Voices of Hope, Voices of Cynicism: Using Q Methodology to Interpret Complex Attitudes towards Organizational Change

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Abstract: The metaphor of voice is used to explore attitudes of members of a manufacturing firm enmeshed in a constant flux of leading edge change recommended by external consultants. Q methodology, complemented by a discursive perspective on organizing, provides a rich understanding of the dynamic processes surrounding workplace changes. Insights could be gleaned about the participants' beliefs and assumptions and the origins of each point of view by intertwining qualitative and quantitative analyses, using ethnographic data to develop the Q instrument, and later returning to traditional ethnographic analysis to interpret the Q results. Two voices were of special interest because of their influence on the change process. A hopeful voice occurring throughout the organization enthusiastically supported the recommended changes. A second, more complex voice emanated from long-time union workers and technical support staff in the production areas who accepted hope, but were cynical regarding management's commitment to implementation of changes. These individuals expressed a desire to change, but indicated pressures that needed to be addressed to make changes possible.

Introduction

In an era of rapidly changing markets, new corporate affiliations, and flattened hierarchies, continuous change has become a fact of organizational life. In manufacturing, for example, competition arising from the effects of globalization and advances in technology has caused major disruptions in traditional organizational arrangements, production processes, and shop floor practices (Womack and Jones 1990). While much advice exists for strategies, designs, and techniques for implementing change with expectations of improved performance and employee satisfaction (cf., Dunphy 1996; Van de Ven and Poole 1995), less is known about the attitudes and opinions of the men and women who must implement the changes. Workers are frequently described as resistant to change, and managers are urged to overcome this resistance (Strebel 1996). Recently, however, this model has been challenged (Dent and Goldberg 1999). In anticipation of more realistic models of change

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dynamics, the research reported here contributes a detailed description of attitudes and opinions of managers, salaried, and unionized workers about their involvement in organizational change.

A small stream of research in organization studies has examined change processes, seeking to describe actions and meanings from the point of view of those involved. Such research involves fieldwork in the tradition of anthropology, when the researcher spends time interacting directly with organization members as they carry out their work-tasks. The resulting description of the organizational culture may be called an organizational ethnography (Rosen 1991; Schwartzman 1993).

Q methodology can be a powerful adjunct to organizational anthropology methods. As a tool of ethnography, Q surfaces subjectivity as operant within a context of interaction. Other techniques (e.g., observation and participation in activities, interviews, document reviews) engender a rich description of organizational life, including the webs of actions and meanings surrounding individual members. By adding Q, the objective power of statistical analysis enables the researcher's role in the interaction to recede. The subjectivity of organizational members emerges from within the researcher's story. The Q sort establishes an operant subjectivity traceable to observations in the field data, and sharpens the subsequent researcher attention to interpreting this data. Here Q is incorporated seamlessly into the research methodology, rather than acting as a means of triangulation. (See Singer 1998.)

As this work demonstrates, when complemented by a discursive perspective on organizing, Q methodology provides a rich understanding of the dynamic processes surrounding workplace changes. The example here comes from an empirical investigation in a manufacturing firm enmeshed in a constant flux of leading-edge change. Intertwining qualitative and quantitative analyses, through the use of ethnographic data to develop the Q instrument, and later returning to traditional ethnographic analysis to interpret the Q results, permitted insights to be gleaned not only about participants' beliefs and assumptions, but also the origins of these points of view. The purpose of the research was to understand how individuals could change their work-practices, while continuing to accomplish necessary work. In particular, this study explored organizational members' perspectives on experiencing constant change while still maintaining expected production levels.

Conceptual Framework

Underlying this research was the assumption that organizing involves a dynamic, ongoing process of communication. (See Putnam, Phillips, and Chapman 1996 for an overview.) Language allows the construction of a shared reality, through members' interdependent and goal-oriented communication practices, where different groups compete to shape reality in ways that serve their own interests. Employing the metaphor of voice allows the researcher

to focus on the individual and the reason for speaking. In an organizational context, this leads to investigation of political implications imbedded in structural and working relationships. Discourse is ongoing at all levels of the organization, yet specific voices embody certain forms, meanings, and assumptions, and these voices occur in particular interactions. Some voices dominate, and some may be allowed expression, while others are suppressed. As a metaphor, voice represents *communication* as expression, and *organization* as a chorus of stilled or singing voices (Putnam et al. 1996). The forms and practices of organizing are complex, and are presented according to the location and interactions of different voices, for example, through the voices of owners, managers, employees, or scholars. This work focuses on identifying voices within the discourse of organizational change, and examining the micro-processes of interaction that engage individual perspectives and perceptions.

Both organizational discourse theory and Stephenson's 1978 *Concourse Theory of Communication* approach communicability as shared knowledge, and focus on the multiple, ambiguous meanings subjectively engendered by any statement. Q provides an ideographic methodology for conducting discourse analysis by allowing alternative patterns of response to be scrutinized in situations where a dominant meaning may commonly be assumed to prevail. As Stainton-Rogers (1997/8) notes, "Q has the ability to penetrate a political agenda — by asking, 'What ideologies are being promoted, what is being covered up, who is silenced?'" This work focuses on interpreting factors for understandings referable to subjective positions within the organization's structure and culture.

Within the discourse of organizational change, two streams were important: the concourse used by authoritative voices of management theorists and consultants in prescribing the content and practice of desired changes (cf., D'Aprix 1996; Dunphy 1996) and the concourse of organizational members as they experienced a particular change process. The research concentrated on a single organization, examining discourse surrounding various changes. Some communication centered on objective facts, as observable events and tasks. At the same time, communication contained an affective or emotional component that revealed the underlying beliefs and attitudes of those involved.

Because this research was undertaken "from the inside" (Evered and Louis 1981), seeking to understand the concerns and perspectives of organizational members, the theoretical constructs of interest emerged from the initial empirical research, following an inductive process.

Voices of Hope
In the management literature, with its emphasis on increased effectiveness and efficiency, a dominant perspective is one of optimism towards the

accomplishment of desired changes. While optimism denotes positive affect and general outcome, working with the metaphor of voice requires a broader domain for the construct of interest. Instead, the concept of hope was used. The American Heritage English Dictionary defines hope as "a wish or desire accompanied by confident expectation of fulfillment." Hope is future oriented, and engages cognitive capacity through an assessment of degree of expectation for the desired outcome (Staats 1989). In organization studies literature the word "hope" frequently introduces an emancipatory organizational arrangement (cf., Janov 1994; Kanter 1983), and has been linked with goal setting and motivational theories.

Voices of Cynicism

Employee cynicism has been noted in studies of organizational change, although cynicism towards change does not necessarily produce resistance (Reichers, Wanous, and Austin 1997). The concept has been described as an attitude with components of belief, affect, and behavioral tendencies (Dean, Brandeis, and Dharwadkar 1998). As an organizational voice, cynicism is likely to display negative feelings towards the organization, including bitterness about unrealized possibilities; and to reveal a belief that the organization lacks integrity. In theory, the voice is to be heard among hourly employees, who are expected to engage in behaviors toward the organization that are consistent with these beliefs and affect.

Within organizational discourse, attitudinal positions of cynicism and hope are frequently revealed through expressions of beliefs and feelings. In verbal interactions, each speaker includes an evaluation of past actions, or expectations of future situations through choices of topic, the form of the utterance, and modifiers to nouns and verbs. Without resorting to formal linguistic analysis, the listener, through membership in the sociocultural group, assumes an attitude. A speaker who is consistently critical and expresses negative feelings may be given the label of "cynical," while one who chooses to focus on the future or speak of incomplete actions as if already accomplished may be labeled "hopeful."

Methods

This study began as an organizational ethnography of a mid-sized manufacturing firm that has evolved from a small family business with a single product to a subsidiary of a global organization that supplies components to major industries. The facility has process, assembly, and innovative technologies under a single roof, with a total workforce of about 450 people. Several years ago a prominent management guru featured the organization in a video and book on innovative management practices. This research began as an investigation into repercussions of the fame of this exposure, and later focused on organizational changes in general.

The investigation covered a decade (late 1980s to late 1990s), with two periods of field study. Methods included participant observation, interviews, and document review, and a Q study in which participants came from all business units and organizational levels. In 1992-3, data included retrospective accounts of the radical introduction of cellular manufacturing about 3 years earlier, employee's opinions of the relevance of the guru's visit, and details of the manufacturing process through observations on the shop-floor. During 1997-8, data included observations of a number of planned changes. The Q study was conducted about 6 months after the introduction of a major, company-wide teamwork initiative.

Data gathering and analysis had 3 distinct stages. First, data from observations and interviews provided a general description of the organization from the perspectives of the different informants. Here a common thread of interest in the process and outcomes of organizational change was apparent. During the second period of fieldwork, the researcher's direct involvement with change initiatives led to identifying hopeful and cynical voices among organizational members. Then, for the Q study, the concourse of communication was taken from the researcher's corpus of field data. Finally, with the statistical factor analysis in hand, attention turned once again to field data in order to tease out meanings and inferences that made connections between the narrative and statistical datasets.

The Q Sample

The Q sample was developed from the ethnographic results. First, 2 alternate voices, or modes of expression, in the discourse of change were noticed. A concourse of Q statements was collected from the empirical data, and the Q sample was chosen through a quasi-factorial design using themes from the ongoing organizational discourse surrounding various changes. In the Fisherian sense, the factors are dimensions of change and voice.

Alternate Voices

A review of the researcher's field-notes and interview transcripts showed that members of the organization tended to display either cynicism or hope towards the current change initiative. The organizational discourse was conceptualized as composed of 2 voices, 1 cynical, the other hopeful; and the organizational ethnography included a description of a change program from each of these perspectives. For example, a cynical account of the teamwork program included:

> What's so special about this program? Word soon got round about who was on the teams — its same people as before and of course they have to say they're willing to help save the company — again. We're all weary from repeated programs of team-efforts, and we've all got far too much work. People get laid off without first thinking about the job they did, then others have to make sure that the work gets done. People on the floor are openly

skeptical — they say they'll wait and see before committing to the program. Supervisors and managers say they're supportive, but I've noticed they can't be found when they need to take a stand, one way or the other. (union representative)

Another employee described the same event in a hopeful manner:

> This program is special. The first teams were quickly organized and trained, and set to work to achieve their goals. Most people did their best — fitting in teamwork with their ongoing responsibilities and seeking out others for their inputs or solutions. There's some resistance from all levels, but that will gradually disappear as results come in. (production engineer)

These 2 positions were taken as alternate viewpoints in the design of the Q sample. The researcher also noted that the same employee was seldom always cynical or always hopeful, suggesting that the discourse was more complex than merely composed of 2 opposing views.

Collecting Statements
Field notes, interview transcripts, and company documents were reviewed for statements about changes within the organization, and statements regarding the same dimension of change were grouped together. The dimensions of change apparent in the organizational discourse were reviewed against the management literature to ensure that all facets of organizational change were included. This step meant that the researcher needed to review the field data again in order to add naturally occurring statements. This process operationalized the concourse as the population of statements while allowing subjects to speak for themselves (Dryzek and Berejikian 1993).

Q Sample Design
Themes in changes within the organization, structured according to the management literature, provided the main effects and levels of a quasi-factorial grid, with hopeful and cynical voices taken as 'endpoints' in the expression of opinions. The concourse of statements was reviewed again for statements at each level of the factorial design expressed according to these two attitudes. For example, referring to organizational leadership, a cynical voice might say, "Top management doesn't act like a leader with a clear vision for change," while the hopeful voice might use, "Top management wants everyone to participate and to become a part of the change process." Reflecting on how work is done before, during and after change, "Working here is like fire-fighting — we just do what needs to be done," represents a cynical voice, and "When we take time to gather data and talk about it, we understand what needs to be done so we can go back to the factory or office and put those plans into action," speaks from a hopeful perspective. A third example indicates attitudes towards the change initiative, expressed cynically as "I'm anxious about my future — my job may be changed so that my skills

are no longer adequate," or hopefully as "I expect overall changes will be for the better — and I may learn some new skills for doing my job."

About 100 statements were written originally, based on direct quotations with modifications, so that statements would not be attributable to specific individuals. Sixty-six statements were selected finally, as shown in the Appendix Table 1: Q Sample Statements with Factor Scores. Each statement was typed on a separate small card, and randomly numbered for recording purposes.

The P Sample

A respondent pool designed to include different experiences, beliefs, values, or motivations for changing sorted the Q sample. Thirty-seven people participated, representing all business units, occupational levels, and other organizational demographics. For the purpose of subsequent ethical reporting to members of the organization, more people were invited to participate than might be needed to define pure factors; for example, all members of the senior management group were included and at least 2 union members from each business unit.

Conditions of Instruction

The condition of instruction was, "How, in my opinion, changes happen at <Company name>." Participants were requested to arrange the items along a continuum, from those with which "I strongly agree" to those with which "I strongly disagree," according to a suggested 11-point quasi-normal distribution.

Value	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
Selections	4	5	5	7	8	8	8	7	5	5	4

A "mat" was provided of a size similar to blueprints in common use in the organization, with boxes drawn to suggest the distribution. Most participants adhered to this framework, while some placed different numbers of statement cards in each position, depending on their understanding of the statements and personal viewpoint.

Factor Analysis

SPSS was used as the statistical analysis program because it is well recognized in research within the discipline of organization and management studies. Principal components extraction and varimax rotation were used, with the two-factor solution chosen from an examination of the scree plot. Exemplars of each factor had a loading ≥ 0.41 ($p \leq 0.01$). Each factor represented a particular perspective on organizational change. The arrangement of statements characteristic of each factor was first interpreted as a distinct expression of beliefs, attitudes, and likely behaviors with respect to

organizational changes. Later, the locations of the 2 voices — as situations and speakers within the organization context — were explored.

Interpreting the Factors

Examining the relative positions of statements indicates few similarities and profound differences between the 2 voices. The statements in the extreme positions of the Factor A sort concentrate in the change program, while corresponding statements in Factor B include a concern with work and hierarchical relationships. Factor A is concerned with performing the change program "right," Factor B is concerned with doing the work itself "right."

Factor A

Factor A ranked all hopeful statements "like my point of view," and all cynically worded statements "unlike my point of view." This factor strongly opposed negatively worded statements, so the cynically worded statements in the negative positions are interpreted as a double negative, or reworded as a positive opinion. Factor A speaks with a voice that is "hopeful" as it describes a special feeling of company ownership (21: +5) and how the company is made "better" by everyone working together (40, 53: +5). The voice recognizes the skills and contributions of all employees (7: +4), and includes statements about being innovative (4: -4) and putting customers first (44: +4). This factor acknowledges changes in behaviors that are the focus of the program — working in teams (46: -5), establishing communication (62: -4) and new rules (19: -4). These statements focus on behavior changes of the current program.

Factor A: Most unlike my point of view

-5	-4
Change happens only after the organization is dismantled or sold and no one feels safe. (48)	We're a mature business, there is no place for innovation. (4)
Only a small number of people are really involved in <Change Program> — they are the puppets of top management. (49)	Communication is non-existent — we can't find out what we want to know. (62)
Teams take up time that should be spent on work. (46)	I do what I need to do, but I cannot suggest to a fellow worker to change what he does. (18)
"Who knows who" is still more important than "who can do what." (64)	What's the point of setting up new rules — we never follow the ones we already have. (19)
	<Company> has become more confusing, and my work is suffering. (16)

Factor A: Most like my point of view

+4	+5
Top management wants everyone to participate and to become a part of the change process. (7)	We can all solve problems, seek new ideas, challenge conventional wisdom, and experiment. (53)
We must change our perspectives to put customer needs first. (44)	Not a day should go by without some sort of improvement somewhere in the company. (39)
We innovate by bringing new problem solving methods into use. (38)	Our goal is to create a company where we all feel some ownership in the business. (21)
When we take time to gather data and talk about it, we understand what needs to be done so we can go back to the factory or office and put those plans into action. (27)	Continuous improvement means we are always working to become better. (40)
Sharing information and resources among everyone helps to bring about change. (11)	

Factor B: Most unlike my point of view

-5	-4
My boss has helped me to do my work differently because of all the changes that have taken place. (34)	We're used to changing — we just do whatever we are told. (47)
Once our IT/information systems are implemented everywhere <Company> will work as a 21st century company. (52)	<Past president> started us out on a path, we got lost, now we are getting back on track (25)
We're a mature business, there is no place for innovation. (4)	Teams have changed the way I do my work. (43)
Gradually more and more people are taking responsibility for change around here. (29)	Top management wants everyone to participate and to become a part of the change process. (7)
	I find that participating in <Change Program> teams has become (is becoming) a satisfying part of my work. (30)

Factor B

Factor B had both cynical and hopeful statements mixed throughout. This factor was interpreted as a clear, distinct voice that also expresses hope — "we can still be innovative (4: -5), we must change to put customer needs first (44: +5)." Nevertheless, cynicism is apparent. These speakers suggest that there is a lack of integrity (56: +5): teams are non-existent (43: -4) people are not taking responsibility (29: -5). Rather, we're changing just to stay in the field (3: +4). Negative feelings are expressed towards "my boss" (34: -5), top management (7: -4), and the legacy of the past president (25: -4). There is criticism of the change leadership (2: +4) and unwelcome politics (64: +5). According to this viewpoint, the change program had little effect: instead, changes happen when work groups tackle problems that they know need solving (65: +4).

Factor B: Most like my point of view

+4	+5
Changes really happen when each work-group decides on what it wants to accomplish and then sets about doing it. (65)	Working here is still like firefighting — we just do what needs to be done. (8)
I like having more information, more choices, and more decisions to make about my work. (24)	"Who knows who" is still more important than "who can do what". (64)
Nothing will change until we get rid of the people who are holding us back. (61)	Top management doesn't act like a leader with a clear vision for change. (56)
<Company> used to be feared by our competitors, now we're changing just to stay in the field. (3)	We must change our perspectives to put customer needs first. (44)
The Quality Council talks about fixing things when it should be doing the fixing. (2)	

Comparisons Between The Two Factors

Further understanding of ways in which 2 factors represent different interpretations of the discourse of change may be gained from considering the relative positions of statements. Two statements were common to the strongest-held opinions: First, 2 statements (4, 44) show little difference in opinion, with A and B expressing similar strong opinions. Both A and B believe that customer needs should be first priority, but currently are not. Both believe the company can still have new and different (innovative) practices.

Greatest Similarities between Factors

Statement	A	B
(44) We must change our perspectives to put customer needs first. (44)	4	5
(4) We're a mature business, there is no place for innovation.	- 4	- 5

Two other statements (64, 7) show the greatest difference in opinions for A and B, that is, with strongly held opposing opinions. Here the 2 factors reveal different opinions on inclusion: B considers politics to override ability, while A denies this. In A's view, top management wants the whole company working together, while B denies this.

Greatest Differences between Factors

Statement	A	B
(64) "Who knows who" is still more important than "who can do what".	- 5	5
(7) Top management wants everyone to participate and to become a part of the change process.	4	- 4

Other statements that were less emphatic show how the 2 factors indicate different meanings for responsibility and teamwork. B showed strong opinions toward 5 statements for which A held opposite, but less emphatic, positions.

Different Meanings for Responsibility and Teamwork

Statement	A	B
(29) Gradually more and more people are taking responsibility for change around here.	3	- 5
(43) Teams have changed the way I do my work.	3	- 4
(56) Top management doesn't act like a leader with a clear vision for change.	- 2	5
(30) I find that participating in <Change Program> teams has become (is becoming) a satisfying part of my work.	3	- 4
(2) The Quality Council talks about fixing things when it should be doing the fixing.	- 3	4

This group of statements shows B's opinion about 2 foci of the current change program: *responsibility* and *teamwork*. B has 2 negative opinions on the leadership of the program: neither top management nor the specific leadership group (including all of top management) is taking responsibility and providing adequate leadership (56, 2) — which suggests B considers A's point of view immaterial. Additionally, people in general are not taking responsibility for changes. Although A differs on all these points, since A feels the program is successful, these statements are not in the forefront. B does not

feel that teams have had an impact on work, while A believes that the current emphasis on teamwork has already made a significant difference (43).

Statements that are given prominence by 1 group, but ignored or considered unimportant by the other, reveal the focus of each factor's interpretations relative to other opinions evident within the organization. Three statements indicate strong opinions for A, but are meaningless or unimportant for B. Here Factor A is concerned with the goal, participation, and methods of the change program. On the other hand, B has no opinion (interest) in the specifics of the program.

Factor A Concerns

Statement	A	B
(49) Only a small number of people are really involved in <Change Program> — they are the puppets of top management.	- 5	0
(21) Our goal is to create a company where we all feel some ownership in the business.	5	0
(27) When we take time to gather data and talk about it, we understand what needs to be done so we can go back to the factory or office and put those plans into action.	4	- 1

Conversely, following 5 statements indicate strong opinions for B, while they are neutral for A. B believes the working environment is constrained by lack of planning (8) and individual abilities (61). B indicates a lack of respect for supervision, leadership, and management systems. The specifics of work environment and relationships are not important for Factor A.

Factor B Concerns

Statement	A	B
(8) Working here is still like firefighting — we just do what needs to be done.	- 1	5
(61) Nothing will change until we get rid of the people who are holding us back.	- 1	4
(34) My boss has helped me to do my work differently because of all the changes that have taken place.	1	- 5
(52) Once our IT/information systems are implemented everywhere <The Company> will work as a 21st century company.	0	- 5
(25) <Past president> started us out on a path, we got lost, now we are getting back on track.	1	- 4

Both factors share a lack of concern with some aspects of organizational changes, which they indicated by placing statements in the central area of the sort pattern.

These statements suggest that participants are focusing on their immediate work environment. Individuals do not give particular thought or interpretation to topics that they cannot personally impact. Neither factor includes the "big picture" suggested by statements 10 (longer-term survival), 13 (underlying shared expectations), 6, and 45 (results at different levels of analysis). Neither factor is concerned with management's responsibility for imposing controls or with individual contributions to the change process: 32 (work standards), 50 (past president's involvement), and 59 (current worker's potential individual contributions). They are also neutral about 2 issues that are frequently discussed, but which are seen as being controlled by externals — 14 involves resources that are dictated through the holding company's financial controls, and Statement 6 is seen as a reference to the imposed ISO 9000 certification process, which was a topic of concern to senior management. Customers had demanded that the business unit accept external quality auditing procedures in the manufacturing process. Once standards were written and workers trained in their use, external auditors certified the level of quality and periodically judged whether the unit was performing to standard. These areas may be agenda items in management meetings, but are not relevant for individuals workers' perceptions of reality.

Consensus Lack of Concern

Statement	A	B
(10) \<The Company\> survives, even when owners and executives change.	0	0
(13) I think (almost) everyone wants positive changes to happen — we're ready for change!	1	1
(6) Managers and supervisors keep large-scale results in focus while employees make a difference through small improvements.	0	- 1
(45) We change the way work is organized, but we don't talk about how this affects productivity.	- 1	0
(32) It is a good change when management sets work standards and then makes sure workers maintain them.	1	1
(50) \<Past president\> did things his way. He had his own agenda.	- 1	0
(59) The guys on the floor have great ideas for change, but they have no way of making them happen.	- 1	- 1
(14) Our resources are fixed, so we have to find ways of doing more with those that we've got.	1	1

Locating Each Voice

Factor membership helped place each point of view in context. Of the 37 participants, 21 were members of Factor A, that is, they contributed to establishing this voice, while 10 were members of Factor B, and 6 did not

appear to be members of either. (Appendix Table 2) Factor membership, together with the rich data of the ethnography and the metaphor of voice, provided an additional layer of interpretation. By referring to field data that indicated when members expressed the points of view indicated by the factors, inferences were made about the *voice* in terms of the range and source of the opinions expressed. Interpretation moved beyond describing the point of view to uncovering underlying attitudes and links to more widely held opinions.

Voice A: A Hopeful Voice
Organizational demographics suggest that the Factor A viewpoint was expressed, in some form or other, throughout the organization — by all of senior management, by many middle managers and some members of the bargaining unit. Most of these people attended the special two-day training session to launch the teamwork initiative (participants in fieldnotes 2/7/97). Several of the statements were presented as key ideas during the training program — for example, putting customer needs first, teams as part of work, not outside of it, and a focus on solving problems cooperatively (consultant's materials 2/7/97). The main slogan of the program was "customers first," this also was included in statements defining Factor A. The theme of the previous radical changes was also remembered — "we are an innovative organization" (videotape of consultant's televised presentation 7/91).

This voice originated outside the organization — in ideas and slogans brought into the organization by external consultants. The latest training session was similar to many others, both at this organization (communication training 1/16/97, training in Japanese-style *kaizen* or continuous improvement techniques 4/2/97), and throughout the industry (ISO format 5/1/98). The format of the transfer process from consultant to client followed established patterns. The consultant had adapted a particular model based on a portion of management theory, with the vocabulary adjusted for the situation. Rhetorical strategies were used in the training to convince clients that the model was appropriate to the organization's situation and to build commitment to the proposed actions and behaviors (fieldnotes 2/7/97). While specific to his consulting group, this consultant's approach and materials were little different than those of hundreds of other change consultants. Each draws on the same business-change vocabulary, presents a simplified model of the process, and provides a step-by-step plan for achievement. To acquire and use this voice is to acknowledge such universal membership, and at the same time, to leave with confidence and expectation that the program will succeed. The materials from the session provide a symbolic badge of membership in the discourse, ready to be displayed on a bookshelf and compared with other materials from other training sessions (fieldnotes 6/9/97). Later, these opinions about change were disseminated through company and department meetings. They were reinforced at Quality Council Meetings, in particular when the vision and

mission were discussed (fieldnotes 3/24/97), then published in the company newsletter (issue dated 4/25/97).

In this discourse an authoritative voice presents concepts in abbreviated form, defining them only when questioned. Listeners subsequently model this pattern, using the vocabulary to present their own authority. Phrases became separated from examples, and were used without reference to local meanings. The voice expresses *hope*, as a view of a very different organization. This voice pushes for changes to take place.

Voice B: A More Complex Voice

Significant membership in the factor that defined this voice was confined to long-time union workers and to technical support people. No members of senior management were included. The factor exposed opinions expressed by skilled workers who had long tenure with the organization. Their voice was heard around specific work issues, in everyday interactions focusing on completing the work at hand. For example, at one group meeting of shop floor workers lack of support by the operations manager and the scheduling system was cited (fieldnotes 4/18/97). In another instance, while presenting kaizen results to the Quality Council, a group leader (union member) suggested that the way that productivity was measured was a contributing problem (fieldnotes 4/14/97). For workers, being responsible meant getting/taking credit, such that moving an issue to another level where it was not dealt with suggested a lack of responsibility on their part. This voice is concerned with the realities of the production process. It pulls messy everyday relationships into the change process. It is a more complex voice that speaks bluntly to the aims of the change initiative.

Voices as Solos or a Duet?

Field observations indicated that these 2 voices spoke independently of each other: the hopeful voice discussed the change program in the abstract, while the more complex voice spoke from the position of being intimately involved in the work process. When the 2 voices did interact, it was most likely to be the dominant voice presenting the ideas and methods of the change initiative while the alternative voice remained silent. At times the second voice expressed an opinion during a formal meeting, only to be silenced by a stronger statement of hope (e.g., Quality Council Meeting 4/25/97).

Not long after the change program was begun a new CEO of the holding company began demanding faster improvements in company performance (fieldnotes 5/6/97). When these results did not materialize, the president was suddenly terminated (fieldnotes 9/18/97) and the consultant's contract revoked. The organization was plunged into turmoil. The hopeful voice ceased to have a platform, and cynical elements of the realistic voice were stronger (fieldnotes 10/97-1/98). As the organization re-focused on everyday issues of production, the researcher's access to voice ended.

Conclusions

The results of the Q study incorporated into organizational fieldwork enabled the researcher to "hear" distinct voices emerging from the polyphony of a workplace engaged in continuous change. Cynical and hopeful voices described past and ongoing events to the researcher, while the Q study indicated the perspectives and perceptions of members. Two distinct factors emerged: one was characterized by hope, the other by shopfloor reality.

The senior managers and the salaried and bargaining-unit employees throughout the organization who comprised Factor A espoused the views of various change consultants, accepting the slogans and aspirations of the change program. Whether or not organizational reality was consistent with the expressed points of view was not as important as the desired changes. Others, the key workers who were members of Factor B, expressed their concern with the work process itself. Their viewpoint connected change with action and was expressed relative to their hierarchical position in the organization. Members of Factor A voiced uncritical acceptance of externally generated change initiatives that contrasted with workers' needs to maintain production. Members of Factor B believed that management played by a different set of rules than those espoused by the change program. It was hypocrisy to say a task was complete or a responsibility accepted if it was not so with absolute certainty. Anyone who said that changes listed in the program had taken place when this was open to question was considered to view the world of work in a different way.

Each factor expressed a point of view through a distinct voice. Factor A, a hopeful voice, articulated what leaders desired for the future without explicitly acknowledging that some changes in workplace practices and relationships had not yet occurred. The second voice was more complex, expressing some hope, but moderated with cynicism about the outcome and the route to that outcome.

A hopeful voice expresses a vision without containing traces of the past. A cynical voice, on the other hand, includes experiences and attempts at change, as well as flaws in the current initiatives. The Q study showed that this perspective was more complex than the simple label of 'cynical' would suggest. While the Q study revealed the content of the 2 perspectives, additional qualitative data indicated that there were few opportunities for dialogue to explore differences.

Discussion

Results from this study suggest that we may be too hasty to apply the label of "cynicism" with its attached strong negative socio-cultural implications. Listening carefully to a cynical voice indicates the nature of relationships, including the importance of trust. Employees may not complain at all if they

do not trust the managers who are expected to help them (Mulcahy 1994). People "grumble" because they see a discrepancy between what they actually have now and what they see as possible. "Grumbles" include complaints about safety in the workplace, altruistic concerns for others, and comments that one's own talents are not being fully utilized — as covert pleas for more motivating work. Only in a workplace where people *are* in on things and where their talents *are* being utilized would it occur to someone to speak out about such issues (Farson 1996). Workers complain openly when they believe that they have an opportunity to affect outcomes. Leaders and managers must pay attention not only to the content of messages, but also to the location and origin of different points of view.

Managers should understand the presence of *voice* as an option for members to express their concerns to management, rather than using the option of exit (quitting) or remaining silent (Hirschman 1970). Stephenson (1988/1967) notes that the adjusted alienated worker relies on opportunities to *converse* to enrich an otherwise barren work life, rather than achieving satisfaction through understanding how his work is imperative for organizational success. Workers rely on social interactions to relieve the tedium when work tasks provide little satisfaction. The alienated worker uses voice to counter a dependency on extrinsic rewards and to accept that his own efforts are unrecognized and unrewarded by management.

This study suggests that *using* voice involves more than self-fulfillment. Here exercising *voice* expresses the desire to change, while the views articulated indicate pressures to which managers need to take time to respond. Attitudes too easily labeled as "cynical" may not be the same as resistance to change. Instead, recognizing, locating, and engaging more complex voices may in time allow changed organizational arrangements to emerge. Unlike the "one size fits all" perspective of the guru and other consultants, Q methodology uncovered specific concerns and practices that have to be addressed in any successful change management process.

This study was unusual for incorporating Q methodology into an organizational ethnography. Other empirical work in the management field may benefit from this process to check the researcher's perceptions with participants' perspectives. Since the researcher used extensive knowledge of the organizational context rather than formal interviews, this study also demonstrates how a Q sample can be build from field data, and how such data can enrich the interpretation of the statistical analysis. This approach extends the use of Q beyond being a means of triangulation with qualitative interview data (Singer 1999), and may promote further discussion of ways of operationalizing the concourse of communication and validity of the Q sample.

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Appendix

Table 1: Q-sample Statements with Factor Scores

Change Dimension	Voice (*)	Statement	Score A	Score B
Philosophy and Leadership	C	(48) Change happens only after the organization is dismantled or sold and no one feels safe.	-5	-3
	C	(50) \<Past president\> did things his way. He had his own agenda.	-1	0
	H	(51) A charismatic leader helps us solve our problems and sweeps away our confusion.	1	-1
	H	(25) \<Past president\> started us out on a path, we got lost, now we are getting back on track.	1	-4
	C	(56) Top management doesn't act like a leader with a clear vision for change.	-2	5
	H	(7) Top management wants everyone to participate and to become a part of the change process.	4	-4
Reasons for change	C	(58) At \<Company\> profits are all that matters, so changes that don't affect the bottom line are worthless.	-3	3
	H	(10) \<Company\> survives, even when owners and executives change.	0	0
	C	(37) We work hard to satisfy our customers, but they always find new requirements to put on us.	0	-2
	H	(44) We must change our perspectives to put customer needs first.	4	5
	C	(1) Employee can derail any change effort, just be resisting.	0	2
	H	(53) We can all solve problems, seek new ideas, challenge conventional wisdom, and experiment	5	1

* *H = Hope, C = Cynicism*

Change Dimension	Voice (*)	Statement	Score A	B
Types of Change	C	(9) Most managers and supervisors are production numbers oriented — they don't value employee efforts to change.	-1	1
	H	(6) Managers and supervisors keep large-scale results in focus while employees make a difference through small improvements.	0	-1
	C	(60) Without a major investment in our resources we can't get real improvements in our processes.	-2	0
	H	(39) Not a day should go by without some sort of improvement somewhere in the company.	5	2
	C	(4) We're a mature business, there is no place for innovation.	-4	-5
	C	(42) Without new technology we cannot be innovative.	-1	1
	H	(38) We innovate by bringing new problem solving methods into use.	4	-2
	H	(26) We can innovate by putting together other companies' ideas in a way that makes them unique to <Company>.	2	2
	C	(3) <Company> used to be feared by our competitors, now we're changing just to stay in the field.	0	4
	H	(54) We need to hang on to all our good routines, and make adjustments to stay competitive.	0	2
Attitudes (before after)	C	(12) The ideas sound good, but I'm still waiting to see results.	-3	1
	C	(28) I'm anxious about my future — my job may be changed so that my skills are no longer adequate.	-3	-3
	H	(13) I think (almost) everyone wants positive changes to happen — we're ready for change!	1	1
	H	(33) I expect overall that changes will be for the better — though I may have to learn some new skills for doing my job.	3	2
	C	(35) Before I've adjusted to one round of changes, I'm told to make more changes.	-2	0
	C	(63) We did everything we were asked to do, but no one really listened to our ideas.	-3	-1
	H	(5) After serving on a team, I am eager to get back to work because I know how important my contribution is.	2	-3
	H	(30) I find that participating in <Change Program> teams has become (is becoming) a satisfying part of my work.	3	-4

Change Dimension	Voice (*)	Statement	Score A	B
Managing the Change Event	C	(2) The Quality Council talks about fixing things when it should be doing the fixing.	-3	4
	H	(29) Gradually more and more people are taking responsibility for change around here	3	-5
	C	(49) Only a small number of people are really involved in <Change program> — they are the puppets of top management.	-5	0
	C	(59) The guys on the floor have great ideas for change, but they have no way of making them happen.	-1	-1
	H	(57) Change is initiated and led from the top and leaders find ways for everyone to be involved.	2	-3
	H	(65) Changes really happen when each work-group decides on what it wants to accomplish and then sets about doing it.	2	4
	C	(62) Communication is non-existent — we can't find out what we want to know.	-4	-2
	H	(22) We're setting up lots of good communication methods — we talk, we have communication boards, plant information meetings, and a newsletter.	2	-2
Working (before, during, after) ...Cont'd.	C	(8) Working here is still like firefighting — we just do what needs to be done.	-1	5
	C	(45) We change the way work is organized, but we don't talk about how this affects productivity.	-1	0
	H	(27) When we take time to gather data and talk about it, we understand what needs to be done so we can go back to the factory or office and put those plans into action.	4	-1
	C	(23) When people leave — or are on vacation, I lose access to things I need to get my job done.	-1	-2
	H	(14) Our resources are fixed, so we have to find ways of doing more with those that we've got.	1	1
	H	(32) It is a good change when management sets work standards and then makes sure workers maintain them.	1	1
	C	(18) I do what I need to do, but I cannot suggest to a fellow worker to change what he does.	-4	-3
	C	(19) What's the point of setting up new rules — we never follow the ones we already have.	-4	2
	H	(20) When work is changed so I have responsibility for the whole job I want to do it right.	2	2
	H	(21) Our goal is to create a company where we all feel some ownership in the business.	5	0

Change Dimension	Voice (*)	Statement	Score A	B
Flow of Different Changes	C	(15) Every change program is about working in teams, but we never seem to 'get it'.	-2	0
	H	(55) It sounds as if we have lots of different changes going on, but they're all part of a single strategy.	2	-2
	C	(47) We're used to changing — we just do whatever we are told.	-2	-4
	H	(40) Continuous improvement means we are always working to become better.	5	3
Structures (optimum for changing)	C	(46) Teams take up time that should be spent on work.	-5	-1
	H	(41) Change happens when there is energy and some confusion.	1	-2
	C	(36) Bosses interfere with bringing about needed changes.	-2	-1
	H	(34) My boss has helped me to do my work differently because of all the changes that have taken place.	1	-5
	C	(64) "Who knows who" is still more important than "who can do what".	-5	5
	H	(11) Sharing information and resources among everyone helps to bring about change.	4	3
	C	(16) <Company> has become more confusing, and my work is suffering.	-4	-1
	C	(66) When people don't know exactly what their role is, team efforts don't work.	0	3
	H	(24) I like having more information, more choices, and more decisions to make about my work.	3	4
	H	(43) Teams have changed the way I do my work.	3	-4
Other (added)	C	(61) Nothing will change until we get rid of the people who are holding us back.	-1	4
	C	(17) We don't have the resources to do our daily work, let alone experiment with changes.	-2	1
	H	(52) Once our IT/information systems are implemented everywhere <Company> will work as a 21st century company.	0	-5
	H	(31) When people get the training and skills they need to change, everyone will be able to go forward together.	1	3
	C	(61) Nothing will change until we get rid of the people who are holding us back.	-1	4

Table 2: Factor Loadings

ID	Level	Sex	Yrs	A	B	ID	Level	Sex	Yrs	A	B
32	Exec mgmt	M	<10	0.83	-0.05	07	Union	M	>10	0.56	0.35
36	Exec mgmt	M	<10	0.80	0.02	22	Salaried	M	>10	0.18	0.51
16	Exec mgmt	M	<10	0.78	0.07	20	Salaried	F	<10	0.17	0.49
37	Exec mgmt	M	<10	0.74	-0.03	27	Salaried	F	>10	0.09	0.47
02	Exec mgmt	M	>10	0.72	0.04	14	Salaried	F	>10	0.00	0.45
34	Exec mgmt	M	>10	0.71	-0.02	21	Salaried	F	>10	0.38	0.45
24	Exec mgmt	M	<10	0.68	0.17	15	Union	M	>10	0.00	0.72
26	Salaried	M	>10	0.87	0.14	12	Union	M	>10	-0.30	0.72
33	Salaried	F	<10	0.81	0.07	11	Union	M	>10	-0.03	0.60
09	Salaried	F	<10	0.80	0.07	13	Union	M	<10	0.42	0.56
30	Salaried	M	<10	0.76	0.28	04	Union	M	>10	0.14	0.52
05	Salaried	M	<10	0.72	0.26	18	Salaried	M	>10	0.35	0.37
06	Salaried	F	>10	0.70	-0.02	19	Salaried	F	<10	0.31	0.36
29	Salaried	F	>10	0.64	0.06	03	Salaried	M	>10	0.28	0.35
08	Salaried	F	<10	0.62	0.28	23	Salaried	M	>10	0.31	0.25
01	Salaried	M	<10	0.55	0.26	25	Union	F	<10	-0.18	0.38
17	Salaried	F	<10	0.55	0.46	28	Union	M	>10	0.31	0.31
35	Union	M	>10	0.81	0.22	Eigenvalue				13.0	3.6
10	Union	M	>10	0.70	0.16	% Variance				35.0	9.7
31	Union	M	>10	0.67	0.20		Indicates loadings ≥ 0.41 ($p \leq 0.01$)				