantage.<sup>(2)</sup>

(1) University of Leeds, 4th February 1974.

(2) See Chapter 6. It may be more useful to distinguish between employers and employees rather than attempt to differentiate management and trade union parties. Managers are also employees and many also belong to trade unions in the U.K. See also comments made by some managers in Chapter 5. Differences between the U.S.A. and the U.K. may be important in this respect.

There is however evidence suggesting low congruence between what sponsors and practitioners regard as 'good' pieces of research. Dunnette and Brown (1968) for example attempt to assess the impact of sociological and psychological research on management. These authors found that researchers and managers ranked pieces of research quite differently according to their own criteria. Nevertheless, there are a number of authors such as Clark (1972), who give guidance for those who would seek a collaborative relationship with a research sponsor.

Awareness of possible bias during writing up research may be no substitute for inadequate awareness of biasing influences during fieldwork. For example, it was pointed out to me that I had accepted some aspects of the management structure of the Firm in this study as inviolate. Dominance of the Personnel Department, to the exclusion of other departments from crucial negotiations for example, probably due to my close ties with Personnel Department members, had not registered in my early perspective on the research as being important to the conflict. Adopting a management (or Personnel Department) perspective on: separate union groups at the start of the study, poor arrangements over supervision in the Road Transport Department, not observing conflicts between and within sections of management, or improvements possible in joint consultation, could be put forward as further examples of my taking up a management standpoint through default, by not pointing out ways in which aspects of conflict could have been attributable to management shortcomings or weaknesses.

Inadequacies in structures could have been pointed out without apportioning blame to individuals. (1)

Some of these points were articulated by shop stewards during the first feedback session. For example, one reported that:

"...we accept that a lot of the reason for the bad communication beforehand was our own. There was also a lot of this to do with the Company. There was bad communication as far as the Company was concerned for the three groups. I don't think we were before ever treated on a fair level like we are today..."

Another confirmed:

"...I think you've made the point in there (draft report), which is very valid, that historically the Transport were very isolated: more so than distance would suggest..."

The first shop steward then gave examples of people in the Firm still treating the Road Transport Department as a separate firm, noting that: "...this is the sort of thing that causes bad feeling...". He provided a specific example of an old tea-making machine that had been transferred from another part of the Factory to the Road Transport Department, saying that this was typical of the treatment meted out. He also blamed management in the Road Transport Department for such a state of affairs.

(1) A manager in one research study has been quoted as saying: "...we cultivate a battleground and then blame the workers for fighting on it..." (Clack, 1967, p95). Ferris (1972), contains a chapter entitled: "It's a Battlefield".

Criticisms made by Schmid of 'peace' (or conflict) research thus find some support from this study. With every intention of being 'objective', a researcher encounters problems in remaining apart from the viewpoint of a particular party to his research, especially that of the strongest. A researcher might similarly be influenced by views of more senior and influential colleagues. These points add credence to the shop steward's remark on research and management, and highlight dangers of assuming that a researcher has an unbiased standpoint merely through access to all parties.<sup>(1)</sup> A researcher may have an illusory sense of 'objectivity' which can amount to bogus impartiality. To avoid internalizing a dominant party perspective, a researcher may need to make strenuous efforts in another direction, and wherever possible articulate the mechanisms of this process as he sees them. Action in carrying out intentions once realized, together with constant vigilance, may thus be necessary. Hyman (1972) and Fox (1972), point out that intentions are one thing, but consequences of actions another.

(1) See Appendix note 47 for an example of how this was brought home to me on one occasion.

Does a researcher take sides?

This discussion reintroduces an aspect of the researcher's group memberships. He will be a member of a number of groups, some of which might, but most of which probably will not, be coterminous with those to which his respondents belong. For much of the time, only important memberships will be manifest (e.g. social class), while others may be relevant only in certain contexts (e.g. Masonry). Very often, it is only by aligning himself with membership groups of his respondents, that a researcher can hope to get close enough to understand meanings underlying their behaviour. A researcher who is studying trade unionists, from this point of view must himself be a committed trade unionist in order to appreciate their problems and values. Sympathies of a researcher should not only be seen (by his respondents) to be favourably disposed towards them, but should in fact be favourably disposed towards them, in order to meet his responsibility to accurately report his observations of the their behaviour.<sup>(1)</sup> Despite such alignment, it should be recognized that observations will still be distorted through the research process.

A 'favourable' disposition towards respondents does not imply complete internalization of their values. Cohen and Taylor (1972), in their study of long-term prisoners, consider it essential to be on the 'men's side', and Becker (1967) contends that it is impossible for a sociological researcher not to be contaminated by sympathy.

(1) Blum (1952) discusses relations of the researcher with workers in the context of the former's motives.

Cohen and Taylor stress that feelings of sympathy do not imply blanket moral approval for their respondents' behaviour. They record hostility encountered from prison officials resulting from their liaison with inmates, and doubt the possibility in their situation of seeing both sides at once.

Becker (1967) considers an important question to be whose side researchers are on, suggesting that field workers' sympathies are with 'minority groups'. Gouldner (1968;1973), critical of Becker's position, alleges that Becker calls upon others to make a stand, while making none himself.<sup>(1)</sup> Gouldner considers career and age to be important variables in underdog sympathies, the old and the young being more likely to exhibit such feelings. Gotesky (1975) argues that it does not matter which side a researcher is on, the only need is to recognize that sides are being taken. This is perhaps too extreme a position, for it may matter to some party which side a researcher is on. That a researcher may be obliged to take sides may have to be accepted as a limiting factor of the research.

(1) Riley (1971), in a discussion of the Becker/Gouldner confrontation, comes down against the usefulness of asking 'whose side is the researcher on?' Implications of this now famous debate are considered at greater length in Chapter 9.

Merton et al. (1972) question the separation of a sociologist's politics from his profession, and note the major trends in the field sustaining a conservative view of society. Horowitz (1971) regards contemporary sociological texts as viewing the social order from the perspectives of the privileged few near the top of the social and economic ladder. Horowitz considers their objective to be the effective management of society and the reduction of its tensions and conflicts. In a text on human conflict (McNeil, 1965), most of the contributors from a variety of disciplines seem to start from a value-premise that conflict is 'bad', and social science should work towards its limitation, if not its elimination. Douglas (1957) notes a cultural predisposition towards intolerance of conflict as generative of attitudes seeking removal of 'divisive elements'.<sup>(1)</sup>

Becker (1970) considers the sociologist-researcher *vis-à-vis* the established order, and Horowitz (1967) refers to the bias resulting from accepting the values of one's own culture. Poole (1972) considers that a dominant view of society is accepted by many as valid, while Cohen (1931) remarks that: "...those who boast that they are not as social scientists interested in what ought to be, generally assume (tacitly) that the hitherto prevailing order is the proper ideal of what ought to be..."

(1) Evaluative positions on conflict were referred to in Chapter 6. Mention of these points should not be taken to mean that conflict is necessarily 'good'.

Kelman (1968) maintains that it is easiest to delude ourselves about the disinterested nature of research when its assumptions reflect the dominant value preferences of society. Kelman argues that such research is less likely to be questioned regarding its scientific objectivity, and yet is most likely to suffer from a lack of objectivity.

Myrdal (1967) argues that a conservative/radical scale is the master scale of biases in social science, and that a 'middle of the road' attitude is not always best for objectivity. Becker (1967) maintains that greater accusations of bias arise when a researcher takes the side of subordinates in a relationship, making the point that distinctions between political and apolitical accusations of bias are analytical categories only. Hyman and Brough (1975) maintain that not to ask questions is to underwrite the existing order by default, and Hyman (1975), refers to the myth of 'national interest', inferring that this is often equated by the powerful with employers' interests. Becker (1967) considers that charges of bias arise because sociologists do not give credence to the established order. Kaplan (1964) describes a dominant response as the 'hands off' policy, experienced when those who are threatened fear the outcome, when values are subject to scrutiny. Cohen and Taylor (1972), discussing accusations of bias, like Becker (1967), note that these do not arise if the official or dominant party's definition of the situation is accepted by the researcher. This might happen if accusations of bias are levelled by superiors against the researcher whom they consider to be taking the position of subordinate groups (Becker, 1970).



Myrdal (1958) notes that it cannot be assumed that groups have a common interest except in 'crisis'. What such 'crisis' might involve, he does not specify.

Barnes (1963) makes the point that while formal opposition to publication may come only from powerful or articulate groups, others who are less powerful may feel similarly. It might be added that less powerful groups might have reason to be more strongly opposed to research findings which they regard as reinforcing the social order. An example of a study designed and executed specifically to help a dominant party is that of Sullivan et al. (1958).

Participant observation, cleverly concealed, was used to gain insights into the views of young airmen to help reduce what the dominant party saw as 'disciplinary problems'.

Gouldner (1967), in asking the question: "Whose side is the researcher on?", points out that data is more available to superiors at any level than to subordinates. Becker (1967) reinforces an observation made during fieldwork in this study about relative speeds of communication, when he refers to an 'hierarchy of credibility'. He points to the upward flow of information which results in those in positions of dominance having more 'right' to be heard in their capacity as objectors.

Positions adopted by Gouldner and Becker may be simplifications of information-flows within an organization. Burns and Stalker (1961) for example note that information mainly flows laterally with controlled leaks up and down.

Evidence from this study on the distribution of the research report would tend to support this position. During the participant observation study, one finding was a general upward flow of information. However, insufficient data was collected on this topic to support this finding and the content of information flow could be crucial. In some circumstances, a predisposition to information flowing down a power-gradient could be envisaged as those in subordinate positions choose to withhold information which they could use to support their positions.

Deutsch (1969) considers that:

"...we have focussed too much on the turmoil and handicaps of those in low power and not enough on the defensiveness and resistance of the powerful; the former will be overcome as the latter is overcome".

Platt (1976) highlights one difficulty in studying the powerful, namely status barriers operating against researchers who might wish to study powerful groups, in organizations for example. Winkler (1974) reports that 85% of companies originally approached with a request to participate in a study of directors, declined to do so. Reasons for this response rate however were not given and it cannot be assumed that status barriers were the only or main reason for refusals.

A weaker party might also make accusations of bias against research. Relative potencies of accusations of bias from stronger and weaker parties, by the nature of the relative influence of each of these, could be important in the research process.

What for example, is to be made of the following passage?

"...The Middle Classes have a nightmare. Workers with cars and jeering expressions swarm through their land, snatching new handfuls of the national cake. Governments whimper and retreat. There is some justification for this view. Miners and dockers have used their strength..." etc. (Ferris, 1972; p8)

This extract relates much about the author's implicit prejudices perhaps, but how much about his subject matter?

Encouraging remarks from a departing President of the British Psychological Society were made in his address to the Annual Conference 1972, when he spoke of the:

"..flippant (sic) assumption that (industrial) psychology must be the tool of management, a supporter of the status quo....I do not subscribe to this view. There are 25 million people employed in this country....(industrial) psychology is aiming to serve all of them, workers or employers, trade unions or management." (Kay, 1972)

Such public pronouncements, besides revealing the salience of the debate, are a hopeful sign that research is seen to be prone to external influences, which Vaughan (1967), states would make us dishonest were we not to admit them. Vaughan argues that conflict must be faced in research, while Becker (1964) warns against suppressing conflict-provoking findings which may be ideologically committed to maintaining the status quo. Another researcher of conflict said of the role played by workers in this field:

"...If we have given any advice at all, it has been to those in high power. The unwitting consequence of this one-sided consultant role has been that we have too often assumed that the social pathology has been in the ghetto rather than in those who have built the walls to surround it, that the 'disadvantaged' are the ones who need to be changed rather than the people and the institutions who have kept the disadvantaged in a submerged position".

(Deutsch, 1969: Kurt Lewin Memorial Address, American Psychological Society, 1st September 1968).

### Classification of values

A number of writers take a more overtly political stance towards the operation and use of social research in a supportive role in relation to the established order, (e.g. Bates, 1967; Medwar, 1969; Blackburn, 1972). The role of participant observation has been deemed by one author to have been transformed from: "...taking conscience and notebook in hand..." to the more sinister function of a form of "social espionage" (Nicolaus, 1972). Berk and Adams (1970), in a discussion on the study of deviant groups, urge that the researcher take the moral decision over his relations and obligations to the group *vis-à-vis* the rest of society. This sentiment could be extended to cover obligations to all groups studied, irrespective of their 'deviance'.

Kaplan (1964) considers that there is a greater preoccupation with the basis of value-judgements rather than with their content, compared to earlier times. Goulder (1962) argues for open expression of values to safeguard against their unwitting influence, while Becker (1967) stresses a

need for sociologists - most of whom he points out are 'liberal' - to warn their audiences of their approach, but to take sides as personal and political commitments dictate. Wright Mills (1959) makes a similar assertion about the political orientation of 'most' social scientists, and states the necessity for researchers to be politically aware. He adds that the reason for confusion in social science is that we have to decide whose problem we are tackling. Selltitz et al. (1966) submit a plea for awareness of the way in which values enter into the selection of research topics, and Rex (1961), makes the same point, stating also that value-judgements involved should be made explicit, a sentiment expressed also by Wright Mills (1959). Myrdal (1958) also calls for a clarification of researchers' value premises, adding that it is not necessary to adopt only those which are held by a majority of the population or by a politically dominant group. This point relates to the violation of the 'hierarchy of credibility' by researchers, described by Becker (1970). Gouldner (1970) contributes to this aspect of the debate in his discussion on Reflexive Sociology:

"...Insofar as a Reflexive Sociology focuses on the problem of dealing with hostile information, it confronts the problem of a 'value-free' sociology from two directions. On the one hand, it denies the possibility and, indeed, questions the worth of a value-free sociology. On the other hand, it also sees the dangers, no less than the gains, of a value-committed sociology; for men may and do reject information discrepant with the things they value. It recognizes that men's highest values, no less than their basest impulses, may make liars of them.

.....

.....

Nonetheless, a Reflexive Sociology accepts the dangers of a value-commitment, for it prefers the risk of ending in distortion to beginning in it, as does a dogmatic and arid value-free sociology."

Elsewhere, Gouldner (1968; 1973) accuses Becker of creating a new myth of the *sentiment-free* social scientist. Gouldner argues for examination of the basic ideology for commitment and considers that social scientists should continue to adopt viewpoints as outsiders. Just to state a position Gouldner argues, is smug and inadequate because such a revelation assumes our values are good enough. Gouldner urges caution over *what* values are stated and notes conflict between them and real commitment, as well as between sympathies and practicalities of research. Galtung (1967) considers that: "...contamination can just as well come from the unengaged conformist as from the engaged deviant - it is only more difficult to discover". Galtung advocates research on political issues and urges researchers not to feel inhibited by combining political interest with research into a subject.

Rex (1961) points to the inadequacies of a sociological tradition dominated by empiricism and positivism. A similar line is argued by Gouldner (1970), when writing of the cognitive emphasis of research findings which, he maintains:

"serves to defocalise the conflict of values that remains involved in political differences, and to focus contention on questions of fact, implying that the value conflict may be resolved apart from politics and without political conflict... yet despite this seemingly neutral, nonpartisan character, positivism's social impact is not random or neutral in regard to competing social mappings; because of its emphasis on the problem of social order, because of the social origins, education, and character of its own personnel, and because of the dependencies generated by its own funding requirements, it persistently tends to lend support to the status quo."

Debate on these issues will doubtless continue. In Chapter 9, political and value issues are discussed at greater length.

#### The participant observation study

Schwartz and Schwartz (1955) suggest that participant observation is unavoidably mostly a retrospective process. However, if biases of the investigator are recognized and taken into account as a variable in the research, this is likely to improve its reliability. Schwartz and Schwartz explain that an observer must firstly be motivated to look for his biases, must explore each one as it is found, and look upon this as a continuous process of discovery. This may be possible for some, but not all types of bias. Nevertheless, there is no reason to suppose that in spite of such criticisms, analysis of the management/union and inter-union conflicts reported in the original study were invalid, even if this fell short of a complete perspective on events.

It was also suggested to me after the original study that conflict could re-emerge in a different form. For example, at some time 'two-party' conflict could arise between unions and management, and that such conflict might highlight splits in the management structure. Time and continued study would be required to establish this possibility.

A more general criticism which may be levelled at this study is inadequate consideration of all the variables; a criticism which may be levelled at almost any piece of research. A second criticism is that a biased framework for the project was selected, again a shortcoming of much if not all research. An issue which then becomes important is attempting to identify factors militating against objectivity in field research. Vidich and Bensman (1954) suggest listing sources of error under four headings, while Weick (1969) list five sources of bias in participant observation, namely: abbreviation, closure, habituation, selection and symmetry. This list might also be appropriate to other methods. For participant observation, a more empirically based analysis of biases is perhaps more useful than a theoretical framework of categories.

Because of the key role of the researcher in participant observation, his personal biases are considered first. My way of dealing with these was to maintain an awareness of the distinction between the 'political' role which I had as a researcher, which to some extent provided by motivation for conducting and maintaining the research, especially when it was going badly, and an 'objective' or 'scientific' role based upon training, and essential in conducting any



'professional' research. Coser (1967) reports that he endeavoured to distinguish clearly between scholarly and political writings, remarking that this was 'not always successful'. Lofland (1961), acknowledging the influence of Goffman, notes conflicts among the roles of scientist, professional and person, in field research. Vidich (1960), similarly suggests conflict between the scientific and cultural roles of the researcher, remarking that the obligation to do scientific justice to one's findings often conflicts with a social obligation to please all the object(ive)s of research. Bruyn (1963; 1966) notes interdependence between social and scientific roles of the participant observer. I considered it most likely, perhaps mistakenly, that my biases in this research were more liable to favour a 'trade union viewpoint'.<sup>(1)</sup> I might have inadvertently 'compensated' for this supposed position, and accepted a management viewpoint more readily.

A second, and more ubiquitous bias, is that which could be transmitted through training and education received by researchers. Orientation of instruction may tend towards identification with, and internalization of, the dominant ideology of society. For industrial relations research it means that there may be a greater likelihood of a researcher acquiring a management oriented viewpoint than a trade union one.<sup>(2)</sup>

(1) Not necessarily the same as a 'worker viewpoint'. Hyman and Fryer (1975), suggest that 'unity is strength' as a trade union goal may be given priority over democracy.

(2) This is a contentious position. 'Education' may be more liberally or radically inclined than the dominant ideology. However, a distinction could usefully be drawn between intent of educators and practical outcomes for those who are 'educated'. A researcher still has to earn a living.

This reflects to some extent, 'built-in' biases of the educational system which tend to favour advancement of those from middle-class backgrounds at the expense of those from working-class backgrounds, extending up to and beyond higher education. An extensive bibliography exists on this topic, and detailed treatment will not be attempted here. However, some idea of the perpetuating nature of middle-class predominance may be seen from a few examples. Fordham and Peffers (1973) found ignorant or unfavourable attitudes towards trade unions among school leavers. The problems of trade unions not being able to allocate resources necessary to finance and appoint 'public relations' exercises in schools as the management side of firms are able to do, for recruiting for example, may be as far as one needs to look in order to find a probable reason for this state of affairs. (1)

A classic in the field of class differentials in educational opportunity is the study by Little and Westergaard (1964), while Blackburn (1967) provides arguments on a broader front for perpetuation of educational inequalities. Kuhn and Poole in a THES article (8.12.72), point to the bias of middle-class students in universities. It is not claimed that such evidence offers proof that society produces research workers who are biased towards a dominant ideological perspective, or that even if this were true, that this is reflected in their research.

(1) Parental and educational values may also exert considerable influence upon this process, although there is inadequate space for a consideration of all such factors. For a brief discussion on the role of the media in industrial relations, see Appendix note 37.

It does, however, suggest that there is greater opportunity for them to adopt a 'dominant ideological' rather than a 'deviant' standpoint. Feyerabend (1975) argues that ideology of science needs to be separate from both state and education.

A third issue to raise in a discussion of bias is that the incidence of effect of bias becomes self-perpetuating. I was not concerned in this research directly to alter or influence the environment of the Firm. I might be aiming at 'indirect' influences through people subsequently reading about the research. Most research in industry however is undertaken by academics for managers, or with other academics as intended audiences, either directly through sponsorship, or indirectly through channels of communication such as journals, conferences and seminars. Findings from this research were presented originally at a conference of academics and managers. Subsequent talks based upon the research were given to student or academic audiences. Such bias in the distribution of information based upon research data tends to have a cumulative effect by virtue of those who receive it. Warr (1973) explains that while his book on psychology and collective bargaining is written for managers and shop stewards, he recognises that the former are more likely to read it. Colvard (1967) points out that in the long-run, the effect of a study is the action it prompts in its audience. Once made aware of the possible usefulness of research findings, managers may seek out further studies which might be helpful to them in their managerial roles.

Given such a bias in the communication of research findings, it is small wonder that a number of trade unionists at the Firm expressed various degrees of unwillingness to participate in the research.<sup>(1)</sup> Their experiences, and those of colleagues, had taught them that it was unlikely to be in their interest to do so, no matter what I as a researcher might say.<sup>(2)</sup> Only by making strenuous and continuous efforts to inform trade unions and their members of findings useful to them from this type of research, noting carefully and acting upon feedback received from them, can the effects of management bias begin to be diminished.

- (1) Co-operation from the trade unions in the Firm was forthcoming despite their reactions to the research. A verbal agreement on such matters as confidentiality was sufficient for the most part to gain entry to their deliberations.
- (2) During the phased introduction of the Industrial Relations Act 1971, the last section which was due to become operational in a package of legislation which was for the most part opposed by the trade unions, was that on disclosure of information by employers to employees. A code of practice has been produced on disclosure of information since the repeal of the 1971 Act. However, the delay in implementing information disclosure proposals may be symptomatic of problems encountered by subordinate groups in industry in gaining access to information.

## Summary

In this chapter, some aspects of bias in research conducted in industrial organizations have been discussed. Contributions from a number of writers have been considered within a framework of management bias suggested for the study described in Part I. Some support was found for the proposition that many trade unionists identify research with management interests.

It was shown that a number of authors have expressed views to the effect that strong links often exist between universities and powerful groups in industry, which are not paralleled by links with the less powerful. A body of circumstantial and other evidence exists for this position, although locating hard empirical evidence to support this finding is more difficult.

The issue of a researcher 'taking sides' in the course of his research was discussed, and it was concluded that this may be an undesirable, but unavoidable part of the research process on occasions. One consequence for this outcome was that even if a researcher could not control this aspect of his research, he should make every attempt to be aware of its operation.

In the final section, various ways in which dominant ideology is transmitted in society were mentioned and the manner in which this could influence the incidence of research bias was discussed.

CHAPTER 9

POLITICS, NEUTRALITY,  
AND VALUES IN RESEARCH

A president of the Royal Society said at that body's Annual anniversary meeting in 1976, that scientists should not meddle with politics, morals or divinity. He noted that two hundred years ago it was "generally acknowledged" that the concerns of scientists were above political conflicts of nations, but that today, the position was uncertain. The President argued against the direction of research on political grounds. (1)

This chapter considers some of the issues raised in the position argued above. Among these issues is the question: "if political grounds are not (or should not be) the basis upon which research is (or should be) directed, then what are the alternatives?" Almost implicit in making a value statement about the role of politics in research, is the suggestion that it is impossible to separate politics from research.

(1) Lord Todd, reported in the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 3.12.76.

'The Scientific Method' of doing research exists as a theoretical entity. Much research in the social sciences is conducted within some form of hypothetico-deductive, or other systematic framework. Nevertheless, it becomes clear to many researchers that their efforts are guided by many other considerations. Availability of resources is one important factor which often precludes research along lines which might be indicated by 'scientific' enquiry. Another possible block to pursuit of ideal scientific enquiry is the ethical issues which arise. Such issues are likely to be related to a third factor, the moral and political climate of the society in which research is conducted. To a great extent, this climate determines values influencing the direction of research in society, and often directly affects individual research projects.

These and other factors result in a range of views on how research should be conducted. Ring (1967) suggests a split has developed in social psychology between 'scientific' and 'humanist', while Kerr (1963), indicates a widening gap between "scientists to affluence, humanists militant". Representing a 'militant humanist view', 'Rat, Myth and Magic' regards positivism as seeking to make illegitimate, questions about values, ethics and scientific priorities. It is however noted, that these factors help to guide those who allocate funds for research, and that seeking to banish questions about values is an attempt to maintain the dominant value perspectives in society. These values are cited as being:



élitism, selection, competition, manipulation, reward, efficiency and individualism.

Gouldner (1970) recognises influences affecting the quality of research which are often ignored. These, according to Gouldner, arise from adherence to a doctrine of Methodological Dualism, which:

"...stresses the 'contamination' possible in the research process itself; it sees the main danger to 'objectivity' in the interaction between those studying and those studied. In effect, this is the narrow perspective of an interpersonal social psychology that ignores the biasing effects of the *larger* society and the powerful influences it exerts upon the sociologist's work through the intervening mechanism of his career and other interests".

An alternative to this picture, Gouldner refers to as Reflexive Sociology, which:

"...for its part, recognises that there is an inevitable tendency for any system to curtail the sociologist's autonomy in at least two ways: to transform him either into an ideologue of the status quo and an apologist for its policies, or into a technician acting instrumentally on behalf of its interests. A Reflexive Sociology recognizes that the status quo often exerts such influences by the differential rewards - essentially, research funding, academic prestige, and income-earning opportunities - that it selectively provides for scholarly activities acceptable and useful to it...Reflexive Sociology, then rests upon an awareness of a fundamental paradox: namely, that *those who supply the greatest resources for the institutional development of sociology are precisely those who most distort its quest for knowledge*". (author's italics)

There is little in the above passages that could not equally well be applied to subjects other than those referred to.

A number of issues are opened up by these viewpoints. An alternative to pronouncing that positivism is being used as a scapegoat for politically motivated publishing is to adopt a rigorous approach towards investigating value issues. Social sciences have within their methodologies, tools with which these aspects of their operation may be critically examined.

The purpose of this chapter is not to attempt any such detailed analysis, for this would be outside the scope of this work, but rather to review some of the published material on the subject of values, especially that which has appeared over the last twenty years. Where appropriate, I shall attempt to relate material to participant observation, although generally the points made are applicable to all, or most types of research. Throughout the chapter, it may be seen that a number of influential writers have declared positions which are not inconsistent with one another. Authors whose works are cited are mainly, but by no means exclusively from the social sciences, in particular psychology and sociology.

Considerations of value-freedom and facts and values in research follow two short sections on research funding and the political role of the researcher. These are followed by an examination of what values are involved, values and research, and neutrality and objectivity. Discussion then returns to research and values, before a brief summary.

## Research funding

Discussion of research often focuses upon methodology, or how research is done, rather than upon why research is done. In the U.K., research tends to follow fashions, or interests of researchers. It is also highly dependent upon bodies which fund research. An absence of centralized research organization may be functional for research diversification. One consequence of such an absence of planning, however, is that research which is funded tends to rely upon earlier research. Resources tend to be allocated according to what funding bodies see as 'low-risk', as opposed to 'high-risk' projects. <sup>(1)</sup>

Low-risk research is likely to be characterised by short-run specific returns. High-risk research tends to be of a longer term nature, and there may be vague expectations of the precise nature of possible findings, thereby providing less assurances of a return to funding bodies. High-risk projects may also be more expensive, as they frequently probe previously unexplored areas, perhaps seeking new approaches and insights into issues and problems.

(1) While the descriptions 'low-risk' and 'high-risk' applied here to research projects are on a continuum of 'riskiness', to produce findings acceptable to a funding body, the decision to allocate funds is made one way or another. Thus the discrete categories are justified. There may of course be 'trading' between a research body and a sponsoring body over a proposed project and compromise may be necessary over the final form of the grant application.

Hish-risk projects may represent 'discovery' research, aiming to uncover new areas or methods. Low-risk projects may correspond to 'proof' or 'verification' research, outcomes of which would be expected to 'confirm' or 'disprove' suspected phenomena. (1)

While funding bodies vary considerably with respect to the criteria adopted for allocation of research monies, for some at least, a short-run return may be a necessary prejunct to a researcher obtaining funds for a long-term programme. Project proposals might have to demonstrate probable payoffs through pilot work, even if funds cannot be guaranteed to follow. Under such conditions, research in seeking to survive, tends to feed off previous research and becomes aligned with short-term aims. Because funds are limited, this would be expected to occur at the expense of longer-term research which seeks to break new ground.

(1) Distinction between discovery and proof in research is made by Homans (1949), described by Reichenback as one between 'discovery' and 'validation'.

## The political role of a researcher

Harré (1) claims that among issues which have received inadequate attention are: the question of *how* research has acquired a political role, and what sort of activities are thereby involved. At one extreme, some researchers may only observe the world because they feel helpless to change it. However, research may have political implications despite feelings or intentions on the part of the researcher. The intention to leave an environment unchanged may be a 'political' decision in the broadest sense. In studying industrial relations, the political nature of research has become clearer to me. One way in which awareness can be increased is through a researcher being frequently obliged to declare his interest or position to his respondents. For example, whether or not a researcher is, and is known to be, a trade union member at a time of polarization in industrial conflict, could be important for research access and acceptance. It is also of political significance for the research.

Being on my guard for such field role expectations, I found it useful to distinguish between my scientific role as a researcher, perhaps striving for 'objectivity', and at the same time being aware of how my interests had led me to this line of research.

(1) R. Harré, When actions and words speak together, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 9.4.76.

Such a theoretical distinction could be applied to all research roles, and not merely to those where the dichotomy is most readily recognizable such as in participant observation. Thus, while a researcher may claim to be politically unaligned and therefore 'objective' in his work, at the same time he is likely to adopt a political and/or moral stance towards his research and its uses. An example of the exposition of such a stance is seen in Patrick (1973), where in his final chapter the author takes a stand on proposals for changing the environment he has been studying, implying recognition of a committed value position on a major issue of his research. Adopting a stance may for some researchers be a necessary prerequisite to research, for as noted above, it may be necessary in motivating a researcher towards his chosen research. Alternatively, being able to handle political implications of one's research may be seen as one aspect of research competence.

#### Value-freedom in research

A number of authors have chosen to consider political implications of research as part of the 'value problem'. Kelman (1968) expresses the view that the researcher cannot be value-free, while Kaufmann (1958), considers the motivation of the investigator to be part of the 'value problem'.

Edgley<sup>(1)</sup> discusses the origins of a conception of reason as value-free or neutral and the exclusion of philosophy from politics. Many researchers have contributed to the debate on the role of values in research, and in the remainder of this chapter, an attempt will be made to select important points from their various contributions, and to make comment where appropriate.

Gotesky (1973) argues that the very existence of the debate justifies the conclusion that values enter into scientific research. Werkmeister (1960) asks the question: "can the reality of man be fully understood in terms of value-free concepts and theories?" He considers that the problem can only arise because some influential social scientists think it can.<sup>(2)</sup> Mitchell<sup>(3)</sup> would regard the view that the academic should aim at objectivity and that objectivity is attainable only in science, as a caricature, if he had not heard it enunciated by a number of eminent scientists at a conference. Mitchell suggests (after M. Broady) that sociologists and other academics are called upon to be impartial, although not neutral, about values. Mitchell concludes:

- (1) R. Edgley, Plato to NATO, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 28.11.75: extract from; Philosophy in academia, *Oxford Review of Education*, 1975.
- (2) Denzin (1970) locates Lundberg and Parsons among those sociologists who think values have no role in the scientific process.
- (3) B.J. Mitchell, Commitment need not prejudice objectivity, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 1.10.76

"The liberal university need not claim that the social sciences, or other academic disciplines, are value-free,...but it must insist that, if values are involved, they are open to rational discussion, and that even known or generally accepted truths are open to criticism".

A number of texts urge that bias and lack of objectivity are undesirable in research; (e.g. Bierstedt, 1963; Riley, 1963; Berelson and Steiner, 1964). It is more difficult to find in texts of the 1970s, written claims that research can and should be value-free. Coser (1967) writes:

"...the attempt to implement value neutrality, even if it is bound not to be fully successful, seems to me a moral imperative embedded in the very ethos of science." Albrow (1968), while arguing a need to maintain separateness of sociological approach and organization theory, asserts that it is accepted by most sociologists that sociology should be value-free! Lynd (1939) writes "...the word 'ought' ought never to be used except in saying that it ought never to be used..." Lynd notes that values are employed in the selection of research problems, but should not be employed thereafter. He does not explain how this distinction is to be made, and Winch (1958) outlines the philosophical confusion in Lynd's arguments. Winch cites Lynd's writing as an example of corrupt use of 'scientific ideology', regarding this as a conceptual rather than an empirical problem.



Easlea (1973) also attacks "...proponents of value-free social science (who) believe that...there is complete identity between the natural and social sciences", and for whom: "...The only value-judgement allowed therefore, is that value-judgements should be excluded." Easlea<sup>(1)</sup> provides examples of a number of social scientists stating value-free positions. In particular he takes up the case of R.G. Lipsey's *Positive Economics*, pointing to the illogicality of Lipsey's stated position. Easlea takes Lipsey's stand on unemployment as a specific example, and demonstrates that Lipsey cannot claim to be value-free and desire less unemployment. Easlea makes it clear that he does not dissociate himself from Lipsey's values, only from his logic, concluding that:

"Lipsey himself is guided by value-judgements in his identification of problems and in prescriptions for the future prevention of unwanted phenomena."

Weber's ideal that social science could and should be value-free, where science and reason supplied the means, and values the ends, is attacked by Gouldner (1962) as a myth. Deutscher<sup>(2)</sup> (1965) maintains that there is no such thing as value-free social science, while Becker<sup>(3)</sup> (1950) notes that: "The statement, 'No value-judgements in social science', is itself a value-judgement". Kaplan (1964) refers to 'scientism': exaggeration of the status and function of science in relation to values.

(1) (2) (3) Other authors have also made these same or similar points. This applies to many of the standpoints outlined in this chapter. MacRae (1976) for example, urges discussion of value systems within the social sciences. He devotes separate chapters to the major social sciences, arguing that each should be revealed apart from its own spurious neutrality.

Gouldner (1962), in demonstrating the complexity of the issue, lists nine different possible meanings for 'value-free sociology'.

A dichotomy arises between a research ideal of 'objectivity', and the context within which research is conducted, which latter cannot be selected by objective criteria. Benne and Swanson (1950) note the irrational grounds for scientists choosing research problems, grounds which are always biased by cultural perspectives. Colvard (1950) stresses the need for fuller recognition of the subjective basis of all scientific knowledge.

Gouldner (1962) is justifiably critical of modern sociologists' misinterpretation and distortion of Weber's original conception of a value-free discipline. He considers the very different political climate in Weber's Germany with that of more recent times and argues that what may be appropriate and understandable at one time and place is not necessarily so at another.

Kelman (1968) contributes to this debate by noting that: "...scientific objectivity depends not on the absence of value commitments, but on the way in which these are taken into account". Sjoberg (1967) considers that: "...social scientists are prone to see the role of ideology in structuring the work of their colleagues; it is rare for an author to examine the place of ideology in his own analysis". It is important that political positions and their influence are recognized by those who hold them as well as by those who accuse others of allowing their views to influence their research.

It may become a matter of course for researchers and other authors to state their political position, possible biases, and provide information likely to be relevant or to have an influence upon their research. Cantril and Katz (1939) adopt a pro-labour standpoint, unlike most other writers of that time. They maintain that employees suffer worse losses than do bosses as a result of conflict. Cantril and Katz argue that the conservative climate of the United States at that time seriously infected their discipline and made scientific objectivity literally impossible. Hyman (1972) clarifies his ideological stance at the start of his book on strikes. Beck (1974) claims in the foreword to his book in which his sympathies are with the strikers: "...not even to have attempted to pander to the elusive myth of 'objectivity' in putting it together..." Johnston (1975) uses written evidence and interview data as well as being an involved and committed activist 'observer' in his study. He uses the example of a strike and its aftermath to draw lessons for his readership. These four examples are from the field of industrial relations, where 'sides' may be more readily seen than in many other areas. The prejudices or views of a writer/researcher are important in recounting research, as are those of its readers in the interpretation.

As a simple rule in reporting research findings, Hudson (1966) suggests dropping the 'mask of objectivity' by using 'I' in describing what has been done.

Andreski (1972) also favours the use of 'I' over 'one' as a more honest way of expressing a writer's position. (1)

Stansfield (1956) considers it important for a research worker to specify his value system and interests at the same time as he describes his methods, so that readers know there may be biases in the reliability and completeness of his conclusions. He notes that a researcher needs to be detached, contemplative and dispassionate and that making value-judgements goes outside the role of being a scientist, even though this may concern him as a person and as a citizen. Cook (1949), considers that a recommendation that a social scientist state his beliefs to 'give the reader a chance' may be ineffective and misleading. For a discussion on admitting partisanship, see for example Cornforth (1974).

It may be that only by critically examining his own research that a researcher can come to appreciate values which underlie his position on a range of topics. On the issue of ethical misgivings in research, Gusfield (1955) refers to a change in perspectives for the researcher, but not of his opinions. It is through examining method and values that I have been made aware of, and come to change, my view of my research, and of research in general, from that which I had at the time the fieldwork was conducted, and when the first report was written in 1971.

- (1) A letter to the *Bulletin of the British Psychological Society* argues for explanation of what was done in laboratory experiments rather than an impersonal style which can lead to 'suppression of information'. (R.G. Stansfield, *BPS Bulletin*, Vol.29, 1976) Kirkman (1975) also argues against use of passive terminology in natural science.

If a researcher is not himself changed, for example in his attitudes and behaviour, as a result of the research he has done, how can he claim that it is useful? Can he legitimately claim that he is above his own findings and their implications when he is the means of their production?

I think the answer to both these questions is 'no'.

Similarly, if he is not convinced by his own research and shows no evidence of conviction by a change in his own attitudes or behaviour, how can he hope to demonstrate its importance to audiences? He must be convinced himself in order to convince others of its value.

### Facts and values in research

The political position of the researcher is often discussed as a value issue. Kelman (1968) notes inevitable tension between the scientific study of man and humanistic values, and as a result, considers that the study of man through confrontation of value issues can make unique value contributions. Many authors adopt a stance on the issue of facts and values in research.<sup>(1)</sup> To attempt to examine their positions in detail would be a lengthy exercise, and a relatively brief excursion through some of the viewpoints is given here.

(1) Riley (1971) notes that a characteristic of logical positivism of the 1930s was the separation of facts and values. Simey (1968) traces the dispute back to 1904. Meehan (1969), reminds us that Hume made the logical distinction between 'is' and 'ought'. Johnson (1975) draws attention to an ancient distinction between knowledge and interest, citing the separation by Plato of *logos* and *doxa*. The revision of this distinction into that between facts and values, he attributes to Weber.

Nettler (1973) considers facts and values to be intertwined, and that converting values into questions which are answerable by data means that facts change values and values affect facts. Fletcher (1974) considers that "...fact is fused with value...". Wootton (1959), urging separation of fact and value, notes that they are confused in everyday life, and considers fact to be "superior" to value. Boulding (1962) notes that "Our images of fact and value grow together in inextricable symbiosis". Henley (1975) notes 'confusion' that values can be derived from facts. Malinowski (1954) argues that it is impossible to keep facts separate from an observer's interpretations. Myrdal (1958) oversimplifies to the point of distortion when he argues that 'science' is about facts and 'art' is above values and policies, although he notes the interdependence of facts and values. Vickers (1970) argues that values are present even in so-called physical science. Werkmeister (1959) offers an alternative opinion to the effect that:

"...(It is therefore) an incontrovertable fact that the social sciences, but not the natural sciences, must be concerned with values and valuations...

"...the social scientist in particular is enmeshed in valuations which define his facts. He is himself an integral part of the culture in which he lives and can free himself only with difficulty from the dominant preconceptions and biases prevalent in his environment".

Easlea (1973) however, devotes chapter eleven of his book to activities of some natural scientists who have seen the value-usage of their work and its implications in supporting the power-élite. He considers it a 'dangerous myth' that physicists have discovered a value-free method for progress in science. Easlea also considers an ideology of a 'value-free' social science to be dangerous.

Myrdal (1958) argues that an attempt to do research which is 'factual' in order to avoid valuations is itself a valuation and that because 'facts' do not speak for themselves, value premises should be explicitly stated. Of the latter, Myrdal notes that: "...the value premises should be selected by the criteria of relevance and significance to the culture under study". One is left with a choice to agree or not with this value statement, and Myrdal does not state who he thinks should do the selecting of relevance criteria. For Durkeim (1962), explanation of 'social facts', requires separation of cause and function. Lynd (1939) points out that it would be wrong to assume the meaning of 'facts' is always clear and unequivocal, while Poole (1972) considers facts to be defined by the status quo. Vogt (1962) maintains that severing the factual content of a phenomenon from the value it embodies also severs it from reality.

A number of writers' contributions in the Journal of Social Issues edited by Benne and Swanson pertain to this area. Alexander (1950) for example, refers to a 'pseudo-distinction' between 'facts', and 'values'. Wieman (1950) states that a value is no more subjective than other 'facts of nature'. Values are part of what is, and not simply what 'ought to be', and as Feigl (1950) points out, to adopt a 'scientific' frame of reference is itself a value decision. (1)

Kaplan (1964) points out that "...values enter into the determination of what constitutes a fact...", and Sjoberg (1967) notes that a distinction between political and ethical issues is analytical not empirical. This argument may be extended to assert that distinctions drawn between 'content', 'method' and 'value', are also analytical rather than empirical, as are those between values, expectations and preconceptions of the human investigator.

(1) I recall as an undergraduate my first economics tutorial, where a distinction in this subject was made between 'positive' and 'normative' aspects; between 'what is' and 'what ought to be'. For the next three years, I was supposedly instructed in the former, as though the latter were not a legitimate area of inquiry, let alone having influence upon 'what is'. Such a stilted approach cannot be expected to lend itself to a real appreciation of a subject. Subsequently, more exciting areas of economics were opened up to me via analytical techniques which appeared to be more freely available from other social sciences.



Geiger (1950) explains that there is no theoretical reason to separate values from the main lines of inquiry (in social science), but that such a divorce arises as a result of the bequeathed dualism of the social sciences. These broadly speaking originated from a 'fact' orientation of the natural sciences, and a 'value' orientation from philosophy, perhaps the father and mother of social science. This appears to be an attractive hypothesis, and yet social science does not seem far advanced in confronting systematically, issues raised through such a birthright.<sup>(1)</sup> The social sciences may need to determine adequate conceptions of rigorous scientific inquiry, without - as Cicourel (1964) notes - necessarily ascribing arbitrary numerical properties to theoretical concepts which are totally inappropriately described by measurement. Rex (1961) considers that the models of the natural sciences cannot be taken over and applied to society. Much careful consideration is required to evolve conceptual frameworks more appropriate to the social subject matter, including value issues.

It seems that there is little agreement about the role and status of facts and values in research, and different authors appear to mean quite different things when referring to these concepts.

(1) It has been suggested (Stansfield, R.G., private communication) that when the social sciences overcome the 'father-fixation' and the maternal possessiveness, they may then become adult!

Kuhn (1970), in answering critics who accuse him of confusing 'is' with 'ought', the descriptive and the prescriptive, remarks that they are not so separate as they seem. Kuhn believes that the philosophy of scientific theory provides a legitimate basis for 'oughts'. As is so often the case with debate on facts and values, the proclamation of a position which has any meaning takes the form of a value statement.

Kaplan (1964) argues for the treatment of values as subject-matter, and of the need to inquire into their existence rather than their validity. Becker (1950) makes the point that conduct is always normative, and points to the use of values as tools of social analysis. Meehan (1969) similarly notes that "...A value-judgement is an instrument or tool, no different in kind from an explanation or a description". He records that there is little agreement among philosophers as to the meaning of 'value'. For Meehan (1969), "...Value-judgements appear as the instruments that provide man with the purposes of goals he strives for..." and the: "...most important point to emerge...(is the)...extent to which value-judgements are amenable to rational-empirical criticism to test and amendment..."

Simey (1968) indicates that the social scientist must study values in order to understand facts, and may have to express genuine sympathy (!) with values other than his own in order to be able to understand them. Simey notes that an attempt to avoid values is itself a valuation, but renders his arguments less credible by asserting the value-

judgement that no value should be allowed to 'bias' a researcher's analysis. Diesing (1972) attempts to explore authors' biases and bring them under stricter control. Henley (1975) considers that research in the form of social surveys advocated on grounds of having practical consequences, cannot be value-neutral. Lessnoff (1974), in a pro-Weberian stance, claims to know of "no attempt to rebut the value-freedom doctrine that has succeeded". Lessnoff challenges those who reject 'value-free' social science, and assumes that 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity' cannot be for rational discussion.

Galtung (1967) examines different interpretations of value-neutrality on a dimension corresponding to the scientific process: choice of problem, concepts and methodology, data-processing and analysis, interpretation and theory-formation, conclusions, publication and the social scientists' activities. Galtung considers that:

"...value-neutrality does not mean that the social scientist should not do research *on* values. Nor should it mean that he should not let himself be *guided* by his own values in his *choice of topic*..." (author's italics)

Galtung considers the two extreme positions on value-neutrality which he terms the *restrictive* position, where the scholar should do nothing of relevance to other than scientific values. This he considers to be value-loaded in practice because by failing to take a stand the scholar adopts a false 'apolitical' attitude which is usually in the interests of the establishment and the status quo.

Galtung's view of the *permissive* position is that the scholar can do anything he wants as a citizen, but his scholarly work should be evaluated on its scientific merits only. Boalt (1969) considers conflict between an individual researcher and citizen roles.

Easlea (1973) is critical of any attempt to deal with such conflict which involves separation of roles. In particular he takes Lundberg, a Swedish sociologist to task for his claim that in their activity as scientists, researchers should remain morally and politically neutral, whereas as citizens they can favour one point of view rather than another.<sup>(1)</sup> Easlea claims that because researchers are human beings this approach is simply unworkable. Of political neutrality, Easlea (1973) alleges:

"There is no way in which the social scientist can be ethically and politically neutral. The refusal to give advice is as value-motivated as is the giving of it".

Wilding,<sup>(2)</sup> in listing a number of objections to social science, cites among these the encouragement of defining political problems as 'social' in nature. He is concerned among other things about treating a clash of interests between parties as social rather than political in nature.

(1) A Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (and MRC) report, considers research workers in the UK as able to maintain impartiality and independence of research role (unlike the USA!) between workers and management. The report advises that the research worker should recognise that choice between social objectives is a matter for those in industry and not for him. (DSIR, *Final report of the Joint Committee on Human Relations in Industry 1954-57*, 1958).

(2) P. Wilding, *Objections to social science*, *New Society*, 8.4.76.

In a rejoinder, Banks<sup>(1)</sup> accuses Wilding of confusing the roles of scientist and citizen and considers that (only?) in their roles as citizens are social scientists obliged to take sides on issues of the day. Banks' position is at least as confused as that of Wilding. He accuses Wilding of adopting a position contrary to that of 'value-freedom' in ignoring the 'danger' that a social scientist might give an impression that his expertise on matters of social fact enables him to pronounce authoritatively on ethical and other value priorities. While Banks acknowledges that an act of omission is still an act, giving the example that not to take sides is to support the stronger party, he ignores the role of values in determining what constitute 'social facts'.

Strasser (1976), describing the tasks of sociology, suggests that 'scientific' sociology takes a *neutral* stand on the political consequences its findings might have. The political relevance of its findings might then become an object of study. Strasser argues that the Positivistic model of science leaves the sociologist to double in his citizen and scientist roles and *select* topics of political relevance while carrying out study by objective rules.

(1) J.A. Banks, In defence of social science, *New Society*, 15.4.76.

## What values?

What are the 'values' about which the debate on their role in social science is concerned? Meehan (1973), addressing the problem of agreement on a definition of 'value' and 'science', describes the former as "sets of priorities developed to cope with real choices". Meehan argues the need for an empirical base for ethics, while Schrader (1973) recommends abolition of the term 'value', seeing values as a type of fact. For Werkmeister (1960), the one important value commitment is to objectivity. Werkmeister sees this as related to Weber's 'ethical neutrality' where the social scientist refrains from passing moral judgements, although he (Werkmeister) considers ultimate objectivity to be beyond human reach.

Furfey (1954) studies value postulates stated or implied in the first five issues of the Journal, 'Social Problems'. He found that 63% of all articles contained some value postulates, consistent with each other to 'humanitarianism'.<sup>(1)</sup> Horowitz (1964) lists four concepts of value in research, these being: purpose, pro-attitude, obligation and research as worthwhile. Kelman (1967) notes a conflict of values between scientific discovery and deception.

(1) In an empirical study, Box and Cotgrove (1966) examine the degree of commitment to clusters of values characterizing members of professional occupations. They identify three main types which they call: public, private, and instrumental, on the basis of differential attachment to values of: autonomy, 'disciplinary communism' (e.g. publication) and commitment to a career in science.

Boulding (1962) addresses himself to the 'important but unresolved question' of whether there are any basic values common to all mankind, noting that almost all conscious values are instrumental. He suggests a multi-dimensional structure of semi-basic values such as: freedom, justice, democracy, economic growth and equality, noting the difficulty of resolving these into a basic value of 'good'.

Werkmeister (1960), discussing the 'problem of value', explains that the different meanings perceived by different authors are of three basic forms: the value *of*, values *in*, and values *for* social science. A comprehensive attempt to delimit research values is made by Boalt (1969). The worth of a scientific work to Boalt is determined by the number of scientific values it satisfies. Boalt proceeds to examine relationships between what he terms "scientific" values of: reliability and validity of measuring, representativeness of sample, hypotheses formulated on the basis of stated theories, and usefulness of a project to the community. He categorizes research 'values' under three principal headings: planning values, working values and supplementary values, and identifies 24 'values' under these headings before continuing to develop a more detailed outline of 'values' in research. Boalt's interpretation (or that of the translator from the original Swedish?) evidently is wider in its conception of 'values' in research than that of most authors. He includes what many would regard as no more than rules, objectives or practice of research procedure under the heading of 'values'. Gouldner (1968; 1973) for example, sees the objectivity issue as separate

from those of validity and reliability.

For Boalt (1969) "values are the things we deem important". Rex (1961) lists: positivism, idealism and voluntarism as the values in sociological theory, while Wright Mills (1970) delimits: truth (or 'fact'), reason and freedom as the potential ideals or values of social science. Bredemeier (1973) contrasts the sociologist who is committed to values of truth and justice with the physician whose objectivity is 'safe' because he is committed to the value of health. Other authors would doubtless forward their own conceptions of the role and nature of values in research. George Sorel was alleged to have replied to a request in 1923 for the important elements of sociological research with the single word, 'honesty'. These examples demonstrate that when referring to research values, it may be important to know precisely what values are under discussion, for different researchers may have very different ideas of what these values are. Few would refuse to align themselves with such a 'positive' value as honesty in research. (1)

(1) Gans (1968) however, reflecting upon his own field researches, challenges the 'unwritten rule' that a scientist should be honest. He argues that a researcher necessarily has to be dishonest in order to collect "honest data". Dichotomies arising through clashes between 'scientific' and ethical values are rarely readily resolved.



## Values and research

A number of authors consider the points at which values affect the research process. Leighton (1949) argues that moral values dominate scientific values at three contiguous points: i) the selection of the problem to be investigated, ii) the limitation of the human and other materials that may be used, and iii) the determination of what shall be done with the results. Similarly, Werkmeister (1959) notes that for a researcher the:

"...culture pattern...his own value orientations ...may affect the selection and formulation of the problem, the approach, the collecting of relevant data, the recording of observations, the interpretation of 'facts', and the manner in which the results are finally presented".

Mack (in Sherif and Sherif 1969) discusses six biases in social research: ethnocentrism, problem selection on the basis of tool availability, monetary magnetism in problem selection, debunking, theory-shyness, and theoretical inefficiency.

Phillips (1973) considers bias in the selection of research design, and Furfey (1959) argues that research builds up an incomplete picture of reality and that there is: "...scope for value-judgements not only in the choice of relevance criteria, but also in the application of these criteria after they have been chosen." Kuhn (1970) explains that, "The points at which values must be applied are invariably also those at which risks must be taken." It seems that there is greater consensus among researchers on the points

at which values are likely to affect or bias research, than upon what values are involved.

One returns to a position of requiring a rigorous approach to the study of values and their effects. Kaplan (1964) argues that values cannot be excluded, but that they should be given objective ground and through them account taken of bias. Duval and Wicklund (1973) consider values as feedback for an individual to examine himself, but ignore their role in research. Mannheim (1936) argues that objectivity in social science develops through critical awareness and control of evaluation. In Weber's (1949) view:

"...The objectivity of the social sciences depends on the fact that the empirical data are always related to those evaluative ideas which alone make them worth knowing and the significance of the empirical data is derived from these evaluative ideas."

Simey (1968) makes a plea for ending sociological indifference masquerading as objectivity. Noting the impossibility for the social scientist not to become involved, like other authors he wishes to see abandoned the idea that sociology must be value-free. Myrdal (1970) argues that social research is weakened by concealing value premises and that the valuations should be brought into the open and seen as subjective facts. Cook (1949) urges that open debate and recognition leads to greater awareness and honest reporting.

Burgess, (1) in arguing for making experience public, considers that:

"...objectivity rests not in denying the existence of value-judgements (dishonest) or seeking to eliminate them (impossible), but in making explicit what they are and testing them. Value-judgements are the hypotheses of social science: we cannot make progress without them."

Similarly, Kolakowski (1975) maintains that while disagreement from fundamental biases remains, value-judgements are a background to social scientific enquiry. Friedrichs (1972), discussing the separation of knowledge from valuation aligns himself with Becker's view that objectivity itself is rooted in selective valuation.

### Neutrality and objectivity

Many problems arising in research studies may be related to the researcher's 'neutrality'. Those conducting research may tend to become 'methodologically self-centred'. Researchers may adhere to *their* definitions of neutrality or objectivity, while ignoring their respondents' conceptions of the same terms, even to the extent of implicitly denying that they might hold any! Henley (1975) points out that while an informed observer may have a better understanding of what an actor is doing than he does himself because of a social context in which the observer can attribute meaning to behaviour, the observer is essentially marginal.

(1) *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 26.4.74.

The starting point of social analysis is participants' definition(s) of the situation. Cicourel (1964) warns that in field research, the 'common sense' perceptions of respondents must be taken into account. In survey research, he stresses that likewise it cannot be assumed that respondents share a common framework with the researcher. They probably exhibit many different frameworks for interpreting the survey questionnaire for example.

A number of authors discuss the related topics of bias, objectivity and neutrality. These topics have already been referred to and only a fraction of what has been written can be considered here. Albrow (1968) considers crude forms of bias to have been replaced by more subtle ones. Of individual bias, Polanyi (1958) notes that, "...commitment...saves personal knowledge from being merely subjective." Gouldner (1973) argues that "...the notion of contaminated research presupposes the existence of uncontaminated research, and this is pure folly." Couch (1960) regards it as an illusion that the social scientist knows how to proceed impartially and get rid of bias in his work. Myrdal (1958) argues that a solution to bias does not lie in ignoring implications of research. He notes that biases are easier to detect after the elapse of time, and that not making viewpoints explicit creates room for bias, (Myrdal, 1970). Viewpoints however may not easily be made explicit and anyway may change over time.

For Maquet (1964), objectivity is equated with conformity with the object, in the, "...context of knowledge...

the...result of the meeting of the subject and the object".

For Galtung (1967), "Objectivity is inter-subjectivity...".

His view is that the acceptance of inter-subjectivity between (and within) camps should be accepted as a value.

Andreski (1972) differentiates between 'semantic' and

'practical' objectivity, regarding the former but not the latter as possible to attain. Polanyi (1958) makes his

position clear when he states: "The purpose of this book is to show that complete objectivity as usually attributed to the exact sciences is a delusion and is in fact a false

ideal." Vickers (1970) regards the achievement of objective social science, which he appears to equate with an absence of values, as an impossibility. Couch (1960),

in criticising Myrdal for superficial analysis, makes reference to the uncertain status of value, noting that

the 'problem of value' is more confused than that of objectivity. Nokes (1974) considers that objectivity alone

(divorced from a theoretical framework or conceptual system) can lead to irrelevant and misleading insights. The

problem as Nokes sees it, is that of combining objectivity with compassionate understanding. Of the split between

objectivity and passion, Turner (1961) urges the acceptance of extremes over attempts to find a mid-way solution.

He notes that, "...desire to gain the truth must be

balanced by an equally strong desire not to be played false".

Underlying a researcher's self-oriented research mode may be insecurity of purpose affecting the research role. It is in the context of adherence to a supposedly 'objective' stance, that Gouldner (1970) attacks Methodological Dualism. This he sees as a: "...strategy for coping with the feared vulnerability of the scholar's self..." seeking to insulate him from: "...the values and interests of his other roles and commitments, on the dubious assumption that these can never be anything but blinders..." prohibiting: "...the sociologist from changing in response to the social worlds that he studies and knows best; it requires him to finish his research with the same self, the same biases and commitments, as those with which he began it"

Gouldner denounces a traditional concept of 'objectivity' as:

"...not neutrality, but alienation from self and society...the way one comes to terms and makes peace with a world one does not like but will not oppose; it arises when one is detached from the status quo, but reluctant to be identified with its critics..."

transforming:

"...the nowhere of exile into a positive and valued social location; it transforms the weaknesses of the internal 'refuge' into the superiority of principles of aloofness. Objectivity is the ideology of those who are alienated and politically homeless...commonly, these 'objective' men, even if politically homeless, are middle class and operate within the boundaries of the social status quo."

Gouldner considers adherents of objectivity to be alienated and resentful of a society whose élites treat them as useful skilled servants. Under the protective covering of objectivity, they proceed to partially unmask society's failures, which if challenged can always be presented as impersonal facts which have spoken, rather than the sociologist who has pronounced a judgement on society. Thus, notes Gouldner:

"...as a claim of the contemporary professional sciences, 'objectivity' is largely the ambivalent ideology of those whose resentment is shackled by their timidity and privilege."

The concept of neutrality has probably attracted less comment than the concepts of value-freedom, bias, and objectivity. Taylor (1975) considers there to be no absolute neutrality. Following J.S. Mill, he notes the need for confrontation between various views to make truth accessible, and that, "...the necessity for intellectual polarization is fundamental and inescapable...". Taylor reasons that everyone's judgement of neutrality reposes on a background of valuation. Ogley (1970), in a discussion of neutrality of states, considers four kinds of neutrality. Neutralization is imposed on a state by agreement between other states. A state which is non-aligned ('neutralism') may be active in attempts to settle wars between other states. The 'traditional neutral' state declines to take sides during any conflict, while an 'ad hoc neutral' decides on its neutrality on the basis of individual conflicts between other states. Ogley draws attention to one of the problems of maintaining neutrality, noting that: "...while a country can only be

neutral if there is a war going on, (?) it is precisely in time of war that a neutral state is in greatest danger of losing its neutrality." It could be added that neutrality might have a potential existence during a state of conflict, including, but not restricted to, open warfare.

Ogley opens his first chapter on "The idea of neutrality" with a comparison:

"...Neutrality is rather like virginity. Everybody starts off with it, but some lose it quicker than others and some do not lose it at all. Unlike virginity, however, neutrality once lost can sometimes be recovered, albeit with difficulty."

Like many a comparison, that between neutrality and virginity is inappropriate and inaccurate because it might suggest that neutrality is characterized by a combination of immaturity, ignorance and innocence, rather than being based upon maturity, knowledge and sophistication. Ogley later confounds his ambivalence towards his subject material when he considers mediation, which he argues must come from neutrals. He notes that: "...the basic condition of neutrality is the existence of a balance of power". Ogley argues that to be neutral in war, strength is required. (1)

(1) At an individual level, this could refer to conscientious objectors.



The position of Ogley (an historian) on neutrality, may be contrasted with that of Kolakowski (a philosopher).

Kolakowski (1975) argues that neutrality always results from weakness, for example the intellectual weakness of being unable to grasp the nature of a conflict. Kolakowski (1975) states: "...I am neutral in relation to a conflict when I purposely behave in such a way so as not to influence its outcome." Kolakowski considers intent as a feature of neutrality, distinguishing it from impartiality on the grounds of not being a party to a conflict.

Kolakowski claims that it is not neutral to create equilibrium of force among parties to conflict or to help or hinder both sides equally, although in an anti-Marxist stance, he believes that it is not true to say that one is helping the stronger side if claiming neutrality. Social scientists might legitimately hold logical and political objections to Kolakowski's position.

Montefiore (1975) explains that one can only be neutral if there are parties to be neutral between, and that the perceptions of these parties by (or of?) the 'academic' (or other 'neutral' party) are important. Montefiore also upholds the importance of intent, and indicates that a high degree of intellectual sophistication is required, although he claims ultimate neutrality to be unreachable. He does not claim objectivity or impartiality in discussing these terms, and in his essay discusses: neutrality, indifference, detachment, objectivity, impartiality, open-mindedness, disinterestedness, independence, and lack of bias.

Other expressions mentioned, include: non-political, non-partisan, truthful, honest, accurate, balanced, uncommitted, and undogmatic. Each of these and other terms (e.g. autonomy, 'academic freedom', etc.) have different but related meanings. To discuss each in depth would not be appropriate here.

From an interactionist viewpoint, perceptions of the other are valid, and as Gouldner (1970) points out: "Those being studied are also avid students of human relations; they too have their social theories and conduct their investigations." Extended to all spheres of research, it would logically be necessary to consider all respondents' conceptions of neutrality in research analysis. However, it is not generally held to be permissible for researchers to identify with their respondents rather than with their research colleagues. This point returns us once again to the issue of how a researcher handles conflicts between 'scientific' and 'ethical' questions in the course of his research.

As Mannheim (1940) remarks, only the balance of power ultimately decides what is objectively true between conflicting ideologies, 'facts' depending upon whose point of view they are perceived from. Myrdal (1958) explains that the course of events is likely to be determined by the power at the disposal of groups, and the balance of power may change so that some value premises may gain in significance over others. Mannheim maintains that objectivity may only be obtained by making value premises explicit.

There remains a long way to go before such objectivity is achieved, for as Rex (1961) points out, in debates on public issues authors of relevant research often seek to conceal their value biases.

### Research values and outcomes

Finally, what are the effects of completed research upon social policy? Myrdal (1958) reports that the urge to improve society is of greater impetus to social science than mere curiosity. Abrams (1974) examines reasons for gaps between survey research findings and policy action, and a special supplement of *The American Sociologist* (Spring, 1974), is devoted to a consideration of the relationship between research and the making and execution of public policy. Rein (1976) examines relations between empirical social research and public policy. Merton (1957) considers a number of conflicts of values between intellectuals and policy-makers.

The chasm which a researcher may perceive between his work and its subsequent application means he is faced with possible alternative courses of action. He may argue for greater awareness of his findings; he may withdraw from the field of study, or he may accept his designated position and pursue an 'isolationist' policy (the 'ivory tower' image of the academic may partly stem from such a reaction). He may alternatively become part of the political decision-making process himself, either as a professional politician, or as an 'expert consultant'.

Clinard (1955), in calling for more applied sociology, suggests putting sociologists in positions of greater influence, although he makes no specific recommendations to this end. Rex (1961) suggests that increasing weight is being given to sociologists on discussion of public issues. Horowitz (1968), and Smelser and Davis (1969), argue for greater involvement of sociologists in the life of society. Payne,<sup>(1)</sup> in a review of Argyris (1972), warns that future society: "...may ignore the researcher, or actively condemn him, because his apparent disinterest may be viewed by the citizen as researchers playing their research violins while society is burning."

The researcher may make some attempt to tailor his research more directly or specifically to help particular groups in society, although directions may be determined by decision-makers who are not themselves researchers. The gulf existing between political decision-makers and researchers probably helped to produce the wave of 'social relevance' demands made of education in the late 1960s. However, the desire to see results of social and other research translated into political reality had probably been dormant for a long time before that. McGuire (in Sherif and Sherif, 1969) suggests that the increasing social concerns of researchers is one explanation for the tendency to more field research.<sup>(2)</sup> What the mass of researchers do is important, because as Naess (1972), in a discussion of intrinsic value of research and science points out, a

(1) Op. cit. p105.

(2) For a comparison of participant observation and experimental research in this context, see Appendix note 49.

majority of researchers who take up the ideas of the brilliant few, determine the rate of growth of a discipline.

Two diametrically opposed schools of thought on the nature of social psychological research may be distinguished. On the one hand, there is a view maintaining that research is an end in itself. Such a view may be typified by the approach of McGuire (1961). Another view is that research acts mainly as training for the researcher, who should then be encouraged to proceed to teaching (and administrative) duties, with a small obligation to produce a minimum output of research. Research in this case serves a 'maintenance' function for the academic.

Opposed to both these views of social research is the view that findings should be of use to some party, perhaps tailored to a specific purpose, or should contribute to a socially defined current problem.<sup>(1)</sup> This might be a simple exposition of the 'social relevance' view of research, whose adherents would maintain that social scientists have obligations to society, and that their skills or products should be 'useful' to society.

(1) Merton (1957) notes that problems selected as the focus of social scientific inquiry in industry have largely been defined by management, giving high labour turnover and restricted output as examples. Merton argues for jointly sponsored research in industry. Simey (1968) lumps together unofficial strikes with such 'problems' as: crime, prostitution, drunkenness, and drug-taking. This stance indicates that even writers who are sensitized to value issues, may fail to appreciate the values underlying their own pronouncements. An *SSRC Newsletter* report of 1974 reviewing some SSRC supported work in the U.K. notes that the: "...SSRC decided some years ago that industrial relations, plainly one of the chief social and economic problems of the day - if not *the* chief problem..." (SSRC emphasis). This is an example of the way in which problems are socially defined, and research is geared to meet perceived needs. The SSRC report goes on to describe the establishment of the Industrial Relations Research Unit at Warwick University.

Social relevance in research could be regarded as validity mediated by beneficial social action. Edwards and Allen (1) argue that, "...knowledge is ultimately only validated through its social use..." A view at first glance cynically opposed to this position perhaps should be taken into consideration, and is provided by Weigart (1970). He writes:

"...like all social movements, scientific sociology attempts to train its adherents to identify society's problems in terms that are unique to the discipline so that the discipline is recognized as necessary for the larger society to discern, solve and prevent those same problems."

There are possible intermediate stages between these views as to what findings from social psychology or other social sciences should be used for. Acceptance of one of the philosophies does not preclude acceptance of another under different circumstances. There are signs that former status differences characterizing relations between pure and applied researchers in social psychology are beginning to be broken down, (see for example, Hudson, 1972).

(1) E. Edwards and V. Allen. The case for the abolition of tuition fees, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 30.7.76.

## Summary

This chapter has been concerned with some of the issues behind research procedure, which may be grouped under the general heading of the 'value problem'.

It has been suggested that the decision-making processes leading to research funding are important in affecting research conduct. Consideration was given to the inter-relationship between research, and politics in the broadest sense, and the value basis of research was examined.

Some areas of the long-standing debate on facts and values in research were opened up, and it was suggested that it would be helpful to clarify what values were under discussion in such a context. The importance of considering neutrality and objectivity as part of the complex value issue was stressed, particularly when research was concerned with conflicting parties.

It was finally suggested that the interplay between research outcomes and their influence (or otherwise) upon social policy, could not be ignored in this debate.

One aim of this chapter has been to demonstrate that the issues of politics and values in the research process are not so simple as to be dismissed by urging that they should not intrude upon research.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS



In Chapter 1, it was suggested that the initial acceptance period for the participant observer was about two months. This was confirmed in the follow-up study to be the time period for acceptance noted by at least one respondent. A field researcher can hardly expect to be accepted in less time, and if there are many different parties to get to know, the acceptance period may well be longer than this.

Events described in Chapter 2 suggested that acceptance and experience of the participant observer were important in assessing the nature and extent of conflict within the organization. Once the researcher was involved, and could take up positions close to events, these could be followed and explained in various ways.

Acceptance of an observer seemed to be more readily given by management, than by trade union parties, for example at formal meetings. Different levels of acceptance of the researcher could reveal aspects of relationships between the parties studied. Informal, as well as formal communication between the parties could be observed.

As a result of field observations, it was possible to hypothesize a build up of tension between certain parties prior to the strike, and predict further conflict. What could not be predicted was: i) what might cause such an increase in conflict, although a pay issue was suggested as a likely precipitating factor, and ii) what form the conflict might take, although it was likely that the Road Branch and Personnel Department would both play central

roles; the former because of their relationship with the researcher, and the latter because of their strong position in the organization.

The strike, described in Chapter 3, marked a significant phase in the research, and was a watershed in terms of: research activity, rapport, and events in the environment under study. The role of directors during the strike was discussed in the light of the limited evidence available from one other empirical study.

It is important to note that conflict existed before and after, as well as during the strike. Respondents generally saw the level of conflict experienced here as undesirable for them. It would be useful to undertake further research on the levels of conflict which parties find acceptable under various circumstances, given that a certain amount of conflict is inherent in industrial relationships. Implications for industrial relations, of mergers between trade unions and between firms, were discussed.

Predictions outlined in Chapter 2 were largely confirmed: i.e. an increase in conflict, particularly between trade union parties was brought to a head by a pay issue, with the Road Branch and Personnel Department playing central roles. This demonstrates that a participant observer must get close enough to events to make general predictions in the field. The importance of being close in terms of experience was indicated by the finding that other shop stewards predicted that the Road Branch would

strike; a prediction not shared by management respondents. It was suggested that managers' predictions were at least partly based upon their hopes.

It was found that resolution was much more difficult to study than the build up to conflict. Nevertheless, it was possible to identify six factors which were important to conflict resolution in this study: i) no means for the parties to avoid future interaction, ii) sanctions for all parties in continuing conflict, iii) hard work, increased communication and involvement of party representatives, iv) increasing desire for harmony, v) formalization of agreement, and vi) the time period required for resolution. It was possible to show how rapport and conflict varied over time, and also how rapport of the participant observer with different parties, changed over time.

In Chapter 4, the importance of obtaining respondents' views of what had been observed and recorded by the researcher, was highlighted in a feedback session. In particular, prior study, access through more than one party, and at a time when an organization is not experiencing a high level of conflict, were shown to be important for research access. It was suggested that analysis of industrial relations case studies which do and do not involve strikes, might be valuable. It was also indicated that with adequate resources, participant observation could be made a more systematic technique.

In Chapter 5, it became possible to compare participant observation and interview techniques, in respect of the types of data generated by each. The former imposed less of a structure, but it was harder to compile data gathered in this way. It was suggested that often the two may be combined to good effect.

It was shown how it is possible to make testable predictions from participant observation data, reinforcing the desirability of being close to events studied - a feature not gained through other techniques. For example, it would not have been possible to make further predictions on the basis of the interviews conducted in the follow-up study. Not only was there inadequate information to proceed to prediction, but the interviews were conducted at only one point in time, and within a framework imposed by the researcher.

It may be concluded that the only way to study in detail a strike such as this one, is for an observer to actually be there. It seems fairly clear from the follow-up study interview data that a researcher could not have obtained anywhere near as complete a picture of events some years later. It also seems clear from the participant observation study that a researcher could not have gained access during, or just after the strike, to study all parties. Perhaps at best, a researcher may have been able to gain access about a year after such a strike, by which time some of those focal to the conflict would have left the firm and there may have been poor recall among many of those remaining. The best position for a

researcher wishing to study a strike is to be in situ prior to its occurrence. This obviously requires a fair degree of luck.

The difficulty of finding a satisfactory model to even describe conflict, became apparent in Chapter 6. An alternative to simply describing events is to begin with empirical observations and then attempt to fit a model to these. It was suggested that within the context of one model, the firm studied was probably 'typical' of many in the U.K.

Other ways of looking at the complexity of conflict phenomena, from both theoretical and behavioural perspectives, were discussed. Many types of conflict theory exist, and researchers are still working towards consensus on the important elements and processes of different forms of social conflict. Causes of the strike observed in this study were suggested under four headings: underlying, historical, contemporary, and complicating factors.

In Chapter 7, it was suggested that there was a need for more case studies and perhaps field experiments, to study strikes and conflict behaviour in industry. It was indicated that the usefulness of combining participant observation with other methods had theoretical support, to reinforce the empirical backing demonstrated in Chapter 5.

In Chapter 8, the question of whether there is management bias in research, was addressed. It may become increasingly difficult to identify unambiguously who is manage-

ment and who is worker, and it may be more useful to speak in terms of employer or employee bias. However, a general absence of empirical evidence might suggest a number of things about this issue: i) that bias towards a dominant party is so pervasive as to be impossible to assess and would therefore pervade any research attempting to study its influence, ii) it is more imagined than real, or iii) it has not been studied because of the political nature of the topic and the fact that research funds are supplied by powerful elements who do not wish this topic to be investigated. Further research to test these and other propositions would be useful.

Finally, in Chapter 9, the impossibility of ignoring value and political issues in research was revealed. Research on overt conflict may help to throw these issues into relief, and thereby aid further study of them. There seems to be little doubt however that such issues are more complex than is suggested by a stance claiming that politics and values should not intrude upon research. Such a claim contains the seeds of its own refutation.

Two questions remain to be answered: have the three major aims set out in the introduction to this study been achieved? and, what else may be learned from the research?

In answer to the first of these questions, the events which took place in the Factory during the fieldwork period, were described in a manner which was acceptable, and which made sense to, the key participants in the study. This was indicated by data collected during the feedback sessions, and at the time of the follow-up study.

In addition, a number of theoretical models were examined for their possible use as descriptive devices. Data from the research were considered in the light of these models. It was suggested that while the data could readily be seen in the context of models based upon: frames of reference, trust relations, and events in a conflict sequence, these models did not substantially increase understanding of observed events. In the light of empirical findings, a model for conflict resolution was forwarded.

Attempts to explain the events described were to a large extent, empirically based. Thus, reasons and motivation for parties' behaviour were sought at the time that behaviour was observed. This study differs therefore from those which begin with a theoretical position and attempt to obtain data to test that position in some way. Instead of beginning with a set of pre-conceived notions as to how the research should progress, this study began with the empirical data, and sought to move towards theoretical positions which would accord with it. To this extent, theoretical developments were 'grounded' in the data, rather than the data being supplied to test theory.

It was found to be possible to formulate and test hypotheses in the field to a limited extent. However, the adequacy of explanation for observed events could be tested more rigorously by predicting certain future events, and subsequently testing these predictions. The research has shown how it is possible to formulate predictions on the basis of a participant observation study, and to test

these through a follow-up study. The efficacy of combining research methods, in this case participant observation and interviewing, was thereby demonstrated. Most of the predictions made were wholly or partly confirmed, although caution was expressed in interpreting these findings.

In setting out to achieve the third aim, that of critically examining the method used, it was found that to a great extent this had to be considered in the context of the data which it generated. Thus, the role played by the researcher was an integral part of the study. The dual nature of the participant observer role, represented by both involvement and detachment, was reflected in the presentation of the methodology. Some of this appeared in the main body of the thesis, while more peripheral or anecdotal aspects of method were presented in appended form.

Advantages and disadvantages of the method were discussed. Among the advantages that a participant observer has, is that it is possible for him to obtain information from the whole population he wishes to study. In other types of research, it is recognized that those who decline to participate may differ importantly from those who do participate. The participant observer recognizes such differences, and can exploit them to obtain data from 'non-responders' (i.e. those who are unwilling or hostile 'participants' in his research).



Data obtained from participant observation are often made more difficult to handle because of their low degree of systematization, compared with data collected by other methods. However, a shortfall in this respect may be more than compensated for by the thoroughness of the data. The participant observer does not sample from his population of cases in a traditional manner. Instead, he samples according to his view, and his respondents' views of the importance of actors' roles in events. Checks are available on the adequacy of such a sampling framework in the form of alternative data sources, and feedback. Employment of this sampling framework may be sustained on the grounds that the best-informed respondents provide data commensurate with their knowledge. There is thus less 'waste' from obtaining 'don't know' responses than often occurs in social research.

Specifically, this study has been important in demonstrating that it is possible for a researcher to study industrial conflict in the workplace from the point of view of two or more parties whose interests conflict. An original research aim, to interview systematically among members of two groups of respondents in the environment studied, had to be foregone because of the impossibility of gaining research access. However, it was maintained that richer data were obtained through the flexible approach adopted.

A number of factors were identified as being important in influencing the behaviour of actors and groups within an industrial organization. The origins of observed

behaviour were identified as being complex. Investigation of underlying values of parties which could influence their attitudes and behaviour, would be an interesting area for further study.

The research was deliberately limited to a study of factors within an organization which could be identified as being influential upon parties' behaviour. In the 1970s, the U.K. has moved into an era when legislation and other external factors may be expected to exert increasing influence at the level of individual enterprises. Findings from the follow-up study suggested this was true for the Firm studied, Nevertheless, legislative provisions have been important for many years in industry, and one set of regulations were at the centre of the dispute observed in this study, although were not focal to the conflict as such.

Relations between groups in the workplace will continue to be important in determining their respective behaviours. A further area ripe for research expansion would be the continuing influence of external factors, such as legislative provisions, and government policy on pay and prices, upon group behaviour in the workplace.

## APPENDIX NOTES

The notes comprising this lengthy Appendix are intended to provide background information, mainly upon various aspects of the methodology of the study. They contain material which although important to the research, is peripheral to the major events described.

Each Appendix note is numbered and referenced to the page(s) in the thesis for which it has relevance. Despite these references to earlier chapters, the Appendix notes may be read independently after the other chapters.

The Conflict Research Unit was established in 1968 and undertook research in a number of fields. The most important of these concerned aspects of international conflict, and two major studies were conducted; on foreign ministries and diplomats. The study of communal conflict, especially that existing in Northern Ireland was another line of enquiry at the Conflict Research Unit. A third aspect was the study of small group functioning using both field observations and experimental studies. The fourth main area was that of industrial conflict, and this study was the second piece of research which was carried out in the Unit in this area.

A problem which dogs many research programmes is the availability of money. Its supply determines whether or not research can be undertaken. Members of the Conflict Research Unit had become masters of improvisation and economy in research. The young average age of its members, coupled with their enthusiasm and work capacity helped to minimise problems arising through lack of funds for substantial research projects. Despite difficulties, in its short history, the Unit produced many published and unpublished research reports.

Because grants obtained by the Conflict Research Unit were small, research plans could only realistically be made for the short-term. Compromises which researchers are frequently obliged to adopt because of perennial bugbears of sponsorship grants, job insecurity and wasteful use of resources through short-term projects have been known for some time (see for example: Luszki, 1957). The demise of the Unit, early in 1972 was accepted as a casualty of working in an insecure area. Similar problems as were experienced by the Conflict Research Unit by virtue of its chosen area of study, act as a backcloth even for larger and more stable research units. See for example: Holland (*Times Higher Education Supplement*, 10.11.72) on similar types of problems experienced by researchers in the Industrial Relations Research Unit at Warwick University. For a review of the main problems and suggestions for changes in research funding, see: Bamber and Glendon (1975).

Gullahorn and Strauss (1954) point to the importance of meeting a wide range of people early in a study, and the participant observer may rely to a large extent upon the 'snowball' or 'chain' method of sampling and observing, (see for example: Polsky, 1967). The participant observer has a delicate role to play, and generally must not interfere with the course of events (Whyte, 1955). He may be in a position on many occasions to divulge information from one party which might be at least of short-term use to another party, and as Polsky (1967) points out, the participant observer is under no legal obligation not to give away information. Conversely, as Friedrichs and Ludkte (1975) point out, the researcher does not have the legal protection afforded to other professions. Concern on the part of those who come under scrutiny regarding the confidence in which their utterances and behaviour are observed may however be appreciated. Berreman (1962) notes that the field-worker must be seen to be able to safeguard secrets (including information which is overheard as well as that which is volunteered in confidence), and not be a 'performance risk' by letting on information sources to others. During the course of his field-work, Johnson (1975), witnessed 'hundreds' of law violations among social workers, but never considered reporting any.

A participant observer quickly learns how not to conduct himself, and for the inexperienced researcher there can hardly be a more demanding apprenticeship. Wax (1957) points out that the student under such circumstances changes by necessity from novice to professional. For example, I soon discovered that a fruitful way of lubricating a conversation was to get a respondent to talk about a group in the Firm other than that of which he himself was a member. Besides this, by getting different groups or individuals to speak about others, I began to build up a more complete picture of a respondent group. This in turn helped interpretation of behaviour and responses of the group itself when its members were encountered.

Individuals in the Factory were often prepared to air grievances to an outside stranger. Revelation in this context may parallel the phenomenon of the stranger in the railway compartment, to whom confidences may be divulged in the belief that he will never be seen again. Simmel (1950) makes the observation that revelations

## APPENDIX NOTE 2(continued i)

are possible when it is known that true intimacy does not exist. Merton (1947) notes that the outsider with stranger value may be party to views and information which would not be expressed by respondents if it was thought that they would get back to management. Alternatively, respondents may consider that the outsider does have some authority.

For example, on one occasion some unsafe materials were dislodged so that they fell crashing to the ground narrowly missing some workers, who then turned towards me as though to say: 'there, now you've seen it'. These were materials which came in from outside the Factory, for the safety record of the Firm was comparatively good. However, this incident might indicate that the ambiguous outsider, despite assurances to the contrary, has attributed to him powers that he does not possess. In this case, the facility would have been to drop a word to Management to the effect that certain incoming materials were not loaded safely. Another explanation would be that I was thought to be a member of Management on this occasion.

When respondents have seen more of the observer and his behaviour, their perceptions of him may change, and they may ascribe different role properties to him. For example, they will see him talking with others and be made aware that it is not to them alone that he is directing his efforts. The observer may therefore become aware that he is being treated by some respondents differently over time. Selltitz et al. (1966) mention informants who give away too much early on to regret this later. This point may however mean that material collected early in a study may be rich in content, even possessing a higher degree of validity than that collected later, by more intensive or systematic methods. This point of view contrasts sharply with the more frequently stated difficulties of making initial contacts (see for example: Gullahorn & Strauss, 1954), or the use of first interviews mainly as rapport-builders as suggested for example by Gardner and Whyte (1946). The issue is more complex than is suggested here and further study on the validity of information collected at different stages in the data-gathering process is required. Variables of social power, reciprocity, role perception, and social exchange

## APPENDIX NOTE 2 (continued ii)

might all be expected to exert some influence.

In the early stages, I was content to let my respondents talk, for as Polsky (1967) points out, keeping the mouth shut, feeling and listening is an important rule. The style of the focussed interview (Whyte, 1960) using techniques of probing, clarifying, prompting and recapitulation, can be employed in field interviews, although there remains a danger of selective perception by the observer.

Friedrichs and Ludkte (1975), in their study of a youth centre, supplied observers with the following catalogue of 'rules of behaviour'.

1. Get to know everyone. Explain clearly and concisely the reason for your presence. Give detailed information to anyone interested in it. Explanations should be general so that your later activities make sense to the people and need no further explanation.
2. Greet everyone.
3. Ask for information and co-operation of those with whom you have developed personal contact. First turn to key persons; you will experience the most from them and they are followed by many others. Look for the co-operation of participants, who themselves are good observers and in strategic positions. Try to interest them in your work and ask them to criticise your results.
4. Avoid discussions on controversial questions.
5. Promise not to spread gossip or confidential communication.
6. Interact daily in the same way with many respondents.
7. Avoid becoming a group's or person's pet. Bring no uncontrollable tensions in the goings-on.
8. Participate as much as possible in activities without forgetting your interest in observation.
9. Neither rumours nor secrets should develop about the observer.
10. Be as impartial and neutral as possible, even when you feel closer to certain groups than others.
11. Avoid intimate contact outside the centre.
12. Take your time and do not be too eager to get to know the whole operation right away. ...



## APPENDIX NOTE 2 (continued iii)

...

13. Let it be known whether you are familiar with the observed situation.

(Op.cit.pl97)

Friedrichs and Ludkte (1975) note the need for systematic observation for comparisons, although even they admit that observers cannot be systematic in the early (infiltration) stage. Such lists of rules may be acceptable in theory, although a participant observer who attempts to fulfill all of them may find this an impossible task, even in the observation of a relatively 'homogeneous' group.

It is a moot point as to how sophisticated a view of the observer is required by respondents. If they see him as a sympathetic and interested listener for anxieties and grievances as Kimball et al. (1954) suggest, this may suffice. To clarify an immediate identity in the field as Polsky (1967) suggests, may not always be appropriate, nor may the observer be in a position to "tactfully reject a misperception of his role on the spot" (Scott, 1963). Daniels (1967) advises on accepting role prescriptions of respondents, while Gullahorn & Strauss (1954) also advise on difficulties of depicting the research role. Respondents wish to ascribe a set of role behaviours to the participant observer at an early stage. Demerath (1952) gives an extreme example of the establishment of the social position of an observer over rank and prestige worries in a military organization, and the particular importance of the early stages in determining later perceptions has been commented upon by a number of writers (for example: Gullahorn & Strauss, 1954). It has also been remarked upon that the observer is isolated and lonely at the start of a study (Scott, 1963), which serves to highlight a dilemma for the participant observer of being the object of much scrutiny by his respondents, while also being kept at a distance by them. Goldner (1967) remarks that in shaping the new role, expectations for behaviour will be strongly influenced by the incumbent's actions. Other writers consider the problems of role and status in greater detail (Junker, 1960); the importance of the participant observer's own status within the system he is studying (Bruyn, 1963); the dilemma of needing status, but not too much (Scott, 1963); and

## APPENDIX NOTE 2 (continued iv)

the crucial nature of the social position of the participant observer (Vidich, 1955), being examples.

The dress and general appearance of the participant observer may be of particular importance. If he is accustomed to 'compromise' in his everyday behaviour, then his natural attire may be acceptable to a range of individuals. In a factory environment, where obvious differences in dress exist between white collar and manual workers, clothing is important as an indicator of hierarchical position. In early meetings, jokes were made about our suits to the shop stewards, and we explained that we were seeing Management that day. Our jokes were returned in kind as we were offered overalls so as to be less conspicuous at worker's meetings. In the *Times Higher Education Supplement* (26.12.75), Beverley Shaw questions the ascribed status attributes of suits and gowns, although suggests that there may be differences between northern and southern England. She notes that:

"...The wearing of a boiler suit marks one out as a man of high status. In such a garb a man can only be doing something useful for himself and his neighbour...  
"The costume shows its wearer to be one who belongs manifestly to the real world. He lives in a world of things which he must be shaping and welding, painting and repairing, joining and fitting, drilling and plumbing."

It is important that the participant observer should not be associated with management, but he must maintain a credible role to them. I would wear a suit that was not too smart, occasionally appearing in more or less formal gear, depending upon who I intended to see that day. Benny in any case always wore a suit. Berk & Adams (1970) suggest that the field worker should dress in his regular attire. Papanek (1964) gives an extreme example of the importance of dress for gatherings where admission would be refused for those incorrectly attired. Once the participant observer is accepted in the factory environment, his manner of dress assumes less importance.

This second objection of the Minority Union has been recorded under similar circumstances by Bain (1950). The two objections indicated that the union members who were opposed to the research had associated us with management in both a short-term specific, and a long-term general perspective. This was unfortunate, but perhaps not surprising considering the manner in which we had negotiated entry into the Firm. We had dealt only with management until quite a late stage in the process, and were now paying a price for this error. It would have been to our advantage to have contacted local full-time union officers who covered union members in the Firm, in order to obtain clearance through them as has been done by some researchers, (for example, Turner et al., 1967), rather than aiming at co-operation only from management and workers within the confines of the organization - the 'older' approach (e.g. Hutte, 1949). While this would have involved more work initially in contacting people, it might have prevented such problems as the one now faced from arising in the early critical stages. Warr (1973) however, notes that he still encountered early suspicion from shop stewards despite gaining dual entry to a plant through management and full-time trade union officials. Gouldner (1955), discussing dual entry of a research team reveals a failure to negotiate entry through plant management and the subsequent need to appeal to higher management. Schatzman and Strauss (1973) note the need to negotiate entry with many groups and even with each individual. They note that those at first rejecting may be upset when not asked for their views.

Barnes (1963) remarks upon the period of introductory negotiations necessary for research with management and unions, while Kahn & Mann (1952) outline the general importance of gaining dual, if not multiple entry into an organization. Schneider (1950), and others, mention among the limitations on observation in such organizations, the disposition of unions to define the researcher as management oriented. (See Chapter 8 for a consideration of this issue).

## APPENDIX NOTE 4 p30

Vidich (1955) points out that there is less adequate communication between a researcher who is socially distant from his respondents than with one who is less distant. Berk & Adams (1970) also consider the problem of social distance between a researcher and his respondents. An observer might be best advised to study groups of least social distance from him. However, as my interest was to study the whole internal environment of the Factory, I was obliged to at least gain working access to every identifiable party. Different degrees of acceptance were exhibited by different groups. There are many shades of co-operation along the continuum ranging from reluctant agreement that the research should take place, to a keenness to become highly involved in the research. (See Chapter 5 for information on respondents' feelings about research).

As I became involved with the pattern of relationships within the Firm, the importance of communicating directly with respondents became evident. I had first been identified with Management, and now there was a danger of being identified with the Inside Branch. It has been pointed out that the observer should not identify with a particular group (Miller, 1952), nor be identified by other groups in this way, so making the observer role more difficult, (Gullahorn & Strauss, 1954). To avoid this happening in practice may not be easy.

A participant observer in industry may find it functional for his research to stress a need for cross-fertilization between 'university and industry'. He will probably need to recognize the different emphases required however when using this ploy with management and trade union representatives.

## APPENDIX NOTE 5 p35

The observer, having received formal acceptance by respondents, should be able to maintain their obligations towards him. It may be necessary for him to remind respondents of the agreement they have entered into, and that as long as he keeps his side of the bargain of confidentiality, then they are obliged to continue to co-operate with him. Similarly, respondents may hold the observer to his obligations to them.

## APPENDIX NOTE 6 p37

I made a point of interviewing the director who had been the most hesitant in allowing the research project to proceed, and who specifically objected to the word 'conflict'. This meeting, at an early stage in the research was valuable for maintaining relations with top management. The director was friendly and courteous, but made it clear that he was not in favour of my being there to see how people, "...scratched each other to bits...". I indicated that this was not a research objective, neither was it the image I wished to project. The director surmised that I would be doing work which was similar to that carried out by the research team at Glacier Metal. I did not point out that I would neither be naming the Firm, nor attempting to effect change in the running of it, but the fact that he was using the Glacier study as a familiar example probably did not make this an important omission. After I had concerned myself with putting his mind at ease, he talked for most of this interview, and the meeting appeared to be satisfactory for both of us.

## APPENDIX NOTE 7 p44

The optimal level of rapport and detachment required for effective study is an important issue, and is not confined to the behaviour of the participant observer at formal meetings. Miller (1952) uses the phrase: "rapport combined with objectivity". Polsky (1967) reports that it is desirable to know beforehand where to draw the line. However, the degree of rapport required may not be known in advance. Often, the participant observer must play it by ear, or "balance familiarity with detachment" (Whyte, 1955). Schwartz and Schwartz (1955) refer to degrees of involvement in the social situation under study, and Bruyn (1966) comments upon the maintenance of social distance and dangers of over-rapport (as does Miller, 1952).

Gullahorn and Strauss (1954) outline difficulties of maintaining a non-participant role. This relates to the issue of description of the various styles of participant observation. Bruyn (1963) notes that the participant observer needs to be both part of his environment and also detached. Schwartz and Schwartz (1955) warn that if the observer does not remain detached, values and assumptions char-

## APPENDIX NOTE 7 (continued 1)

acterizing a situation may be accepted without question, while at the same time, the adoption of any role which falls short of proper participation in the environment will lead to the collection of less reliable data, and the observer will have the worst of two worlds. One might not wish to go so far as to institute a distinct set of rules for an observer as was done in the Bank Wiring Observation Room studied by Mayo, (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939). One criterion could be called the 'minimax' approach - minimum of involvement for maximum effort - as suggested by Dalton (1964). Gouldner (1955) summarizes some of the important issues relating to this topic when he notes:

"Deep rapport has its perils, but to treat the norm of impersonality as sacred, even if it impairs the informants' co-operation, would seem to be an inexcusable form of scientific ritualism."

## APPENDIX NOTE 8 p44

Although I did not generally disclose to respondents which meetings I had attended, there were times when this served the function of enhancing my status in the eyes of a third party. This could be done to obtain more reliable information or to improve rapport with another person or group. This sometimes proved necessary when one party, for example as happened on one occasion, a Minority Union perceived that they were fulfilling their 'co-operative bargain' to a greater extent than another party, in this case Management. For me to reveal that I had attended a particular meeting then served the purpose of settling a controversial issue with a party with whom rapport was in some minor state of 'crisis'. It was therefore useful to cite my attendance at a Board Meeting as an example of the extent to which the directors were co-operating in the project if challenged by a shop steward for example.

At the only Board Meeting I attended, the Managing Director asked those present if they objected to my presence in terms which if anyone had voiced a negative vote, would have made them appear unnecessarily unaccepting. Indifference prevailed. For the only time, I did not object to my name being taken as present for the record. At meetings, I was always treated as a participant as

## APPENDIX NOTE 8 (continued i)

far as refreshments were concerned. At the Board Meeting, these consisted of tea and biscuits with china crockery, whereas at other meetings the fare was generally machine coffee out of throw-away plastic mugs. A general guide to the status of a meeting where this was not otherwise obvious, was the setting in which it took place. I was invited to leave for a 'confidential' item at the Board Meeting, and was glad of the chance to do so. It was one of the most uninteresting meetings that I had the privilege of attending, and my purpose of establishing that I could gain access to the top meeting of the Firm, had been accomplished.

## APPENDIX NOTE 9 p45

Although Whyte (1955) notes that merely listening may often be the best course of action for the participant observer, he has to adapt and 'blend' with the scene (Polsky, 1957) as much as possible. There is considerable evidence for the influence of an observer on situations (see for example: Weick, 1969), this being an important problem in participant observation (Vidich, 1956). The presence of an observer affects the situation under study (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955), even if one does not go so far as to suggest that his presence 'distorts reality' (Mensch and Henry, 1953). A group for example may adapt in the presence of an observer (Weiner, 1971), and the researcher will probably need to join in information conversations in order to hold rapport (Gullahorn and Strauss, 1954).

## APPENDIX NOTE 10 p45

Blum (1952), Dexter (1956), and Berreman (1962), discuss problems connected with learning the language, establishing residence and working with different informants in the field. Whyte (1955) notes that the observer must learn the language so that perceptions of respondents towards him become more favourable, and Polsky (1967) asserts that the observer should 'forget' the special language once it is known. Problems of translation - distortions, meanings and alternatives have also been considered (Phillips, 1959). In the context of participant observation, 'language' includes

## APPENDIX NOTE 10 (continued i)

many items besides the spoken word. The subtle nuances which accompany interaction must all come under the scrutiny of the observer who should attempt to familiarize himself with social cues employed by his respondents.

## APPENDIX NOTE 11 p47

Scott (1963) points out that the completely neutral person may be too dull or annoying to respondents, who like people anywhere, require social interaction that is rewarding. Dexter (1956) notes that the interviewer must accept informants' definitions of neutrality. The researcher's actual sympathies would not be considered important in this context, but only those which are attributed to him by his respondents. Argyris (1958) mentions that trying to be neutral creates alienation which in turn is a crucial anxiety and hostility producing factor, and that passivity can generate the same effects. Dalton (1959) indicates that the observer cannot stand back, and that it is better to get the feet wet, remaining close to respondents while escaping over-identification in the process. Dexter (1956) remarks that there is a need to make an interviewee feel that you are on his side and that the researcher may have to align in order to participate at all. He notes that the main point is not to establish neutrality, but to create a situation where the informant will tell what is required. Gouldner (1955) reports that the research team *had* had to be friendly with the miners they studied *before* obtaining interviews with them, and that the miners acted as teachers to the research team members.

## APPENDIX NOTE 12 p47

There was much joking, especially during my early visits to the Factory about events at the London School of Economics, which had at that time received much publicity in the media. Students had low status at that time, especially among some members of the manual workforce, and concern amongst a number that members of the Research Unit were students was expressed. Being so obviously 'young', this presented a problem found also in interviewing and other forms of research to a lesser extent, and one which



## APPENDIX NOTE 12 (continued i)

colleagues in the Research Unit had encountered on other occasions, in particular in the course of interviewing diplomats. Because qualifications are increasingly being gained at an early age by many people, this might be a problem which will be encountered with increasing frequency by young researchers. In the long-term, it may be a question of waiting until the norms of acceptance shift, so that it becomes more generally recognized that men and women in their early twenties may be fully trained professionals, albeit a little short on experience.

In the short-term, one answer is to take opportunities to bolster the status of the researcher. Where senior and junior researchers are together with respondents for example, the junior researcher's status may be upgraded in the interaction so that in the eyes of the respondents, their statuses become closer. Status, while important in a university, is not always such a rigid determinant of behaviour as it may be in the business world. An early example of the way in which my status received a boost was in addressing the senior managers' meeting. Had this been done by any other member of the Research Unit, I could have lost status in the eyes of managers, possibly making my task at a later date more difficult. The role, post, and qualifications of the researcher can be stressed, taking care not to create too much social distance between participant observer and respondents. The concern of the research programme in this area should be to make the participant observer's role easier to play, sparing no effort to improve performance. Such effort should be rewarded by improved reliability and validity of findings.

## APPENDIX NOTE 13 p48

The importance of the image of the participant observer (Vidich, 1955); the problem of being misinterpreted by respondents (Bain, 1950); respondents being suspicious of the observer (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955); and the misperceptions of those being studied (Wax, 1957), are among perennial problems of the participant observer's role. Gardner and Whyte (1946) suggest that individuals must have a clear and simple picture of the researcher's role or they will develop anxieties about it. Vidich (1955) reports that talk among respondents can establish the identity of a research worker, and Gullahorn and Strauss (1954) maintain that while those at the top of an organization generally understood their (research) roles,

## APPENDIX NOTE 13 (continued 1)

those below did not. I did not always find any greater understanding of my role among those 'higher up' in the Firm. Bruyn (1966) asserts that it is important to define the researcher's role, while Polsky (1967) suggests pointing out the differences between the observer and his respondents. This may not always be the most appropriate course of action, and as Whyte (1955) explains, individuals develop their own explanation of the role. That the role of the research worker is increasingly understood is a viewpoint forwarded by Vidich and Bensman (1954), while Kimball et al. (1954) suggest that it is becoming increasingly possible to explain principles of research and sociology to laymen.

A question in the follow-up study, on images of the researcher was not readily understood by respondents. One possible explanation is that the concept of an 'image' for a researcher was not meaningful to respondents. Alternatively, respondents could have forgotten the images held of the researcher after a time interval of six years, or they might even have forgotten that he had one!

## APPENDIX NOTE 14 p49

Schwartz and Schwartz (1955) point out that in active participation, relations between others are more clearly revealed through the observer noting their relations with himself. I was particularly aware of this technique during times of conflict and when I was associated with one party in the eyes of another. These were occasions when relations with others could be used as potent clues for data gathering (Schwartz and Schwartz, 1955). Argyris (1958), reveals that the researcher should not be afraid of manipulation as this may produce important raw data. The observer may have no choice in the matter of being manipulated by respondents.

Some respondents might initially perceive that the observer is primarily interested in developing a relationship with them. This relates back to the 'railway compartment phenomenon' described in note 2. When respondents later see the observer talking with others, they reappraise their perceptions of his role, and may be subsequently less willing to divulge information to him. Burns and Stalker (1961) record a similar phenomenon of respondents

## APPENDIX NOTE 14 (continued 1)

suspecting that they may be the subject of gossip. That informants can talk 'hot and cold', depending upon the situation has been noted by other writers (e.g. Dalton, 1959), a phenomenon also experienced in the present study. Johnson (1975), asserts that the development of trust is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for valid observations to take place. This is not necessarily the case. Over-rapport may distort observation as much as an absence of trust. In this study, lack of trust from one party suggested much about the conflict which might not have been revealed if greater trust of the observer by this respondent group had existed.

## APPENDIX NOTE 15 p52

Strauss et al. (1964) suggest that the participant observer should neglect his own reflexive role on proceedings, for example at meetings, using his own presence as a stimulus for public argument. This may be appropriate for certain gatherings where the observer may be obliged to take an active participant role, but I generally tried to remain a passive observer at formal meetings.

While accepting the general principle that the participant observer accepts all information as valid in the social context within which it is obtained (Bruyn, 1966), he must nevertheless not acquire the reputation in the field of accepting everything that is fed to him, for this might encourage charlatanism among his respondents, who might then be tempted to play the game of taking him for a ride. The researcher must therefore be sensitive to clues which indicate that information is being given tongue in cheek by respondents, or in order merely to elicit some reciprocal information from the observer. Whyte (1960) refers to the sources of distortion in subjects' reporting in the interview and possible checks on their accounts of events. Dean and Whyte (1958) warn researchers to be on the look out for conflicts between verbal and non-verbal clues, and guide them towards such checks on information received as: implausibility, informant unreliability, comparing accounts of the 'same' event (tactfully), and knowing the informant's set. The same authors point out that in any case, 'true' attitudes or statements don't exist, only perceptions of events. Wax (1971) notes the usefulness of keeping a personal diary (in addition to research

## APPENDIX NOTE 15 (continued i)

notes) and considers the most important thing for fieldworkers is to keep their wits about them. Her advice that every fieldworker should assume about every human being that he has good justification for his position, appears very sound.

## APPENDIX NOTE 16 p54

Problems connected with introduction and 'sponsoring' of a participant observer can exist throughout the research period. When the Firm was first contacted, Management must have informed the Unions of the future arrival of a research group in the Factory. On my first encounter with the Minority Unions' shop stewards, this group was referred to as "...some students from the L.S.E....". The shop stewards did not appear to associate us with this 'mythical' group, although one shop steward said, "...that's all right, they're a load of reds up there anyway...". 'Research' in general, and as a referent term had little if any meaning for a majority of trade unionists. (But see also discussion of this point in Chapter 8).

I was introduced as "...someone from the L.S.E..." by the Managing Director on the one occasion I met the Vice-Chairman of the Company. As far as I or the Firm was concerned however, I had reached the top in interacting with the Managing Director. While it might have been interesting to follow events outside the Factory gates, difficulties could have arisen in arranging such contacts. Ill-feeling might have been created among Directors, who were responsible for the day-to-day running of the Firm, and who could have considered such overtures to be outside the original terms of reference. The risk of losing rapport with the Directors, who from the research point of view were important through their interaction with other groups under study, would have been too great.

When I met John, the new Chairman of the Road Branch, he appeared reserved, if not a little suspicious of me. I was aware that in the eyes of the Road Branch, I was at that time associated with Benny, with whom John was not on good terms. At this first encounter I was introduced by Ernie, the Secretary of the Road Branch as: "...the bloke who wants to come to our Branch Meeting...", which was certainly one, but not my sole ambition as far as developing

## APPENDIX NOTE 16 (continued i)

contact with the Road Branch was concerned. It was unfortunate for me that Ernie had chosen to pick up this particular request that I had made at some time in the past, for the purpose of introducing me. This incident at least served to put me on my guard about what was likely to be a sensitive area.

Bill, the Foreman's Association Chairman, developed a unique solution to the issue of introducing me. He resolved that it would be better for me to introduce myself as he admitted to always 'getting it wrong'. I was obliged in one sense in that he recognised his inability to perceive exactly what my role and function was, but took it at the same time as a failing on my part that I had not successfully managed to convey this information to him.

Besides misrepresented introduction which the observer may be subject to on occasion, is misperception of his role by individuals or groups. This may well be a covert phenomenon, for the observer may have no confirmed knowledge that a certain party sees him to be something which he believes he is not. At other times, he may encounter directly the perception by another that he is playing some other role than that of participant observer. For example, during the course of this study I was mistaken variously for: a full-time official of the Majority Union, an official from one of the Minority Unions, a reporter, 'someone from work study', and an accountant - all to my hearing. Given this range of misperceived yet unambiguous role-identities ascribed to me, coming directly to my attention, it would be easy to imagine that there were many more misperceptions of my role throughout the Factory over the field-work period.

That the observer is cast in a number of roles, due to the number of people ignorant of the nature of his enquiry has been noted elsewhere (Gullahorn and Strauss, 1954). Such a ubiquitous phenomenon draws attention to an issue developed by Bain (1950), that the observer should never assume that people know or understand what he is doing. The nature of the participant observer's role can continue to be misperceived throughout his study. When I asked Harold if I could attend a meeting at which an outside official of his Union would be present, his reply was that it was O.K. by him,

## APPENDIX NOTE 16 (continued ii)

but that he could not speak for the full-time official. He suggested that I came along and let the official think that I was from the Personnel Department, some of whose members would also be attending. I was surprised at this suggestion and unsure of what to make of it. As shop steward and convenor, Harold was apparently unwilling to extend his obligations to me over and above those which he had with regard to his own members, and it was clear that I would need to make separate approaches to any union involved if I wished to observe meetings at which full-time union officials would be present.

## APPENDIX NOTE 17 p54

The participant observer is marginal to parties comprising an organization he is studying. Kahn and Mann (1952), and Gans (1968), discuss the 'marginal man' aspect of the participant observer role, while Vidich (1955) explains how the marginal position allows for greater (social) mobility. Whyte (1955) describes the need for the participant observer to be seen as 'different' by those he studies. For a fuller exposition of the 'marginal man' concept, see for example: Park (1928), Golovensky (1952), and Dickie-Clarke (1965). In the context of the marginal character of the participant observer, one taxonomy of field roles is described below.

Four types of participant observer role have been distinguished by Gold (1958), and Junker (1960). The first is known as the 'complete participant', whose true role identity is unknown to those he secretly observes. A researcher adopting such a role in a factory would go through the process of obtaining employment and subsequently act as though he were an employee. In at least one study (Sullivan et al., 1958), this role has been called 'real' participant observation, because no respondent in the field knew the researcher's true role. The researcher, knowing he is an observer may liken his role to that of a social scientist who observes his everyday surroundings in a manner qualitatively different from a layman, by virtue of a training in methods and techniques of observation. Glaser and Strauss (1967) point out that the trained fieldworker is more systematic in approach than the layman, while Roth (1962) reveals that although one is always observing the social sphere, for the most part, such observations remain of a casual and non-

## APPENDIX NOTE 17 (continued i)

recorded nature. Bruyn (1963) explains the relevance of role-taking and socialization to participant observation, later describing the methodology of participant observation as reflecting human life (Bruyn, 1966). This phenomenon has been expressed variously as the sociologist being a participant observer in almost all his work (Vidich, 1955); that the techniques of participant observation are little more than an extension of the social skills which every person has anyway (Weick, 1969); and that role-playing and role-taking characterizing the field worker are an extension of social learning in everyday life (Gold, 1958), so that one may be a participant observer in all forms of interaction. These various standpoints add credence to the idea that techniques of participant observation are based on symbolic interactionism (Becker et al. 1961). The 'complete participant' may feel himself to be marginal, although may not be perceived to be so by those he studies because of the nature of his concealment. It is a self-imposed and subjective marginality which is experienced by the 'complete participant'. Ianni (1972) began as a participant in the lives of those he studied, and later became a participant observer.

The second type of research role is referred to as the 'participant-as-observer'. This role exhibits some strains and dilemmas associated with the 'complete participant' role, although the researcher's behaviour here involves less pretence. If studying a factory, a researcher adopting such a role would go through the motions of becoming an employee of the organization, yet ensure that respondents were aware that the true nature of his work role was to study their environment. This approach can create ambivalence for respondents and incur problems of person and role relationships for the researcher. One further disadvantage of the 'participant-as-observer' role is that as the observer is closely tied to one particular aspect of the environment, work observations may interfere with the research objective of accurate observation (Eldridge, 1968). Nevertheless, there are a number of examples of researchers adopting this role, (see for example: Jahoda, 1940; Kluckhohn, 1940; Dalton, 1950 - who spent several years as both worker and member of management in three factories; Roy, 1952, 1955; Clack, 1967).

## APPENDIX NOTE 17 (continued ii)

The 'participant-as-observer' role is uniquely marginal insofar as it is a dual one, both its incumbent and those with whom he interacts being aware of the nature of the role from their respective standpoints. Problems of legitimacy may well focus around acceptance of this role by 'colleagues' of the participant-as-observer, who are aware that he is both 'one of themselves' who they can locate in their social work-space, and yet is also an observer of their behaviour and attitudes. Respondents might find these two characteristics difficult to accept simultaneously. The participant observer in this role may experience conflict between two major role-sets; those of respondent/'colleagues', and colleague/researchers. Scott (1965) pinpoints the necessity to satisfy the demands of at least two groups, colleagues and respondents as being the field researcher's dilemma. Incumbents of this role could therefore experience intra-role conflict, (see for example: Gross et al., 1958). Babchuk (1962) gives a slightly different categorization to that discussed here, and lists some advantages of this particular role.

The research role adopted in this research corresponds to the third participant observer role, referred to as 'observer-as-participant'. While this role is flexible, giving the researcher more freedom of activity than any other, it is not without its problems. A salient characteristic of this mode of participant observation is that the researcher brings a completely new role to the environment he is studying. Although he does not normally perform any organizational tasks in common with his respondents, he nevertheless participates in the sense that he is present. This role cannot therefore be correctly described as 'non-participant' as labelled by some writers (for example: Dean, 1958; Selltiz et al., 1966). The role has been referred to as that of the 'observing participant' (Becker et al., 1961). Gold (1958) notes that the researcher must be aware of role and self problems of those he studies, and be prepared to help participants play their roles. Gullahorn and Strauss (1954), and Sudnow (1967), have described opportunities to perform 'service functions' to aid the role performances of their respondents, and to help them feel that their actions are not being so distantly observed.



## APPENDIX NOTE 17 (continued iii)

The 'observer-as-participant' role is marginal in the classical sense, for the participant observer has a distinct and recognised role in the community he is studying. This role is likely to be 'consensually defined' as marginal by respondents, and the researcher may adversely encounter such social acrourements of marginality as: acceptance and legitimacy for his role, status barriers, and position in various hierarchies. The individual 'observer-as-participant' could be on hierarchies not comparable to those referenced by some or all his respondents, making interaction difficult for this reason. Daniels (1967) notes some problems encountered by lower status researchers, while Goldner (1967) indicates that the observer might have a low status in the organization, but from this position may control aspects of the environment. The participant observer in this role may seek out groups which are, like him, marginal in the social environment he is studying. Berreman (1962) notes that 'resentful' and 'disaffected' members of a society may be those who are most willing to give information, and these may also be marginal groups in that society. Blau (1964) suggests that the observer-role complements marginal groups, but warns of the dangers of becoming too closely identified with marginal or disaffected informants. Vidich (1955) suggests that the observer may in turn be sought out by marginal individuals, but that such individuals should be made use of in solving certain dilemmas of the researcher, for they are likely to have an 'objective' view of the environment. Doubt may be cast upon this latter assertion. There may be many reasons for respondents other than those who are 'deviant', alienated, or who bear grievances, to seek out the observer, such as those who are similar in age to the observer, or those who are more competent than he in the researched environment (Scott, 1963). Dean et al., (1967) list a range of fruitful informant types: sensitives (varied), revealers (various), 'critical cases' and trained persons.

Coming almost full circle, the final role in this field research taxonomy is that of 'complete observer'. Respondents remain unaware of the presence of an observer who is removed from social interaction with them. This role may therefore be more accurately designated as 'non-participant'. While there are severe limits to information which may be collected through this role, there are interesting examples of what may be achieved. (See for example:

## APPENDIX NOTE 17 (continued iv)

Watson et al., 1948; Webb et al., 1966). The 'complete observer' role has few problems of participation and may only be marginal in that the observer feels he is intruding into a part of the lives of others, albeit for the purpose of 'scientific investigation', and ethical issues of deception may therefore arise. However, as with the 'complete participant', subjects do not see the role as marginal because they are unaware of its existence.

In the complete participant role, the researcher is accepted by respondents as 'one of themselves'. While the researcher knows he is there to study their behaviour, his respondents do not. Providing he plays his role competently, there need be no interaction effects stemming from ambiguity, suspicion, or misperception of a researcher in such a role. For other participant observer roles however, there is likely to be continual role ambiguity of various types, and from this point of view they may be more difficult roles to play.

For an individual playing a complete participant role, inherent ambiguity for the researcher means he must balance his social relationships according to demands of his prescribed and 'real' roles. Discrepancies may be expected between aspects of his assumed and his hidden roles. For an observer-as-participant, ambiguity in this more flexible role may have more practical application. Because his status is often indeterminate, the field worker playing this role may be able to manoeuvre himself into social situations which would not be possible for a complete participant. A participant-as-observer in an industrial organization would have access to only a small section of his 'total' environment in which to study behaviour. It may be true that a thorough account of a particular aspect of an organization can be given from the vantage point of this role. In some cases however it may only be necessary to sample behaviour from sections of an organization to achieve adequate representation of its total operation. To give an example of advantages conferred through flexibility of the observer-as-participant role, during the strike, in spite of increased problems in obtaining interviews with managers via their secretaries, I was able to gain access to directors when managers one level below directors were being turned away.

## APPENDIX NOTE 17 (continued v)

Besides capitalizing on role ambiguity, this was partly possible as a result of my enhanced status under prevailing conditions of overt conflict. (See Chapter 3)

One major shortcoming of the foregoing taxonomy of field roles is that it is more descriptive than explanatory of the role-taking behaviour of various types of 'participant observer'. For the participant observer in an organization, a more appropriate distinction might for example be drawn between observation with or without work participation. However, it may not be possible to unambiguously locate every type of participant observation in a discrete category for they may represent a continuum of overlapping roles. What an observer participates in may vary from time to time and it may be neither useful nor accurate to compare across cases because every participant observer finds himself in an environment which is in some ways unique. The difference between participating in an event and being present at it is not always clear. Audiences and spectators may for example influence the course of a sporting or theatrical performance, and the participant observer is only one element, albeit a focal one in his research. He needs to combine many roles, among them those of onlooker, listener, information gatherer, commentator and questioner.

The participant observer role has been described in various other ways. Schwartz and Schwartz (1955) describe it as being passive or active in mode, where an active participant observer maximises interaction with respondents. These authors consider role activity to be a mode of participation rather than the latter being a determinant of activity. However, a participant observer may need to take both 'passive' and 'active' modes, and perhaps both simultaneously with different parties if prescribed by circumstances (i.e. role demands). Bruyn (1963) notes that the observer role may be formal or informal, concealed or revealed. Gans (1968) considers three role types: i) the total participant involved emotionally with respondents, ii) the researcher participant, and iii) the total researcher with no personal involvement. Gans adds that the first of these is the most fruitful, but that it cannot be held all of the time. Gullahorn

## APPENDIX NOTE 17 (continued vi)

and Strauss (1954) attach three conditions to the operation of the research role which they say must: i) enable the worker to do the research, ii) be acceptable to the group, and iii) be compatible with temperament and experience. The above role categories add little to Gold's classification.

## APPENDIX NOTE 18 p56

A dilemma for the participant observer may be seen when a respondent desires some extension of the researcher's role which the 'rules' of participant observation might suggest is inadvisable. In such circumstances, the researcher may have no time to carefully weigh the pros and cons of taking a particular course of action and must make a snap decision. The result of any alternative decision cannot always be known and it is the non-reproducibility of events in participant observation which makes this a research dilemma. An experienced researcher may be better able to make quick decisions yielding optimal results, but the novice learns by trial and error. In the example given, I made it clear that I was stepping briefly outside the research role, and ensured that Fred accepted this. A further danger in such a situation is over-rapport (Miller, 1952), although awareness of this possibility can help to avoid this. Polsky (1967) asserts that one would do well to have few unbreakable rules in participant observation, while a contention of Gold (1958), is that the role is flexible within the limits of the master role.

The participant observer is almost certain to be put in positions where he is 'primed' for information. Reciprocal questioning by respondents, noted by other researchers (for example: Riecken, 1956), indicates that those who are being observed are invoking an exchange rule in social interaction. Scott (1963) points out that the observer incurs a burden of unpaid social debts as he is always asking the questions. In direct action research, payment may be made more readily, but for the participant observer not involved in such research, the balance of obligations can be restored in various ways such as by helpfulness towards respondents and engaging in other activities which are rewarding for them. Being under continuous surveillance is not comfortable for many people, and it is not unnatural that respondents will want to test

## APPENDIX NOTE 18 (continued i)

out the observer as a 'normal human being' from time to time. Blau (1964), and Polsky (1967), remark that respondents study the participant observer from the start, and as part of the acceptance process the researcher must talk and argue about some topics (Whyte, 1955). In this study, the Foremen were the group who engaged most in this type of behaviour, always ready with questions, not necessarily about the project. It was interesting to note that trade unionists in the Factory hardly ever raised issues unconnected with my research, while higher management did so rarely. In another study, Argyris (1958) noted a similar type of 'testing' experience from foremen asking what others thought of them.

As the observer is so evidently in a position to divulge information and opinions, for him to deny that this is the case would be pointless. I therefore adopted a stance of 'low key' meal-time conversations with the Foremen and it became a joke amongst them that nothing could be got out of me. This was desirable in one sense, being preferable to being seen as one who could be squeezed for information. One foreman said of me to his colleagues, "...you'll never get him to commit himself to anything...". Such a perception could also have its negative side, for it singles out the observer as one who cannot be engaged in regular conversation. I was careful about expounding political and similar views for fear of upsetting respondents, following the line of Vidich (1955), who calls the observer a 'political eunuch' who never commits himself completely. The observer may be obliged to withdraw from situations which create embarrassment for him. I was grateful for the lack of subtle questioning on the part of the Foremen, which made easier my refusals to comply with requests for information. This did not appear to lead to their resenting my role, nor to seriously question my relatively privileged position. They appeared to accept it as well, if not better than any other group in the Factory, perhaps due to them realising that like theirs, my role was marginal. The openness with which I refused to disclose information could have been partly responsible for this acceptance, for it confirmed that all my information was confidential.

## APPENDIX NOTE 18 (continued ii)

That I always sat at the same table in the foremens' dining room, was an issue brought up by my foreman friend Fred, who asked why I always sat with the freemasons. Dalton (1959) refers to masonic membership as an unofficial requirement for success, and it would serve the participant observer in industry well to enquire discreetly into the status and membership of such groups. I had been ignorant of this group identification of my regular table companions and was grateful to Fred for mentioning it, for otherwise I would have remained unaware of potential damage I was doing to my relations with other foremen. The experience indicates that even within an apparently homogeneous group, differential rapport can be built up by the unwary observer. I had begun to be identified with a clique within the foreman group, behaviour that Babchuk (1962) points out, should be avoided. When I asked Bill if I could sit with other groups, he was pleased to put me at another table. It soon became a joke as to which table I sat at, and I was in the position of being something of an unofficial 'status symbol', albeit on a jocular level between two or more sub-groups. Daniels (1967) suggests that status can be readily defined through adoption by a group as a 'member', 'mascot' or friend, and something along these lines seemed to be happening in the case of the Foremen.

## APPENDIX NOTE 19 p59

The Medical Officer suggested to me that exacerbation of industrial trouble could be due to a high uric acid content in the blood of the protagonists. Of this condition, commonly known as gout, he knew a number of cases in the Factory, estimating that there were many more of which he was unaware. This observation, while interesting from the point of view of studying conflict at the Firm, could not be followed up due to inadequate resources. However, the experience served to demonstrate the value of seeking out individuals who were of marginal status, for they often gave interpretations of issues which would not otherwise have been apparent to me.

## APPENDIX NOTE 20 p60

A manager may shelter behind his secretary in order to avoid direct confrontation with an intruder. The participant observer seeking out managers may therefore encounter the secretary role, for a principal demand made of the secretary is to act as a buffer for her boss and information filter on his behalf. The secretary may be conservative in dealing with outsiders, and if unsure as to the status of a visitor, may not wish to let him see her boss and risk incurring sanctions from him. The participant observer may need to adjust to the secretarial role. I encountered a 'secretary problem' on being informed that I could not be admitted to a 'special meeting' of the Personnel Department. I accepted this on the word of a secretary, thinking it could only have come from a manager. Later, I discovered that I could have attended this meeting, and that the decisively operating factor was a secretary misinterpreting a word from her boss. This particular incident had caused me to question my rapport with the Personnel Department; perhaps not such a bad thing in itself, but which in the event was unnecessary. The participant observer thus acknowledges the special position of some members of an organization of ostensibly low status who can provide valuable service to him by helping to maintain his role performance.

## APPENDIX NOTE 21 p62

Each of the effects referred to may feed the other. One danger of this approach is that the researcher may develop the 'set' of the leadership, their way of perceiving the environment, subsequently fitting data obtained from 'followers' into this pattern. This phenomenon, noted by Miller (1952), may be an example of the participant observer acquiring the perceptual set of 'selected' respondents. Gans (1968) suggests that the participant observer gravitates towards those who are liked.

There are examples from studies employing the participant-as-observer' role in industry of the researcher adopting the standards of the observed group (for example: Roy, 1952). Clack (1967) warns of the dangers of 'going native' in such research. Others mention this problem in other contexts (for example: McCall, 1969), while Whyte (1955) describes the experience of

## APPENDIX NOTE 21 (continued 1)

going from a 'non-participant observer' to a 'non-observing participant'. Vidich and Bensman (1954), point out that the interviewer can become over-socialised and as a result not ask for information through accepting taboos and premises existing in the observed environment. Gans (1968) sees the problem of over-identification with respondents as a reaction or compensation for the deception which the role entails as well as to its marginal status.

Problems of explaining the purpose of the study (Whyte, 1955); and the importance of sponsoring the participant observer (Olesen and Whittaker, 1967); may be continuing issues, and the research must be explained at all levels of the organization involved (Gardner and Whyte, 1946). Polsky (1967), and Dean et al., (1957), suggest working from high status positions in a group. Berk and Adams (1970) advise acceptance by the leaders first, while Gullahorn and Strauss (1954) assert that clearance from the top increases the status of the researcher making it safer for those below. However, as these latter authors point out, success at the top does not guarantee good rapport further down, and Kahn and Mann (1952) reveal that the researcher must be recognised all the way down and not be merely sponsored at the top as this may bring its own problems, such as that noted by Gusfield (1955) of top-level clearance fostering opposition lower down. On the other hand, Gardner and Whyte (1946) suggest that anxieties may be created at the top if efforts are made to build up rapport lower down, although I had no indication that this happened in the present study. The suggestion of Kahn and Mann (1952), of both internal and external access to the top of the organization may be appropriate. In a large organization, it is impossible for a single researcher to maintain interaction at all levels, (Gardner and Whyte, 1946), and the observer is obliged to concentrate upon those groups and individuals who in his and his colleagues' judgement, are the most important for research purposes.



## APPENDIX NOTE 21 (continued ii)

In the context of my relationships with Benny and Bill, one problem was the possibility of harmful effects of 'fraternising' with the leadership of groups. If attitudes and perceptions of followers are desired to be known as well as those of 'leaders', such behaviour could be counterproductive. Followers may resent the relative lack of attention paid to them, and feel that as the observer is spending so much time with the leaders, they have nothing additional to contribute to his research, and thus 'clam up' under questioning, or else refer the questioner back to the 'leaders'. Neither are followers who see an observer in frequent close contact with the leadership likely to be keen to expound views which are critical of that leadership. However, the observer is obliged to set limits to the coverage which he can give to his potential field-role-set.

## APPENDIX NOTE 22 p62

I was invited to two social functions peripheral to the working life of the Factory. One was an initiation party for an apprentice from one of the Minority Unions, and the other was an annual party of the Inside Branch. On both these occasions I was otherwise engaged, and thus could not attend. My research data would probably have been more reliable had I made efforts to attend these functions, and thus sampled respondents in as many social circumstances as possible, as suggested by Bruyn (1963, 1966). I was perhaps over-concerned with restricting my role to study the work environment of my respondents so as to avoid possible ambiguity of my role. This was perhaps too rigid an interpretation, under such circumstances and an observer should generally take up such offers as are made to study respondents in other than their work roles.

## APPENDIX NOTE 23 pp63, 306

For a participant observer, one important aspect of the address system in his environment is the manner in which he is slotted into it. This can give him some idea of his own statuses within the environment. It may on occasion be to his advantage to maintain an indeterminate status, although others may try to

## APPENDIX NOTE 23 (continued i)

ascribe a status to him. The status of an outsider such as a participant observer may be fitted into the status pattern within a factory, although some writers (for example: Babchuk, 1962) maintain that the observer has a separate status. The observer in doubt should perhaps be conservative in this respect - it was often pointed out to me that this was a conservative firm - and avoid upsetting his respondents by employing over-familiar terms of address. It is the mode which is most comfortable for respondents which is the prime factor, and not necessarily that which the researcher finds most congenial.

## APPENDIX NOTE 24 p64

A participant observer must record as accurately as possible the events he observes. However, if the act of recording has a significant effect upon what is produced by his respondents, i.e. a 'Hawthorne Effect', is he to risk losing information at its source through upsetting respondents by writing down material as it issues forth, or to risk later distortion and incomplete recall as he tries to remember conversations in retrospect? Some researchers favour the technique of reconstructing interviews after they have taken place (for example: Sayles & Strauss, 1954; Dalton, 1964), while Whyte (1960) maintains that it is hard to reconstruct an interview after the event. As far as possible, the method of recording should be suited to the respondent. Whyte (1960) makes the point that informants may be anxious if the interviewer is - or is not - taking notes. It may be more useful for a participant observer to attempt to recall only the gist of what transpires during an interview, and be able to note down the salient points for later reference. Note-taking while a respondent is talking may in any case be an inefficient method of data collection. From the reliability point of view, it may be more appropriate to look the respondent in the face as he is speaking, in an attempt to assess the accuracy of statements. The way in which something is said may be more important than its content. The notion that experience alone can help the experimenter is challenged by Vikan Kline (1962), who, on the basis of research evidence, argues that the higher the status of an experimenter, the greater the effect of bias. Becker (1970) notes

## APPENDIX NOTE 24 (continued i)

that if a researcher is perceived by respondents to be unimportant, then he may be more likely to obtain 'confidential' or personal information, contrasted with his role of greater perceived power in experimental situations, or more impersonal and less visible survey techniques. Rosenthal (1964) demonstrates that higher status experimenters are better able to bias subjects' responses. Findings of Weiss (1968) suggest that the better the rapport between an interviewer and respondent, the greater the proportion of biased responses. This result is explored by Phillips (1971), and Phillips and Clancy (1971). Rosenthal (1966) regards it as 'reasonable but risky' to assume that good rapport gives better data. Rosenthal suggests increased articulation of values by the professional experimenter to help feedback.

## APPENDIX NOTE 25 p65

It cannot be good practice to secretly record conversations without the permission of all concerned, both ethically, and for the reason that in the event of discovery a project could suffer to the point where it was irretrievable and the name of research generally could have diminished credibility. It could be advantageous for the field worker to adopt the tape recorder as part of his regular role apparatus. This could be introduced from the start, or it could be phased in as part of his role itinerary. While it might initially have the effect of inhibiting respondents, in the longer term this effect could be more than offset by the quality and quantity of information obtained. Respondents may be more inhibited in a situation where what they are saying is visibly written down than in instances where speech is 'invisibly' recorded. Polsky (1967) has argued against the taking of notes or recordings in the presence of respondents, but on the occasions where I took notes, such as in meetings, I was not aware of any reticence. This does not mean that the act of recording did not distort observed interaction. Recording of one form or another is regular practice during interviews, and there is little reason to suppose that it would not be accepted in the work of the participant observer.

## APPENDIX NOTE 25 (continued 1)

From a theoretical viewpoint, there is a distinction between 'straight' recording of what is said by respondents, and interpreting what is said or observed in the context of what is already known by the researcher. To begin with, most recording will probably be of the former type. Little will be known about the environment by the new researcher, and he may be obliged to record everything he observes as accurately as possible. However, the development of tentative hypotheses in this approach goes hand in hand with data collection, making this process more than a blind accumulation of material. The participant observer asks questions of his data, searches for answers and makes proposals about what he will do with them later on. As the research progresses, recording may shift in the direction of interpretation. Interpretation based upon (perhaps unarticulated) hypotheses occurs from an early stage, and data collection becomes more selective since it is focussed. Towards the end of a study, everything which is observed enters a comprehensive context of what has gone before.

## APPENDIX NOTE 26 p69

Whyte (1955) maintains that it is difficult for a participant observer to fit into more than one group. That it is not impossible is shown by studies such as this. To fit into all groups with equal facility may indeed be hard, and other authors (e.g. Bain, 1950) report problems over spending too much time with one group in a factory setting. Gullahorn and Strauss (1954) note that in order to get closer to a group, some neutrality has to be sacrificed, perhaps because, as Riecken (1956) remarks, the participant observer will have to offer some support for the convictions of the group. Vidich and Schapiro (1955) mention the selectivity of respondents as a source of bias, and Bruyn (1963) reports on the inclination of the observer to identify with a particular group as a hindrance to recording and reporting, adding that there may be a tendency to report sympathetically the plight of a segment of the population under study. Barnes (1963) considers that the neutral role of the ethnographer can often be defined so that conflict situations can be observed from more than one standpoint, but that in some conflict situations there is no

## APPENDIX NOTE 26 (continued i)

neutral role and then impartial inquiry is impossible. Unfortunately Barnes offers no guidance to the criteria for determining the status of any given conflict situation.

An example of how my role might have been perceived in other than a neutral light arose when the Deputy Personnel Manager, Mr. Duncan, offered me the use of a desk in an office. Michael however thought that even with the proviso that such an office would not be in the 'management part' of the Factory, such a move could still associate me with management in the eyes of the unions. It was Mr. Duncan who had first arranged for Benny to occupy his room in which to carry out some of his duties, thereby effecting greater legitimation for his status in this important manner. At first I took Michael's advice and declined the offer of a room. Later on I thought that an office in the Factory would help to legitimize my role and there would be no need for me to broadcast the fact that I had acquired some measure of 'official semi-permanence'. Months later therefore, I returned to the same man, who lived up to his promise and right away found me somewhere that I could retire to. It was not entirely satisfactory, and after some while I ceased to use it, although it occasionally proved useful as a place in which to record a day's proceedings while they were still fresh in my mind.

## APPENDIX NOTE 27 p75

The 'special' meeting of the Personnel Department from which I had been unnecessarily excluded was concerned with promoting Department members. The Personnel Manager was to take over as Personnel Director, while the rest of the Department moved up accordingly. The Director who had been least happy with the research was being moved from his present position in which he was reputedly not content, to one which would remain untouched as far as the research was concerned. I now had a more sympathetic channel all the way to the top. The increase in anxiety supposedly felt by a researcher who moves up an organization through awareness of his own low status (Argyris, 1958), was a phenomenon which I did not have the dubious distinction of experiencing. I felt greater anxiety while moving in the opposite direction!

Discouragement may be an experience for a participant observer who works alone for long periods. The data he collects is largely dependent upon his relationships with his respondents, so when these are poor, he may be prone to feelings of inadequacy and strain. A trained participant observer should be able to cope adequately with such problems in his research. Such problems as I encountered are of importance in considering the participant observer and reliability of his research.

Whyte (1955) reveals that one can never be totally relaxed while playing such a role, and the strain of wondering about acceptance is always present. Wax (1957) mentions the anxiety of the researcher coming out, and Schwartz and Schwartz (1955) remark upon anxiety and bias as sources of distortion, for example by the projection of anxieties into a situation or through the influence of anxieties from an outside role. They mention the possibility of preoccupation with handling the observer's own anxiety, while Gans (1968) refers to the problems of strain and anxiety in the context of guilt through role-playing. Miller (1952) states that it may be the researcher's insecurity which leads him to increase rapport with respondents, while Trice (1956) argues that the researcher who is overconcerned with acceptance may find it hard to retain his outsider role, especially if he is made aware of resistance towards him. Gold (1958) however, points to the use of the participant observer role in protecting the self, and that one can leave the field to clarify and reconsider the course of study. Blau (1964) considers coping with anxiety by the imposition of a rigid research structure, while Goldner (1967), in an attempt to pinpoint and analyse the strains and conflicts of the role has suggested breaking these up into: gaining access to data, ongoing research, identification with a group, total involvement, and over-rapport. Such a categorisation may not be very helpful in coping with strain, and seems to be more theoretically than empirically based. Weick (1969) stresses the importance of accepting role problems. Vidich (1955) suggests that the participant observer be sceptical of himself when data-gathering, and it may be ironic that in order to perform his role adequately, the incumbent must operate in conditions of self-criticism, doubt and ambiguity.

Wax (1957) refers to acute problems of a participant observer in an hostile environment, while Gardner and Whyte (1946) point out that it is always more difficult for an outsider to operate at times of tension, the more intense the conflict, the harder is access for the observer without a membership role (Roy, 1965). Paul (1954) remarks that the investigator trying to stay neutral may be caught in cross-fire and have to align himself with one side in order to participate at all. Gullahorn and Strauss (1954) disclose that neutrality in an highly charged situation may be equivalent to hostility. This may be one aspect of polarization in a state of conflict, and Vidich (1955) is of the opinion that respondents will attach meanings to the 'neutrality' of an observer. Gullahorn and Strauss (1954) encountered difficulties in working with conflicting groups, and Vidich (1955) suggests that the observer has to choose between competing factions. Wax (1971) suggests that the "participant observer must expect to encounter factions in every environment". Bruyn (1966) remarks that the participant observer should neither encourage nor avoid conflict, although he is always a potential scapegoat (Mann, 1951). A suggestion from Vidich (1955), is that the observer deliberately antagonise one group in order to gain acceptance by another group. Such a policy, if effected however, could backfire, leaving the observer diminished rapport with all parties. This might happen if two or more parties perceived the temporary visitor to their environment to be a threat to their autonomy of action. They might prefer each other's company, despite conflict, to that of a relative newcomer, and tend to form a coalition against him rather than reinforcing their own mutual antagonism, until the threat was removed. The research worker must remember to maintain his self-image (Whyte, 1955), for as Vidich (1955) notes, a primary concern in participant observation is the maintenance of a credible role for the researcher. Roy (1965) asks if a 'universal membership role' is possible which is above conflict. If only 'mild' conflict exists, it may be possible for a single observer to study all sides, otherwise it may be practical to study only one of them in depth. Some writers suggest that a research team could be employed to observe various sides to an issue (e.g. Roy, 1965; Eldridge, 1968).

During the first six months of fieldwork, the Conflict Research Unit was in negotiation with a private grant-giving body for funds to finance a study of three more factories. The body had asked for references from the firm which had been the subject of a previous study, as well as from the one in which fieldwork was under way.

The Personnel Manager was very willing to act in this capacity on our behalf, replying to the effect that he considered our research worthwhile and that we were most welcome to do research at the Factory. A similar letter from the previously researched firm was also forthcoming.

It was a great disappointment when the grant-giving body, after giving much encouragement over our application, turned down the request for funds. By this time, considerable rapport with the Firm had been established and I was offered access to their file which contained the correspondence between the Firm and the grant-giving body. The latter had written to the Firm informing them of the fate of the application. Fortunately, relations with the Firm were such that this did not adversely affect rapport.

Management were concerned that we should finish the project and I agreed to do so. The concern of the unions was similar to that of management, although the suggestion from one shop steward that the Company be approached with a request for finance could not be taken up for reasons of jeopardising the autonomy and credibility of the research. The research was completed with the help of a small amount of money from the Social Research Division of the London School of Economics, whose help was gratefully received.

APPENDIX NOTE 31 ppl21, 174

I had been concentrating on Benny too much for an Inside Branch viewpoint, for Peter and Ron, the Secretary and Vice-Chairman were never as ready with information for me as he was. I had not been careful enough in spreading my time over all the shop stewards. Peter and Ron, who had been representing the Inside Branch in the absence of Benny, were not nearly so sure of the authority of their positions and were correspondingly less ready to co-operate with me than he had been. Gullahorn and Strauss (1954) note that such excellent rapport (as I had with



## APPENDIX NOTE 31 (continued i)

Benny), can sometimes only be gained at the expense of losing rapport elsewhere. For example, I had asked Ron to ring me to inform me of the result of the Road Branch Meeting which I was barred from attending. He did not do this despite agreeing to my request at the time. He later excused himself on the grounds that he had 'forgotten' on the Friday evening of the Meeting, and 'did not think it wise' on Saturday. I was very glad of the return of Benny, whose full co-operation I was still assured of. To emphasise this, he invited me to "stick with us", in order to view the events to come. Peter and Ron were also visibly relieved at Benny's return.

## APPENDIX NOTE 32 p140

Daniels (1967) mentions that the offer of a piece of news can be an act of good faith to encourage respondents, and it might be argued that where a respondent would in any case have ready access to a piece of news (as opposed to confidential information), and is merely asking the researcher as a 'participant' rather than as an 'observer' of events, little harm might come from giving news items away. It would still be better to err on the side of caution because the observer might be perceived as a 'news service' by respondents to the detriment of his research. In my first encounter with Michael, it was brought home to me that I should not under any circumstances be a communication channel. The University of Liverpool (1954) research team noted that they were sometimes used as a communication channel by their respondents however, and reported no adverse effects on the research as a result. Ianni (1972) admits to reciprocity of information and favours with his respondents.

## APPENDIX NOTE 33 p140

One should aim to balance the factors of not ignoring conflict yet not generating it either; not always an easy assignment. Dalton (1964) notes the advantage to be gained from interviewing subjects before they cool or become wary, and Becker (1970) refers to the use of aggressive or deceitful interviewing in provoking people into saying things they might otherwise keep to

## APPENDIX NOTE 33 (continued 1)

themselves. Clark (1965) used the tactic of planning confrontations and conflicts among individuals and groups in order to draw out feelings. Trow (1957) discusses the issue of when to interview and when to participate and observe, while Sayles and Strauss (1953) point out that it is often hard to draw a line between observation and interviewing. Whyte (1955) confirms that learning when to question is important, and advises against the risk of asking the wrong questions. The 'wrong' questions may however provide valuable information, so these factors should also be balanced. Avoiding leading questions and adherence to the standard 'rules' of interviewing may be advisable if there is doubt in the researcher's mind. Diminished rapport does not necessarily result in information loss however. In a number of instances, I had 'poor' rapport with parties, yet could still collect valuable information from them. It may be important to remember a point made by Hudson (1972), that both good and poor rapport in research distort information.

It is a mistake for a participant observer to think that because he has very good rapport with one group of respondents, then the information gathered from this group is more valid than that obtained from groups with which his relationships are less good, although it provides an enticing trap. In all cases, information acquired is an artifact of relationships, the validity of the information never being simply a function of how good the rapport-level is with a group. Vidich (1955) points out that the social position of the observer determines largely what he will see. Although the participant observer may use his relationships with respondents to establish social facts in the environment he studies, these do not necessarily mirror those relationships existing among respondents in their 'natural' environment. Relationships which would exist but for the intervention of the participant observer can only be deduced from observation and not directly observed. As Schwartz and Schwartz (1955) note, the participant observer is an integral part of the situations he studies. The closest that he can hope to come to discovering true inter-party perceptions is to 'join' each group in turn and experience a period of simulated membership in each. This might prove difficult to undertake successfully.

## APPENDIX NOTE 34 pp148,424

The participant observer may feel that he is continually walking a tightrope between 'popularity' which might be regarded as a useful element of rapport, and reliability and accuracy of the information he obtains, which is also necessary for producing valid data. Vidich (1955) expresses the problem thus: "... between...alienation and...objective evaluation lies an approach to the problem of validity...". If the observer is 'popular' among his respondents, he may have to content himself with only superficial data. If he decides that he must dig deeper into the causes of social phenomena such as those associated with a state of conflict, then he may risk losing some rapport yet have more to gain in the longer term from insightful reporting into the nature of the behaviour he is studying. I obtained confirmation of this analysis of my behaviour from some of my key respondents at a later date. Difficult decisions have to be made in the field however, and it may be important for the researcher to be in control of situations so that he retains some freedom to make decisions and act upon them, rather than always being obliged by his respondents to act in certain ways. It remains true that the researcher can probably never 'be himself', but must fit into a prescribed role (Gullahorn and Strauss, 1954).

## APPENDIX NOTE 35 p148

One physical attribute of the researcher of possible importance in face-to-face encounters is his age relative to that of his respondent. Although I was no stranger to interviewing, the Personnel Manager was himself used to interviewing others, among them individuals of about my own age. This encounter therefore represented a symbolic reversal of the type of interview to which he was accustomed. He remarked upon the similarity of questions from one occasion to another, assuming it to be part of 'the pattern'. The conflict which is inherent in the participant observer's role is again seen in this example. It may be rather different from the experience of the 'straight' interviewer whose objectives are more obvious to respondents. For the participant observer, it may be appropriate for the most searching and important questions to be asked first, especially if the respondent

## APPENDIX NOTE 35 (continued 1)

is already known. In almost any interview, the cost to the interviewee may be high as the information flow is almost exclusively one-way, and not representative of normal interaction. Mr. Duncan spoke of having taken on the 'chore' of the research project, intimating that they (i.e. he) were now accepting resignedly the consequences of that decision (made initially by his predecessor).

The day after this event, I thought that I had made an appointment to see the new Deputy Personnel Manager, but found that I had been entered in the wrong diary. Finding myself with Mr. Duncan again, I was about to apologise for the error which had not been my fault, when he called me back to tell me something which he admitted had slipped his mind when I last interviewed him. This highlighted my dilemma, for the previous day, when I had been almost certain of there being more information that he could have given me, I had not pressed him for it. I interpreted his behaviour on the second occasion as an indication that I had done the correct thing in withdrawing when I had done, as this present move from him had the effect of re-establishing rapport between us. The information he wished to impart to me was valuable, and gave me a view of events of the past week which would not otherwise have occurred to me, and which I obtained from no other source.

## APPENDIX NOTE 36 p149

I had lost credibility in the eyes of the Road Branch representatives because I was not seen by them to be performing my role of sitting in meetings, asking questions and 'being around'. Riecken (1956) points out that enquiry, while appropriate for a newcomer, may generate suspicions after initial stages, and Dean et al. (1967) suggest that the routine adopted by the researcher must first make sense to those in the field. Once the strike had begun, my main chance was to make up for earlier deficiencies, and at the risk of over-exposure I felt it was necessary for me to be seen around for as much of the time as possible. This mode of operating had its drawbacks. I had to provide frequent reassurance that parties were keeping their bargain. The Minority Unions, after I had been with them for much of the time during

## APPENDIX NOTE 36 (continued 1)

the strike, had come to believe that management co-operation was ebbing, and I was obliged to provide evidence to counter this belief. At the same time, the fact could not be kept hidden that I did not have full co-operation from the Road Branch, and to have attempted to pretend otherwise would have been harmful from the point of view of appearing deceitful.

## APPENDIX NOTE 37 pp150, 229, 466

Gullahorn and Strauss (1954) came up against union men who were suspicious of researchers through past experiences of betrayal by 'phoney researchers' who were journalists. Perhaps as a result of such experiences, Paul (1954) stresses the importance of introductions for the researcher, which should not be as a 'journalist'. Hyman and Brough (1975), cite Miliband's (1969) explanation of how the dominant ideological framework provides a hostile basis for press reaction to trade union activity:

"...newspapers love trade unions so long as they do badly the job for which they exist. Like governments and employers, newspapers profoundly deplore strikes, and the longer the strike, the greater the hostility..."

In an extensive empirical study, the Glasgow University Media Group (1976) studied TV news material from the first six months of 1975, concentrating particularly upon one 14-week strike. The study clearly demonstrates the non-neutrality of TV news, which is described as "a sequence of socially manufactured messages which carry many of the culturally dominant assumptions of our society". A chapter on trade unions shows suspicion and hostility exist towards the media. Among the reasons for this are that reporting of strikes is unfair and TV reporting is biased in industrial relations matters. A number of the larger trade unions have made decisions to build up links with press and TV, for example in appointing press officers and holding press conferences.

Management may also view the press as an undesirable factor in their industrial relations. The Managing Director of the Firm remarked to me on one occasion that "...the best thing for industrial relations is a newspaper dispute!"

## APPENDIX NOTE 37 (continued 1)

Elmer (1951) pinpoints the need to avoid being taken as an "investigative reformer". Roy (1965) suggests that lack of understanding of the research role is the key to non-co-operation, giving an example of union suspicions being aroused as an organizer drove round to his colleagues warning them of the approach of a "company connected snooper". Other researchers have been more fortunate. Clack (1967) for example, experienced no apparent resentment in his research as a participant-as-observer, in which role he observed three stoppages large enough to be recorded (Turner et al., 1967); while Sayles and Strauss (1953), express surprise at the union co-operation they received.

In the current research, this was the second example of retro-active interference from others. Ten years previously, other researchers from the L.S.E. had undertaken research in the Factory. Theirs had been a study on foremens' work and break patterns, one of the older foremen bringing it to my attention just before the strike. The results of this research had not pleased the foremen, and it was perhaps fortunate that I had a skimpy knowledge of this research and could put the minds of the foremen at ease to the effect that my research would have different things to say. Francis (1967) gives an example of how unrelated research can interfere with later research proposals to the same respondents, permission in this case being refused on the basis of respondents' past experience.

Such examples show how it is possible for a researcher, or one resembling him, to 'sticky the pitch' for others. The previous research at this Factory had presumably left a good impression on management, who had not mentioned it to me. For many respondents, there seemed to be a 'halo effect' (or a 'horns effect!'), whereby all social scientists were 'tarred with the same brush'. On one occasion for example, a shop steward included me in the same category as public opinion polsters!

These and other examples further demonstrate the increasing penetration of social scientific research into the community. On another occasion, while interviewing a random sample of people in Greater London (population around 8 million) for a

## APPENDIX NOTE 37 (continued ii)

colleague's research project, I encountered a respondent whose husband had been a subject for a quite different research project in my Department! Such examples indicate that penetration of the potential respondent population may be reaching saturation point, so that many people have now had first-hand experience of 'social research'. For this reason, researchers should try to leave respondents as far as possible as they were found, and certainly not in any way prejudiced against research. Since I left the Factory, at least two further research teams have descended for information. Moore (1967) mentions that over-researching a population creates boredom and suspicion in respondents.

## APPENDIX NOTE 38 p155

At the outset, in a context of uncertainty about the research, I had said that it would probably take "a few months" to complete the fieldwork. I felt obliged to remain non-committal when asked for more accurate estimates of the time which the project would take. The decision not to become committed to a precise figure was vindicated by events. I thought that my role would usefully exist until a long-term solution to the conflict had been found by the parties. Only when this object was in sight could I say that the fieldwork was almost complete and that writing up could begin.

The length of time which I would be researching at the Factory was a recurring issue during the project. My original personal estimate was that the fieldwork would take at least nine months. This figure was closer to two years when the study was completed. The obligation of a researcher to tell his respondents how long a study of them will take, is a matter for debate. It is unlikely that a project of this type will be amenable to accurate planning. If a definite time period is given to respondents which turns out to be wide of the mark, some loss of credibility for the researcher could result. In some instances, known availability of funds might mean that a precise reply can be given.

## APPENDIX NOTE 38 (continued 1)

If possible, the time period given should be left vague in cases of doubt. If the nature of the research is explained to respondents, then the difficulties of saying for how long the study might last should also be outlined. It would be unlikely that a thorough study of a firm of comparable size would take less than a year with one researcher in the field. Whyte (1955) makes the point that a long period of time is desirable for such studies. Nevertheless, respondents form their own opinions about how long a research study involving themselves should take, and these opinions to some extent determine how they react to a participant observer over time. After some months in the Factory, particularly after short absences, I was assailed by the 'you still here?' type of remarks. Despite the humorous element in these comments, they highlight beliefs of respondents that they should see some return for their co-operation. It may help if past work of a similar nature can be handed over from time to time so that respondents may see an example of what will be the end product of their co-operation. Papers should not necessarily be handed over at the start, but used as reinforcement throughout a research project.

During the present research, an opportunity arose to conduct a small independent research study on a decision-making committee. The resulting paper was handed over for comment before the main research was completed. This project helped to validate the role of respondents as vital participants in research.

When little extra information is obtained from visits to the studied environment, this can indicate that diminishing rates of return exist for research investment and that the useful life of the fieldwork is coming to an end. The rate of accumulation of new knowledge never reaches zero because the process of social change generates new information. Vidich (1955) notes that it is essentially change that the participant observer studies. Clack (1967) observes the phenomenon of diminishing returns in research, for which Glaser and Strauss (1967) coin the expression; "theoretical saturation". Fletcher (1975) regards it as irresponsible to collect more data than can be used.



## APPENDIX NOTE 39 p156

Patrick (1973) records feelings that no progress has been made in the field role, and Bain (1950) relates similar rapport loss. Gardner and Whyte (1946) note the importance of maintaining interaction in an organization over time. Mann (1951) makes the point that the time-cost of establishing lapsed good relations is greater than their constant maintenance. My main attempts to do so continued for some months after the strike, when I concerned myself with the Staff Evaluation Committee, which a colleague and I studied to collect data on their decision-making process, (Semin and Glendon, 1973). I kept in touch with the Factory by way of this project, which did not have major consequences for the participant observation study.

## APPENDIX NOTE 40 p161

Once Benny had given the 'OK', I experienced no difficulty in gaining the confidence of the Inside Branch shop stewards. Peter, the Inside Branch Secretary was extremely helpful at first, but later his attitude towards me took a turn for the worse, which I attributed to one inadvertent remark by myself. Peter often arranged for me to have meals in the Workers' Canteen and would try to sit me with someone who would have something to say to me about some aspect of the Factory. His guesses as to what I would be interested in hearing about were not terribly astute, but I nevertheless appreciated the trouble he went to, and the interest which he showed. On one occasion I was in the Canteen and Peter asked me if I would like a meal there that day. It so happened that I had already arranged to eat with the Foremen, and I replied without thinking, "No, it's OK thanks, I'm with the Foremen today". His response came close to echoing my own words, but his tone was evidently one of misgiving, and my relations with Peter were not the same for a long while after that. The rapport which I had carefully built up with him had seemingly been destroyed in the time taken to utter one sentence. Peter appeared particularly suspicious of me when Benny was absent during the period leading up to the strike.

## APPENDIX NOTE 40 (continued i)

On one occasion in November, Peter vociferously objected to my attendance at a fairly 'innocuous' meeting to which other participants, including shop stewards from all the union groups, had agreed to my presence. The incident was one of acute embarrassment for me. My non-membership of a trade union, which was compulsory for all manual workers at the Factory, he used as an excuse for not allowing me into the meeting. I stayed to attend the meeting, for to have left would have been to acknowledge the non-legitimacy of my status as an observer, which Peter was claiming.

That I had established rapport with other parties in the Firm, may have made my role no longer acceptable to Peter after he became aware of the extent and implications of this. One concern I had, as when rapport with the Road Branch had been low, was that reluctance to co-operate with the research by one party would be infectious. For a while, after the strike, my rapport with all union groups was poor. That I had no union card to present to Peter was awkward; that Mr. Duncan chose to bow politely and deliberately to me as he left the meeting - ignorant of the earlier controversy - served to heighten my embarrassment. I was determined that I should not be barred from attending such meetings, feeling that I would lose credibility if I were to shamble away after one individual had tried to veto my presence. I perceived that relative decrease in contact, together with the mismanaged incident months before, were the factors responsible for diminished rapport with one individual.

I was nevertheless concerned with repairing the damage which had been caused by this incident, and I confirmed with Peter soon afterwards that I was a trade union member. Gullahorn and Strauss (1954) point out that it might be hypocritical for a participant observer in such circumstances not to admit his attachment to trade unionism as a principle. The information need not be volunteered to management, and in the event of discovery by them, could be explained in terms of expediency for developing rapport. Management which gave their approval of closed-shop provisions would be unlikely to be 'anti-union'. By the end of the fieldwork, I was back on friendly terms with Peter.

## APPENDIX NOTE 40 (continued i)

I interpreted the desire of respondents who were manual workers to determine my stance towards trade unionism as symptomatic of their concern to place me in a category within their frame of reference. There were occasions during the fieldwork period of shop stewards approaching managers on the issue of non-unionists working inside the Factory, such as subcontracted labour, or delivery drivers.

## APPENDIX NOTE 41 p190

Miller (1952) notes the phenomenon of acceptance of an observer as a friend rather than as someone who is playing a delimited social role, while David (1961) refers to the behaviour of subjects giving more away to the researcher in his 'out-of-research' role, and Daniels (1967) of the discovery of new things in an out-of-research role. Gullahorn and Strauss (1954) record that towards the end of their research, their roles tended to become increasingly participant. I did not find this occurring in my research. Geer (1964) notes that empathy first rises and then falls away after the research.

As he receives information about his own role, an observer who latterly employs tactics of actively seeking feedback informally may note features of interaction which he has previously missed. For example, through perceiving events in a rigid fashion, he may have overlooked important features of the organization he is studying. If he is accustomed to thinking of organizations in theoretical terms, as a series of hierarchies or as role-set configurations for instance, he may have missed features of informal interaction. He may have failed to perceive subtle changes in relationships between participants in a situation where someone more aware by virtue of being a member of the organization would be able to see changes taking place. This would not detract from added value and insight which an outsider might bring, but does highlight the complementarity of possible approaches, stressing the need for a participant observer to attempt to incorporate all views from those under study into his research.

## APPENDIX NOTE 41 (continued i)

An observer could note a point made by Scott (1965), that informants have different uses: as representative subjects, 'surrogate observers', and experts. Ianni (1972) records that one of his informants became a junior colleague. Campbell (1955) suggests other dimensions for informant sampling which might be followed, these being: qualitative/quantitative, random/specialised, naive/sophisticated, and sharing a 'social scientific frame of reference'/not doing so.

## APPENDIX NOTE 42 pp190, 235, 421

A participant observer undergoes a continuous process of socialization into the environment which he joins for the purpose of study. Role learning continues until he leaves the environment, and lessons learned on parting may prove useful for future studies. A participant observer should not be afraid to check his mistakes openly.

Schwartz and Schwartz (1955) point out that the researcher must be able to derive some satisfaction from playing his role, even though as Blum (1952) suggests, it is better to take a pessimistic view of one's data. I had established working contact of some form with all parties in this study, and a measure of interest in the research had been generated in a number of respondents. Outside the Firm itself, I had established rapport with full-time union officials, who had expressed as great an interest in the type of research I was engaged upon as anyone I had met inside the Firm. This may have been important, for as Gardner and Whyte (1946) point out, it is necessary for management and unions to take an interest in the research they contribute to. Without such an interest being shown, a researcher can feel that he is wasting his own, and others' time.

Vidich and Bensman (1954) note the detective/investigator role in participant observation, and Argyris (1952) also likens research to detective work, as do Dean et al. (1967), who add that like detective work, it is also an art. A researcher is a detective, but unlike a true detective his respondents are not obliged to answer his questions truthfully, for he has no

## APPENDIX NOTE 42 (continued 1)

legal sanctions which he may apply. He must therefore behave like a spy at times in order to extract the maximum of information with the minimum of disturbance of the environment.

It is not easy to prescribe rules that a participant observer should follow, particularly in times of 'conflict' or 'crisis'. He should be flexible and sensitive in social encounters. He may have to act on the basis of a 'feel' for situations, relying on 'intuition' to see him along sometimes. If this viewpoint appears 'unscientific', it should be remembered that when a decision has to be made in a moment in the field, there will probably be insufficient time to apply 'scientific' principles. Becker and Geer (1960) explain that 'hunches' and 'insights' should be seen as, "...truncated and unformalized acts of analysis...". A participant observer will probably have had training in social science, and through such training, have acquired some knowledge and skill in social situations. Strauss et al. (1964) point out that a participant observer always makes choices about data gathering, while Vidich and Bensman (1954) write on the researcher's frame of reference.

Research relationships facing a participant observer may be seen to reflect his encounters in other roles. He therefore not only has theoretical and empirical knowledge of his subject, but also a relevant fund of personal and social experience upon which to draw. Blum (1952) warns the participant observer that he is in a different world to his own, even if he has experience of different walks of life. Unlike an anthropologist who studies societies different from his own, a participant observer in his own country has advantages based upon years of experience of his own culture and society. Vidich (1955) comments upon advantages of being a participant observer in one's own culture, with the proviso that the researcher has the disadvantage of being in a society where his experience is still limited (in my case for example, of detailed workings of factory life), yet being regarded by respondents to some extent as knowledgeable about all sections of it. Vidich (1955) explains how an anthropologist can exploit his true ignorance of another culture, while the observer in his own society has less credibility if he attempts to pursue such a strategy. Wax (1957), an

## APPENDIX NOTE 42 (continued ii)

anthropologist, mentions the teacher role of respondents, and writes of the improvement of an amateur field worker by virtue of his role of student to those whom he studies. Trice (1956) suggests that the participant observer insist that his respondents are experts. Papanek (1964) points to another major advantage of coming from outside the society one is studying, that of flexibility of all aspects of the role.

What may be said of relationships between participant observation and everyday interaction? Everyday life may be compared with the 'complete participant' role, (cf, note 17) and Goldner (1967) discusses becoming an observer of one's own life. Alienated or anomic individuals who feel detached from life, yet who must play a part in it may be in a comparable position to the complete participant in field research. This should not be taken to imply that able participant observers are necessarily anomic or alienated individuals, although Gans (1968) suggests that this might be true. A contrary position would be that the participant observer must be sensitive to his own behaviour in relation to his environment, and especially aware of the nature of his social relationships. He may be more appropriately compared with the marginal man referred to earlier (note 17), aspiring to membership of a higher status group to which he is marginal, but being neither a member of this group, nor of a group of lower status than himself. However, in researching a factory environment, there would be no pre-requisite condition that a researcher should aspire to membership of management.

It is possible for individuals to perceive their lives to be not unlike a continuous exercise in participant observation, that is, seeing themselves observing life from an 'outside' position, and never feeling as though they are truly a part of it. An extreme form of such a perspective on life would be represented by the schizoid personality type, whose view of the world predisposes him to view it from afar. A reversal of this viewpoint, applied to the personality of a capable participant observer would not tally with a finding of Richardson (1965), who suggests that the cyclothymic personality type is more likely to make a good field researcher. A schizoid type is liable to have

## APPENDIX NOTE 42 (continued iii)

a detached or 'distorted' view of reality compared to that which is consensually defined as 'normal'. A number of writers call into question the value-bases of defining those who are held to be 'mentally' or 'socially ill' (see for example: Szasz, 1960; 1965; 1970; 1974).

The personality of the participant observer may have an important influence upon the execution of the research. Some authors, (for example: Dean, 1954; Berk and Adams, 1970) conclude that the personality of the field worker is of greater importance to his respondents than is the organization from which he comes, although this topic has been generally ignored by writers on participant observation. However, findings of Richardson (1965), have implications for the practice of participant observation. Richardson's results show that while the person who has high overall competence in field methods tends to be high on 'human relations', introspection, receptivity, diversity, symbolic aggression and affiliation, as measured by the Thematic Apperception Test, correlation between the skills of interviewing and observing was low and insignificant.

A distinction has been drawn in field research between 'participant observer' and the 'observation interview', (see for example, Greaves, 1960). Roethlisberger and Dickson (1939) regarded the interviewer and the observer in their studies as complementary roles, even though the observer's role in the Test Room was extended to include a number of other functions. The only TAT variable which Richardson (op.cit.) found to be significantly correlated to both interviewing and observation was intraggression, defined as the ability, "...to blame, criticise, reprove, or belittle oneself for wrongdoing, stupidity or failure. To suffer feelings of inferiority, guilt or remorse. To punish oneself physically, to commit suicide..." (Richardson, 1965). The same author remarks that the tendency of an individual to make value judgements about the world and his environment is not likely to predispose him towards objectivity in field research. Against this viewpoint could be set the argument that strong value judgement might provide necessary motivation to begin and maintain an individual in a field role. Fieldworkers however,

## APPENDIX NOTE 42 (continued iv)

rarely discuss their feelings publically, one exception being Johnson (1975).

The value of the participant observer in terms of his motivation affects the validity of the research undertaken. Schwartz and Schwartz (1955) stress the importance of the observer in this type of research, and Gold (1958) considers skill of the researcher to be of paramount importance. A researcher in any area is well placed if he is positively motivated in his field of study. It could be argued that it is especially important in participant observation. To a greater extent than with other methods, moods of a researcher and his enthusiasm for the research affect his respondents. The image of an observer which is held by respondents forms the basis of their responses according to at least one writer (Vidich, 1955). The observer may need to exude confidence on occasion, but must be careful in exercising it. Paradoxically, because his is the closest of all research roles to those employed in everyday life, that of the participant observer may also be the most difficult to learn and apply.

Effective acquisition of field research skills may be made during fieldwork. At the start of this research, I had received no training in sociology of field research methods, yet still collected sufficient data to write up the study. However, need for extended teaching in the use of participant observation perhaps should be given emphasis, particularly with respect to practical field training. Richardson (1952) stresses the need for systematic training in field relations skills, and lists topics for course coverage. Bennett (1960) makes the point that training course experiences bring out differences in perceiving and interpreting data, and discusses implications of this finding.

The participant observer's role can consist of dilemmas and contradictions and as Richardson (1965) notes, is inherently stressful. He states:

....



## APPENDIX NOTE 42 (continued v)

"...the personality characteristics which field supervisors assume make a field worker most vulnerable to the stresses inherent in the role are the same characteristics which predict competence in observation. In other words, the person who is a highly competent observer is one who is most sensitive to the stresses of fieldwork and possibly least able to withstand them."

(Richardson, 1965)

Earlier writers who emphasised a need for participant observers to exclude their own anxieties from their field research activities, may unwittingly have hit upon a crucial aspect of the field researcher's role. A field worker who is competent in either observing or interviewing, or more rarely both, according to Richardson's results will also have greatest predisposition to anxiety, assuming this is linked with the 'stresses of the role'. Opportunities for arousal of anxiety for the participant observer may be numerous. From my experience, I found there could be considerable strain in maintaining a constant cheerful aspect, independent of mood, state of health or other problems. It may be unfortunate that the converse of Richardson's findings should not hold true, that high anxiety and received stress in the field worker, do not predispose him to perform competently.

## APPENDIX NOTE 43 p192

In writing up this research, I attempted to distinguish between my recorded perceptions and my interpretations of events. In the absence of such an effort by its author, a final report risks becoming an indistinguishable mixture of 'fact' and opinion, akin to the report of a journalist. Erikson (1967) considers the role of the press in translating technical reports into news copy to ensure wider readership than they would otherwise receive, although this approach may be inappropriate for academic audiences and not helpful for those who would seek to duplicate conditions in similar studies. T. Hopkinson, writing in the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, (11.7.75), notes that in the academic world, the tendency is not to publish until an author is certain that what he is writing is correct, or can be proved so. Of the journalistic world however, he observes that:

....

## APPENDIX NOTE 43 (continued i)

....

"...it's aim is to achieve the quickest possible disclosure of whatever information is available ...The mass media, therefore, are constantly forced into giving judgements on situations while they are still forming and developing."

Nevertheless, it is inevitable to a degree that topics are selected and events edited, as Polsky (1967) points out. Bruyn (1966) suggests that the narrative style of the writer is a guide to his perceived research role. One problem for the writer is the choice between employing the first person singular in the report to avoid charges of simulating 'objectivity' through the absence of personal pronouns, and appearing to trivialise events described in the manner of a simple 'story'.

There has been debate over issues relating to writing up field research. Some authors consider writing up research as a method in its own right, (for example: Cohen and Taylor, 1972; Baldamus, 1972). McCall and Simmons (1969) distinguish between technical and ethical problems of writing up. Noting ethical problems, Becker (1964) reveals that there is always conflict between values of the researcher and those he studies, and the problem is one of 'who to harm'. Becker explains that a 'research bargain' is not a solution, because of the naivety of respondents in such a bargain. In this context, Barnes (1963) considers the requirements of a high degree of sophistication of informants, suggesting that it may not be possible to obtain agreement of all as to what should be published, so that someone may have to be offended.

In compromising over a final report, there may be a need to negotiate with respondents towards a final position. One problem, which may have both technical and ethical elements, concerns release of material which may be 'interesting' to outsiders, but which is potentially harmful to those studied. One may agree in principle with Becker (1964), that such material should be withheld, while admitting in practice that it may not always be clear which material is potentially harmful. Respondents' own views may be a poor guide as to what might be harmful to them because of unknown factors involved in making such judgements. For example, material which appears innocuous at the time of reporting, could be harmful at some future time. Neither can researcher or respon-

dents know the total audience for any report once it is published, nor action which might be taken on the basis of its contents. Thus, there are problems in assessing the extent of possible harmful effects of a research report.

Erikson (1967) makes the point that sympathy of a researcher towards his respondents is not always relevant, as he may not know what will harm them. Houlton (1975) records contact with respondents from a participant observer's study of industrial relations in a company, who were upset at his published book, even though the researcher had claimed sympathy towards them. Many of the shop stewards who featured in print, Houlton describes as being, "very negative about the book". One steward and former convenor, asked if it was possible to sue the author! The gist of their complaints was that: a) they should have been consulted prior to publication because of their considerable investment in time and trust, b) in the process of telling relevant stories, the author exposed aspects of shop steward behaviour that they had deliberately kept hidden from management, one steward expressing it: "he's given management a whole new set of grudges", and c) by opening a window on affairs at certain sections of the workplace he was providing a valuable service for the Company headquarters. Unfortunately for these respondents, and perhaps many others, books recording various aspects of their behaviour will remain long after their protests have been forgotten, even if they are heard at all. Houlton (1975) also notes that shop stewards in another case involving filming them in a meeting, placed a great deal of weight upon oral assurances given, these tending to have the same validity as written guarantees for them. These examples show not only the influence of assurances, but also the need to keep confidences for the sake of aiding the passage of future research, and to protect respondents, especially when the material is not likely to be particularly valuable to readers.

The problem of interpretation by a researcher who is at variance with the values of his respondents was exemplified by a (1973, STV) television interview with a respondent from a study published in that year. The interviewee, who claimed to be the central figure of the book, made a public denial of the truth

## APPENDIX NOTE 43 (continued iii)

of what had been written. A television appearance however is a transitory phenomenon, whereas a published work acquires credibility through its survival over time. This increases the responsibility of those who publish research findings involving possible identification of groups or individuals. Glazer (1972) considers sensitive issues surrounding competing value systems of researcher and respondents to be one of the four major challenges of participant observation (the others being: acceptance, adaptation, and reciprocity and consequences upon those studied). Glazer notes that the rewards of research often fall to the researcher while others seldom benefit.

Colvard (1967) suggests a resolution of value problems in writing up through separating professional roles from personal identities. This would not necessarily confer adequate protection however. In a case study such as this, those participating in the research and later reading the account of it may well be able to identify one another, especially where key respondents cannot be kept anonymous from the point of view of making sense of the account of events.

The issue of confidences given to respondents may influence research validity. Bruyn (1966) distinguishes between confidences and secrets. Such a distinction may be specious, for there is a continuum of items which are gleaned from respondents, and the researcher may ultimately have to use his judgement as to which are necessary for inclusion in the final product of the research, and which should be left out. An author may be in the position of deciding the fate of information which would give added value to his research report, but which might also result in some harm to an individual or group if it were made known in such a manner. While a researcher may attempt to follow guiding principles, ethical problems of inclusion or non-inclusion of material must often be investigated for each individual case. Ianni (1972), in discussing anonymity and release of data, records that he collected some potentially harmful material which he did not use. Without explicit agreement of respondents, inclusion of potentially harmful material would have to be defended upon the strictest of methodological grounds. Roth (1962) makes the point that all

## APPENDIX NOTE 43 (continued iv)

research is secret in some ways because a researcher does not tell his respondents everything. Roth's view of the 'secret to non-secret' dimension is as a continuum with no ends.

Another question raised is that of who will see the final research report. Where a draft report is circulated amongst respondents in a participant observation study for verification of findings, it is usually necessary to preserve some anonymity. If quotes are used, the identity of individuals being quoted may need to be concealed. For example, use of phrases which are peculiar to, or which could be associated with particular individuals may have to be avoided, especially if the person is well known. Where quotes need to be used, it may be vital to obtain permission of individuals involved. Maintaining goodwill in the closing stages can be important.

In the absence of feedback from respondents, research on their behaviour cannot be thoroughly verified, and may include many mis-interpretations and factual errors as a result. A researcher who fails to obtain feedback on his account of events is not obliged to be so careful over what material he includes in his report. If this practice became widespread however, it might result in a decrease of respect and co-operation given to social scientific research. In the 1973 study referred to above, respondents appeared not to have been consulted in production of the final work as a book, and to have seen no draft copy of a research account. In such cases, an author may remain unaware of his prejudices and be liable to transfer many of them as 'facts' to his report.

Circumstances to a great extent determine the time over which confidences must continue to be respected. Information which is 'confidential' at one point, may not be confidential at some future time. The participant observer may be a link in the distribution of information throughout an organization, and also one who has the potential to disrupt information flows. At first, a participant observer may be obliged to guard his material carefully so as not to disturb regular communication patterns. However, at some later time when the knowledge that he has collected has spread over a larger number of respondents, any confidentiality it originally

## APPENDIX NOTE 43 (continued v)

possessed may have diminished to the point where material may be released in a research report. Estimation of appropriate times for release of material is a matter for judgement by the researcher. In this study, because the conflict episode involved respondents' emotions, it seemed sensible to wait for some months before presenting even a draft report to respondents. One field study was withheld from publication for five or six years on the pretext of protecting respondents (Patrick, 1973). Where research has focussed upon a relatively innocuous topic, or where emotions have not been aroused too much, then a shorter time may elapse before presenting data to participants. Indeed in some cases, a researcher may not be able to complete his research report quickly enough for respondents who are eager to see the results.

Another point to consider when writing up research, are obligations which the researcher has as a social scientist to other parties. Fichter and Kolb (1953) list a number of these including: those allowing or sponsoring the study, the source of research funds, the publisher of the report, other social scientists, society, and the community or group studied. Criteria for obligations to various parties may change over time, and different weightings may be given to each of these at different times. As the period of time which elapses since the fieldwork lengthens, obligations to those who were closely involved in the research such as respondents, begin to diminish in favour of other parties. To some extent, obligations which I once had towards my respondents, ex-colleagues at the Conflict Research Unit, and the research sponsors, have been satisfied by the earlier report which was presented as a conference paper in 1971, as well as providing material for a number of seminars.

However, obligations continue to exist to my respondents, as well as towards myself, other social scientists who may gain something from reading or hearing of the research, and perhaps to 'society'. On conflicting moral obligations surrounding the dissemination of research data, Francis (1967) dwells upon the issue of public responsibility, while Rainwater and Pitman (1967) refer to the right (of a researcher?) to study publicly accountable behaviour. They point out that a researcher is not always warranted in using

## APPENDIX NOTE 43 (continued vi)

confidentiality as an inducement to co-operate. This may not be required for example in the case of those who recognize their public accountability, and benefits to others that their behaviour be subject to study. Such criteria may be more readily applied to public institutions, although a case might be made out for accountability of private organizations, referring for example to their obligations to consumers of their products, or at times to the public at large, perhaps under statutory provisions, (for example: The Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974, S.6 ).

## APPENDIX NOTE 44 p194

The research method I had been using was not strictly 'action research', although human relations skills required in transmitting essentials of the research to those using its results (Mann and Lickert, 1952), could be improved through involvement of researcher and key respondents in a feedback session. Barnes (1963) discusses the role of feedback as providing reassurance and better understanding for the researcher. Feedback from participants also provides an opportunity to extend and deepen the research, although it is important to do this only at the end of the use of the active researcher role, so as not to alter previous relationships (see also Argyris, 1958). Finally, in the light of examples given earlier of 'sticking the pitch' (note 37), it is important to build goodwill for social research generally as well as to leave the door open for possible re-entry (Demerath, 1952; Barnes, 1963). All these points were covered in this feedback session.

## APPENDIX NOTE 45 pp201, 314

Lippitt (1960) refers to the researcher's role as one of 'trainer-teacher' rather than a mere data collector. In a general context where 'industrial relations' is socially defined as a 'problem' (Eldridge, 1968); as may often be seen in the press (see for example: Ferris, 1972), I might have had some small success in advocating a possible new perspective on some aspects of industrial conflict. This may be one of aspect of presenting respondents with new interpretations of their behaviour, together with transmitting some of the concepts of social science into more general usage.

## APPENDIX NOTE 45 (continued i)

If an expression has no meaning for laymen then it will tend not to be used by them. If an expression has a useful meaning in everyday language, then it may be adopted. The adoption of specialist, or more perjoratively 'jargon' words and phrases, into common parlance may be important in validating research. When specialist expressions are more generally adopted, it may indicate that verbal tags employed by social scientists to refer to certain behaviour, for example, do have meaning for those to whom they are applied. Over-concern about use of 'jargon' may be misplaced, for if expressions are cumbersome or inappropriate, then they will not be acceptable and will not be used. If new expressions represent an advance on previous knowledge, then their use will tend to become more widespread.

At one seminar, an example was given of a milkman who described himself to a sociologist conducting a re-study of a community (Stacey et al., 1974), in terms of the categorization scheme employed in the original study (Stacey, 1960). Another example may be found in Ianni (1972), where a social scientist is invited by a member of the mafia group he is studying to 'come and see a nice example of role conflict' in another of his respondents. I observed a similar experience during this research, which an example from the feedback session serves to demonstrate. Whilst flipping through the draft report, one shop steward asked if he might make a general point, posing the question of me: "Why do you keep using this word 'perception'?" I launched into an explanation of the use of this word, using the table around which we were sitting and our relative positions to it as an analogy to the conflict at the Firm. "The table is the same table, yet each of us perceives it differently from our individual positions", I explained, "and therefore perceptions of different parties are important to consider when examining a problem". After this palpably inadequate explanation, I continued to expand upon what I thought was the real issue raised by this remark, that of the use of 'jargon' in the report. I had manoeuvred myself into the position of being obliged to defend the language of the report, and explained that jargon was not necessarily a guise to conceal ignorance or commonsense as may sometimes be thought, but represented a genuine attempt to probe deeper into issues and problems for which a solution in 'simple' terms could be inadequate. My explanations were met with silence.



## APPENDIX NOTE 45 (continued ii)

I was made aware that problems for a researcher trying to make a useful contribution to those he studies, may often be considerable. Participants in research may or may not appreciate attempts by a researcher at 'training', although the same shop steward who had queried my use of the word 'perception', used it himself later in the meeting.

The point has been made (see for example: Gouldner, 1954; Hyman, 1972), that a depth analysis does not invalidate participants' own perceptions, but merely adds to them. Hyman and Fryer (1975), in a critical statement on the approach of Goldthorpe et al., outline the dangers of an unwillingness to go beyond workers' own definitions of situations to get at the reality their words seek to describe.

Schmid (private communication) indicates that there is an important question behind the respective origins of respondents' perceptions, and that the ideologies of different parties require examination so that these may be better understood. These issues did not form part of the substantive subject-matter of the fieldwork of this study. Analysis of the research data cannot therefore probe ideologies of respondents. However, Popitz et al., (1969) analyse interview data to reveal six basic images of society which workers in their study exhibited. These ranged from passive acceptance of society as an ordered structure, to an intellectual conception of class conflict. A collection of readings on working class images of society may also be found in Bulmer (1975).

At a different level, Ramsay (1975) reviews various studies which indicate that workers' perceptions of industrial relations at the workplace are split on the 'football team' analogy. He notes that there may be 'integrated' and 'conflict' images of the firm, but argues that there is a:

"...need to distinguish between acceptance of consensus ideology expressed through generalized statements, and its more frequent rejection in the concrete circumstances of an actor's own experience."

Ramsay records that perceptions of groups of workers may change over time, and that for example the 'conflict' viewpoint comes to the fore

at the time of a wage-claim. In his study, 87% of workers disagreed with the 'firm as a football team' analogy because many of those who would have otherwise agreed with the 'harmonistic' perspective, qualified their agreement by stating that this was so *only* because people had to work together to get things done. 51% of managers in Ramsay's study agreed with the 'harmonistic' perspective. Ramsay concludes that this perspective received no more than: "...pragmatic acceptance by employees..." and that their: "...co-operation is offered on a negotiated basis...". The British Social Science Research Council appeared to consider that 'management ideology' was an area which required further investigation and would be likely to attract research funds from them. (see: Circular 83 on areas of research for funding, SSRC, mimeo, 1973).

Returning to the researcher's role, Kelman (1968) postulates a continuum of three forms of participation via the roles of: citizen, scientist and 'observing participant', as well as of three different degrees of involvement through the roles of: practitioner, applied researcher, and basic researcher, listing separate sets of 'rules' for each (Kelman, 1968). Such expositions may be useful as guides, but omit to mention the expectations and prescriptions for behaviour which emanate from those with whom interaction takes place. More simply, Benne and Swanson (1950) list three roles for the scientist in society, those of: researcher, expert consultant, and citizen. Kaplan (1964) considers the problem of the line between the scientist and citizen roles. An important issue raised here is the legitimacy accorded by relevant others of the transition from researcher to expert consultant.

Dangers of 'gospel spreading' through even a consensually defined legitimized extension of the participant observer role to one of 'expert' should be guarded against. This dictum would hold true for researchers in other fields, the general issue being the right of a researcher to accept the legitimacy of a prescribed 'expert' role.

Set against prescribed legitimacy of the research role might be defence mechanisms adopted by respondents. Argyris (1952) lists these as deriving from two sources; personality and organization,

## APPENDIX NOTE 45 (continued iv)

describing them as ways in which respondents adapt to research. One example might be that of interviewees who maintain a reserve if they feel there are hidden research objectives (Elmer, 1951). A more pertinent distinction might be drawn between defences which arise from seeing the research as truly influencing their own lives, and those which are created by the researcher's own role-behaviour (Argyris, 1958).

## APPENDIX NOTE 46 p384, 447

One might for example cite a comparison between the number of places in business schools which are available to students at all levels, contrasted with the very much smaller number of places and courses for trade union education in universities and colleges. See for example: I. Bradley, *Times Higher Education Supplement*, 6.5.77. I am reminded of the points raised by the Minority Union members who objected to researchers studying its activities. They saw potential future personnel officers gaining experience in industrial relations at their expense.

*The Financial Times* of 24.8.72 carried an article which described: "...the biggest step so far to overcome the 'education-industry' gap...", referring to a Register of Industries and Colleges in the South West of England, produced by the Confederation of British Industry. In the South West Area alone, "...the educational list sets out services available to industry at 29 university departments and further education colleges. The industrial list gives the names and projects of 298 concerns...". A list of courses available to trade unionists produced by the Trades Union Congress is short in comparison. Such a bias in availability of education sets into some perspective the possible problems encountered by trade unionists who are often educationally disadvantaged with respect to their opposites in management. Courses for trade unionists may often deal specifically with training in negotiations and related areas, whereas management courses may cover aspects of management in industry apart from industrial relations. The basic point concerning academic bias however remains unaltered. As an example from a related area, I received a book list from a large well-known publishing company entitled, "Management 1972".

## APPENDIX NOTE 46 (continued 1)

In this list, out of a total of 153 publications, 26 came under the headings of either 'Industrial Relations' or 'Personnel'.

This bias does not end in the academic and publishing fields. Another circular I received in 1972 offered \$750 for the analysis of a problem which: "...should be original and of a general value to the management community. It should deal with the application of new concepts/techniques to a current problem/situation....The entries will be read and assessed by an independent panel consisting of well-known managers and professors..". The panel was announced in *European Business and Society*, Autumn, 1972. The award was sponsored by the European Foundation for Management Development. No similar trade union sponsored award has ever come to my notice.

One final example from the U.K. will suffice. There exists a body called The Industrial Society. Among its stated aims, The Industrial Society attempts to promote improved industrial relations by being aligned with both unions and management, or in its own words, "...an independent two-sided body...". The training policy of The Industrial Society is explained: "...we believe and the new Industrial Relations Code of Practice (a document surviving from the time of the repealed Industrial Relations Act 1971) stresses, that it is primarily with management that the responsibility for getting co-operation lies. The bulk of our training activity is therefore directed at managers, supervisors and increasingly, directors". All information contained in these paragraphs is taken from the Annual Report of the Council of the Industrial Society for the year ended 30.6.72.

In line with its policy, The Industrial Society produces a series of booklets for managers, but very few in comparison for trade unionists, while training courses offered also reflect this same policy. Of those listed as speakers during 1972: 432 are cited as management representatives and 98 as trade union (TUC-affiliated) representatives, with 208 others (from central and local government, non-TUC-affiliated unions, press, universities, and other organizations or associations). The Industrial Society does cover aspects of management apart from industrial relations, but the basic element of bias towards management education remains. The Council of The Industrial Society is composed of 40 management representatives, 14

## APPENDIX NOTE 46 (continued ii)

trade union representatives and 9 others. The Executive Committee is composed of 10 management representatives (including the Chairman), 6 trade union representatives and three others. If The Industrial Society is to be regarded as a 'two-sided body', it might be more accurate to stress that it is a rather 'one-sided two-sided body'.

The number of such examples could be extended to demonstrate the pervasiveness of a management orientation in academia, publishing and research, as well as in bodies which may claim to be independent or 'two-sided', yet which have an in-built bias towards management. This is not intended to be a rigorous analysis of bias in links which universities have with outside bodies, but merely a series of examples to demonstrate the process.

## APPENDIX NOTE 47 p452

During the strike, the Road Branch Chairman remarked in scornful terms that "I ate with the Staff", with the explicit function of highlighting my supposed non-alignment with the trade union members. Although I did not eat in the Staff Dining Room at that time, it had been true when I first visited the Factory. Robertson (1977) suggests the possibility of composing a 'Works Canteen Theory of Industrial Relations', to demonstrate how industrial relations deteriorate in direct proportion to the number of canteen subdivisions in a company.

It seemed that initial impressions remained salient to the detriment of rapport. Blau (1964) points out that the researcher cannot avoid initial identification with management, due to the (workers') assumption that management must have an interest in the study. My impressions during the fieldwork suggested that parties were sensitive to time I spent with other parties, although data from the follow-up interviews suggested that even if they had been aware of such feelings, these had not persisted over time.

While four Road Branch shop stewards (including the past and present Chairmen) were interviewed in 1976, when the issue of circulating the questionnaire to the remaining Road Branch shop stewards was raised at a Branch Meeting, the proposal was rejected.

## APPENDIX NOTE 47 (continued 1)

Thus the follow-up study was rejected by the Road Branch in much the same way as the original research project had been. All but one of the other shop stewards in the Factory who had not been interviewed also 'refused' or 'declined' to complete and return the questionnaire, although their decisions were presumably made individually, while that of the Road Branch shop stewards was determined by their Branch Meeting.

Relative lack of co-operation from some trade unionists in this factory was probably largely a function of the type of research project I was attempting, my own inexperience, and the corresponding image which I projected of myself and the research. This view has been reinforced by the ready co-operation which I have since received from trade unionists (often contrary to expectations) in my subsequent research.

## APPENDIX NOTE 48 p407

Cochrane and Duffy (1974) examine 276 articles published over a three-year period (1969-1972) in the *British Journal of Psychology* and the *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*. They conclude that the "...the great bulk of work in two leading British journals suffers from some serious deficiency", including: misuse of statistics, population inferences, inadequate sampling, and suspect levels of significance. They note that: "most research into human behaviour remains essentially trivial".

Gore et al. (*British Medical Journal*, 8th January, 1977) report a study of 62 papers in the *B.M.J.* (January - March 1976) which involved statistical treatment of results. They found that 32 of these contained statistical errors and 5 came to false conclusions. Errors included: failure to specify dispersion of results, disregard for statistical independence of observations, and errors of commission and omission. This research was also reported in *New Scientist* (13th January 1977), later issues of which (10th February, 3rd March, 1977) debated the matter of refereeing articles for publication.

Peattie (1968) notes that the participant observer's values, goals and interpretation of situations are taken from the community he studies. Rosenfeld (1958) considers that participant observation is likely to create for an investigator inner conflicts which interfere with objectivity. Rosenfeld notes that there may be pressure upon a researcher to become an active participant, especially if the group studied is undergoing an emergency of some sort. He may feel guilty if help is needed and he does not provide it. On the other hand, he may become anxious about losing his identity as a scientist if he enters completely into respondents' group activities. In order to re-establish his position as objective, he may then lean over backwards to separate himself and become susceptible to sources of negative bias and distortion. A first step in safeguarding from inner conflicts and bias is to be aware both of them and of one's defences. With awareness, a researcher can develop specific safeguards appropriate to the nature of the conflicts and the situation (Rosenfeld, 1958).

Research not grounded in real world phenomena cannot claim to describe or explain them accurately. Hudson (1972) notes that only parsimonious explanations for behaviour are obtained through experiment. Uncontrolled or external variables in an experiment may be assumed constant, or excluded from any analysis for the sake of obtaining neat quantifiable data. Parsimony may still be regarded as a desirable property of explanatory theories, but this feature can be of secondary importance to complete and adequate explanation. The experimentalist may be, even if unwittingly, as much as a political agent as the field worker. Sommer (1971), in referring to a number of difficulties of the fieldwork role, whose adoption he states is not for the soft-hearted, suggests that laboratory researchers and field workers have different personality characteristics. This would be interesting to investigate empirically. The work of Hudson (1966; 1968), might provide insights into a possible 'divergent character' of those who choose fieldwork, and a degree of 'convergence' necessary for laboratory work. Investigation of political views of differently oriented researchers might also reveal significant differences.

The references which follow are separated into three sections. The first section includes books, or parts of books which have been referenced in the text. The second section contains journal articles, and the final section lists other references such as papers, theses, legislation and other research papers.

In a number of cases, works cited appear in more than one publication. Where this happens, only one source reference is given, and this generally corresponds to the first date of publication for that work. Information contained in these references is deliberately kept to a minimum for reasons of clarity.



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