

# Consistent and Inconsistent Impacts of a Teacher-Led Empowerment Initiative in a Federation of Schools

**Jean M. Bartunek**

*Boston College*

**Danna N. Greenberg**

*Babson College*

**Barbara Davidson**

*Boston College*

---

---

This study explores the impacts of a teacher-led empowerment initiative in a federation of independent schools. The authors used survey and archival data as well as a conceptual basis in consistency models to examine the relationship between participation in this organizational change initiative, individual behavioral changes pertinent to it, and ratings of its effectiveness. Results indicated that behavioral changes were strong predictors of individual ratings of the effectiveness of the initiative and partially mediated the relationship between participation and effectiveness ratings. Some results supported a consistency framework; others did not. Based on these results, the authors suggest implications for research and practice regarding empowerment-oriented and other types of organizational change initiatives.

---

---

A large number of organizational change initiatives, under rubrics such as quality of work life, employee involvement, and high-commitment workplaces, include empowering employees as one of their components (e.g., Cummings & Worley, 1997; Quinn &

---

*We thank John Austin, Mary Ann Cappiello, Sherri Demers, Mary Lou Gavan, Margaret Humphries, Catherine Lacey, Matthew Lesniewski, Judith McSweeney, Laurie Weingart, and Andrew Wimmer for their assistance and/or helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article. This research was supported by a grant from the Carroll School of Management at Boston College.*

Spreitzer, 1997; Randolph, 1995). The expectation is that empowerment is linked with changes in employee behavior that are beneficial for both employees and their organizations (e.g. Bushe, Havlovic, & Coetzer, 1996; Ford & Fottler, 1995).

Several studies have explored the relationship between already existing levels of empowerment and other individual or organizational characteristics or outcomes (e.g., Spreitzer, 1996; Spreitzer, Kizilos, & Nason, 1997). Empowerment has been reported to have an impact on individual effectiveness and innovation as well as on transformational change in organizations (Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). However, there have been few empirical investigations of the impacts that organizational change initiatives aimed at empowering employees have on the employees' behavior and resulting assessments. Spreitzer and Quinn (1996) conducted one of the few studies of an organizational change effort explicitly designed to empower employees, a large-scale management development program at the Ford Motor Company designed to stimulate middle-management change. Their research focused on the impacts of the middle managers' individual characteristics on their responses to the change initiative and addressed one approach to empowerment, an attempt to foster the middle managers' transformational leadership abilities. However, a wide number of meanings for and approaches to empowerment exist (Bartunek, Bradbury, & Boreth, 1997). The differences in meanings and approaches suggest that change initiatives aimed at empowering employees can vary considerably in how they are implemented and how they affect an organization and its members. Thus, there are still many unanswered questions about participation in empowerment efforts and their outcomes. In addition, little is known about how levels of participation in an empowerment effort affect outcomes of the effort.

In this article, we study the impacts of a change initiative aimed at empowering teachers—an empowerment program that was introduced into a federation of 19 independent schools. We do so using a consistency-based conceptual framework that has not often been explicitly used in planned organizational change research but is implicit in many and explicit in some models of and approaches to organizational change. Festinger (1957), Salancik (1977), Bacharach, Bamberger, and Sonnenstuhl (1996), and others who have developed the consistency framework suggest that people often desire to resolve inconsistencies between their behaviors and attitudes. This desire may help to explain why empowerment and other change efforts have their intended impacts. We used a consistency-based conceptual framework as a basis for exploring the relationship between individual teachers' levels of participation in the change effort, behavioral changes they made as a result of participation, and their ratings of the impact of the change initiative in the federation of independent schools.

---

*Jean M. Bartunek is a professor in the Department of Organizational Studies at Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts.*

*Danna N. Greenberg is an assistant professor in the Department of Management at Babson College, Wellesley, Massachusetts.*

*Barbara Davidson is a doctoral student in the Department of Organizational Studies at Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts.*

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The issues that are central to this study include the levels of participation in a change initiative, the behavioral changes that result, and the relationship between behavioral change and assessment of the initiative. We address each issue in turn.

### Participation and Change in Organizations

Since Lewin's (1947) time, participation of some sort has been considered a major motivator of change. Most research on participation has focused on whether or not people participate in decision making (for reviews, see Locke & Schweiger, 1979; Miller & Monge, 1986; Wagner, 1994). The assumption of much of this literature is that participation is associated with improvements of some kind in behavior or satisfaction. Some of this literature directly asserts that participation in decision making is a primary way of empowering employees (e.g., Atchison, 1991; Powell, 1995).

A much smaller literature has focused explicitly on participation in organizational change initiatives (Neumann, 1989; Pasmore & Fagans, 1992). In this work, level of participation, not simply a dichotomous measure of participation or nonparticipation, is important. Pasmore and Fagans (1992, p. 385) suggest that there is a continuum of participative acts in an organization that is undergoing change, ranging from the lowest level (simply joining and participating in a system), to contributing (helping to improve the existing system), to collaborating (seeking to involve or support others in changing the system), to creating (transcending the current system). Although the specifics of the participative continuum developed by Pasmore and Fagans are not pertinent to all change initiatives, their work does suggest that a simple distinction between participating and not participating in an organizational change effort is inadequate. Some organizational members are likely to take the lead in designing a change initiative, and others will follow their lead in some way or choose not to follow it. The more or less implicit assumption of much of this research is that the greater the level of participation, the more positive the outcomes. Few researchers have formally studied the potential impact that differing levels of participation might have on the outcomes of organizational change initiatives.

### Effects of Participation on Behavior

Participation in a change effort should affect individual participants' behavior. Porras and his collaborators (Porras & Hoffer, 1986; Porras & Robertson, 1992; Robertson, Roberts, & Porras, 1993), in particular, strongly emphasize the importance of individual behavioral change in any model of planned organizational change, insisting that a first aim of planned change efforts must be to change individuals' behavior. Without individual behavioral change (such as behavior that reflects empowerment) there will not be larger organizational change. Moreover, unless participants experience behavioral change, they may be unlikely to rate a change initiative as effective.

Because empowerment programs are based on multiple definitions of empowerment, it is not possible to specify one generic type of empowered behavior that should

result from all change initiatives aimed at empowerment. However, it is a reasonable assumption that a particular empowerment initiative will carry with it one or more expectations of the types of behavior that will result from that initiative. Thus, when assessing an organizational empowerment initiative (or any type of change initiative, for that matter), it is legitimate to explore whether organization members' behavior changes in ways that are consistent with the expectations of that initiative.

A primary conceptual basis for an expected relationship between behavioral change and attitudinal change comes from the long theorized and empirically demonstrated notion that people often try to demonstrate consistency in their behaviors and attitudes. Aspirations for consistency have been discussed by social psychologists and others since Festinger's (1957, 1964) early writings on cognitive dissonance that focused on the fact that dissonance between attitudes and behaviors causes tension and motivates people to create consistency by changing their behavior or cognition in some way. If change agents can accomplish an initial shift in attitude or behavior, other changes aimed at restoring consistency should follow. There is evidence, for example, that initial attitudes have small, but significant, impacts on later behavior (Kraus, 1995) and that behavior has a considerable impact on later cognition (Weick, 1995). As Salancik (1977) and others have discussed, if people perform a behavior (such as participating in a change effort) that is observable, public, of their own volition, and irrevocable, they are likely to experience this behavior as committing them in some way to the endeavor. As those who do research on the foot-in-the-door technique (cf. summary by Cialdini, 1988, pp. 72-73) have demonstrated, even a relatively small public commitment often leads people to become involved in other and more extensive behaviors consistent with their initial actions. Together, this research suggests that when organizational members' participation in an empowerment initiative is public and observable they are more likely to become committed to that initiative and to take on actions that are consistent with it.

#### **Relationship Between Behavior and Assessment**

Based on a consistency rationale, it is reasonable to assume that behavioral changes that result from a change initiative will affect later assessments of the change initiative. One of Festinger's (1957, 1964) main arguments was that people develop attitudes that are consistent with their prior decisions and behaviors. Salancik (1977) built on this argument and Kiesler's (1971) to suggest that because of their need to resolve inconsistencies between action and attitudes, people often become committed to their behavioral acts. Weick (1987, 1995), among others, suggests that one implication of this need to resolve inconsistencies is postdecisional justification. When people complete actions, they work backward and use their actions to search for patterns of likes and values that explain the outcomes. Bacharach et al. (1996) suggest that large-scale organizational change efforts may be largely organized around needs to search for consistency. O'Reilly and Chatman (1996) suggest that consistency partially explains why commitment mechanisms help organizations develop high-commitment workplaces, an example of the type of workplace design that is expected to be empowering.

In other words, a consistency argument suggests that behavioral change that results from a change initiative should affect later assessments of the initiative. Furthermore, such behavioral change should at least partly mediate the relationship between participation in a change effort and assessment of it. If Salancik (1977) is correct, participation in a change initiative should have an impact on assessment because it leads people to act in a way consistent with the participation, and this action should lead to higher assessments in order to maintain consistency.

### **The Context for This Study**

We explore the relationship between participation in an empowerment-oriented change initiative, behavioral change, and evaluation of the change initiative within an important organizational context, a federation of independent schools. As a type of organizational form, federations consist of a number of affiliated organizations that agree to relinquish control over certain activities to a central management office (cf. D'Aunno & Zuckermann, 1987; Oliver, 1990; Provan, 1983). In federations, especially voluntary ones as is the case in this study, relationships among member organizations and between each member organization and the central management office are relatively loose. The central office acts on behalf of the interests of the affiliated organizations and coordinates initiatives that involve all the affiliated organizations. At the same time, affiliate organizations are generally autonomous with regard to their day-to-day operations, even as they carry out activities and initiatives that are introduced by the central office and are of interest to the federation as a whole. Consequently, when an initiative is introduced into the federation from a central source, implementation of the program may vary in the different member organizations.

The initiative introduced here was a central one, introduced by a group of teachers from different schools operating under the auspices of the central office. Most assessments of change deal with a single organization and with initiatives introduced by someone with considerable formal power. This article contributes to an understanding of empowerment in particular and organizational change in general by exploring the implementation of an initiative carried out by a group with relatively little formal power in the multiple settings of a federation.

In the following section, we describe the change initiative and the founders' vision and plan for it in some detail. Their vision is important because it implies the types of behavioral change that would be appropriate to expect.

### **THE CHANGE INITIATIVE: TEACHER EMPOWERMENT**

We explored participation, behavioral changes, and ratings of the impacts of an innovative teacher empowerment program. This program was introduced by the Network Faculty Development Committee (NFDC), a group whose mission was to empower teachers in the network, a loosely knit federation of 19 independent schools dispersed across the United States. The time period of this assessment ranged from the

beginning of the NFDC until its sixth year, concluding with a questionnaire that was administered in all the network schools.

The NFDC, a seven-member group composed primarily of teachers from several different network schools, attempted to empower the teachers in the network through several activities that were derived from a well-articulated and complex conceptual model of empowerment. The NFDC's early vision and early work have been described by Bartunek, Lacey, and Wood (1992), and the following presentation is based in part on that paper.

The NFDC's approach to empowerment grew out of its founders' dissatisfaction with established methods of teacher empowerment. Some of these methods are based on a concept of school-based management (e.g., Conley & Bacharach, 1990). Such methods provide opportunities for teachers to be involved in solving administrative problems in their schools. Other methods emphasize self-efficacy (e.g., Maeroff, 1988) and attempt to give teachers more autonomy in their own classrooms so that they can be more creative in their teaching approaches. The assumption, however, is that this creativity will be exercised only in the individual classroom. There is no expectation that teachers' creativity in their own classrooms could affect anyone other than their own students (Shujaa, 1989).

The NFDC founders were dissatisfied with both approaches. They believed that these approaches depended on a narrow implicit assumption that teachers can have meaningful impact only within their own classrooms or by sharing in the decision making that is usually left to administrators, as if administrators do the only powerful work in schools. In contrast, the NFDC founders designed a teacher empowerment initiative that would enable teachers to build on their classroom- and school-based knowledge to make a public contribution to education and educational reform.

The NFDC's empowerment initiative was based on the premise that teachers and their experiences provide crucial and valuable knowledge for educational inquiry, research, and theory and that the improvement of education hinges on providing forums for teachers to articulate and communicate their practical knowledge to each other and to the public. The NFDC founders believed that if teachers are afforded time and space to build relationships with their colleagues, they can tell their professional stories, articulate problems, recognize recurring themes, and work toward common solutions. In so doing, teachers can grow in their awareness of the knowledge they have gleaned from their work and of their power to imagine new ways to educate. From this affirmation of the value of their own insights, teachers are expected to develop a greater ability to take risks and make changes and, subsequently, a desire to communicate these insights to wider audiences (McDonald, 1988). The founders expected that through participation in NFDC-sponsored activities, teachers would begin to make a public contribution based on their classroom- and school-based experience. In particular, they might be expected to make known in the network (and eventually beyond it) initiatives they took related to their teaching.

The founders envisioned the NFDC as a forum through which both committee members and a wider circle of teachers could carry out this approach to empowerment. The NFDC implemented its approach and philosophy in the network through multiple

mechanisms. Each mechanism represented a different way that teachers could participate in this empowerment initiative. First, the NFDC conducted a semiannual series of faculty institutes. During these institutes, teachers from the different network schools were brought together to build professional relationships with each other and to learn about and propose programs for faculty development in the network (for an example, see Bartunek et al., 1992). NFDC members planned these institutes with the help of other network teachers and administrators. Second, beginning in their second year, the NFDC initiated an annual journal of teacher writing, the *Network Journal of Education (NJE)*, to which all faculty members in the network could submit articles. Several faculty members in the network constituted the *NJE* editorial board (which had a rotating membership), while others were peer reviewers for the submitted papers. Finally, to communicate effectively with the various network teachers, the NFDC appointed contact people in each school. The contact people received NFDC information and made it available to teachers and communicated with NFDC members about pertinent events taking place in the individual schools.

Although the number of teachers involved with the NFDC's activities increased over the years, the majority of teachers in the different schools did not directly participate in the change initiative. Many teachers knew about it primarily through hearing about it from the contact people or other participants or through reading about its activities.

The founders and NFDC members expected that participation in NFDC activities would affirm the value individual teachers placed on their own knowledge and insight and that as a result of this affirmation, teachers would be more willing to make changes and to make public contributions regarding these changes. Hence, the NFDC's activities were expected to have a positive impact on the individual teachers and, through them, the various schools and the network. That is, by making the results of their innovative activities public, the teachers would positively affect their own schools and the network as a whole. In this study, we focused on two innovative activities, writing about one's innovative work and forming local faculty development committees (FDCs). The first change was a direct component of the founders' vision for the NFDC, and the second emerged as a result of one implementation of that vision, the faculty institutes. We discuss these changes in more detail below.

The primary way teachers made their innovative activities more public was by sharing them with other teachers through a public outlet within the network. Two to three times a year, the network's central office published an informal newsletter, the *Network News*, which contained short informational articles about the innovative activities taking place in the different schools. The newsletter gave teachers the opportunity to share information about and learn from initiatives taking place in the various network schools. The NFDC founders hoped that as a result of their participation in the NFDC activities, teachers would be more inclined to make known in the network the creative initiatives they took related to their teaching; a primary way they would do this would be through the *Network News*.

At the first faculty institute, held during the NFDC's second year, some participants suggested that the individual schools start their own local FDCs, whose purpose would be to encourage faculty development activities within the individual schools. A few

teachers who had participated in the faculty institute took the first steps to implement local FDCs in their schools the next year. Word spread about them across the network. The FDCs were formally discussed at the second faculty institute 2 years later, and more local FDCs were developed as a result. At the time of questionnaire administration, there were local FDCs in 10 of the 19 schools. Consistent with the fact that the network was a federation, the number of teachers participating on the local FDCs varied considerably in the different schools, as did the kinds of activities in which the local FDCs were involved.

### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

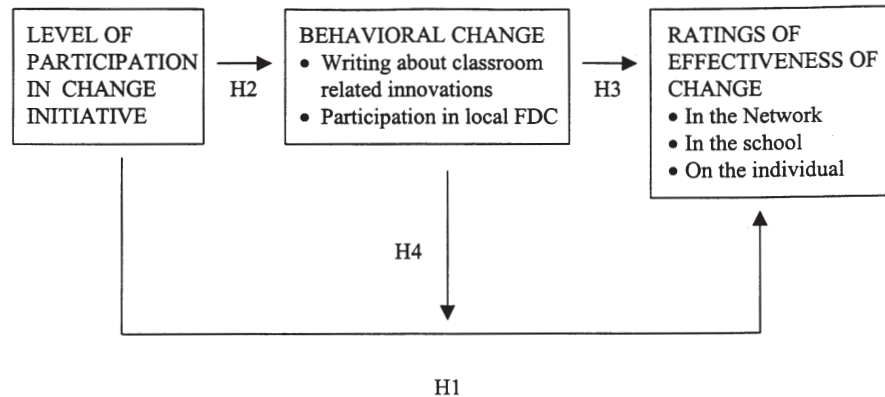
The conceptual model for our investigation is shown in Figure 1. This model depicts the expected impact of level of participation in the empowerment initiative on desired behavioral changes and, as a consequence of these changes, teachers' ratings of the initiative. The model suggests that both behavioral changes and evaluations of the initiative should be affected by level of participation. However, in accord with consistency arguments, evaluations should be affected not only directly by participation but also by whether behavioral changes result. Thus, behavioral changes should partially mediate the relationship between participation and evaluation of the change. Individual organizational members who participate more should be more likely than others to make behavioral changes and should be more likely than those who are less involved to positively evaluate the initiative. The rationale for these expectations and the specific hypotheses that follow from them are presented below.

#### **The Impact of Participation on Evaluation of the Initiative**

As a basis of our study, we expect that level of participation in the change initiative will positively affect evaluation of it. Multiple sources have advocated the value of participation in organizational change and have suggested that people who participate in change typically rate resulting changes more highly (e.g., McLagan & Nel, 1995). One reason for this is Salancik's (1977) work discussed previously: Participation in an organizational activity should lead to greater commitment to the activity due to consistency effects. Furthermore, participation, particularly of the type described here, is a public activity, and the publicness of the activity may be expected to lead to attitudes consistent with participation (cf. Festinger 1964).

Change agents, who are more involved in and committed to a change initiative than are other organizational members, should evaluate a change more positively than do people who are simply recipients of the change efforts (Pasmore & Fagans, 1992). In addition, those who participate actively in the change initiative should rate the initiative more highly than do those who are not active participants in it. This is in part because of the comparative commitment and bindingness of different levels of participation.

*Hypothesis 1:* Teachers with higher levels of participation in the change initiative will rate it more positively than will teachers with lower levels of participation.



**FIGURE 1: Relationships Between Participation, Behavioral Change, and Assessment of the Change Initiative**

NOTE: FDC = faculty development committee.

### The Impact of Participation on Behavioral Change

The more organizational members participate in a change initiative, the more committed they should be to it (Salancik, 1977); thus, the more likely they should be to make behavioral changes that are consistent with the expected outcomes of that initiative. Behavioral changes consistent with a change initiative are also likely to be present because of the greater knowledge those involved in the initiative have about its expectations (Miller & Monge, 1986). Individuals with greater participation in a particular change initiative understand it more fully because they are actively involved with the change and have not simply heard about it secondhand (Pasmore & Fagans, 1992).

*Hypothesis 2:* Teachers with higher levels of participation in the change initiative will be more likely to make behavioral changes consistent with it than will teachers with lower levels of participation.

### The Impact of Behavioral Change on Evaluation

Behavioral changes should lead to higher ratings of the change program's effectiveness. We noted earlier that there is very strong evidence that behavior affects later cognitions in ways aimed at creating consistency (Weick, 1995). Organizational members who carry out behavioral changes that are consistent with the change effort should rate it more highly than do those who do not make these changes (Salancik, 1977; Weick, 1995).

*Hypothesis 3:* Teachers who implement behavioral changes consistent with the initiative will rate the initiative more highly than will teachers who do not make such changes.

### The Mediating Role of Behavioral Change

Finally, based on these arguments, we propose that the relationship between participation and ratings of effectiveness will be mediated by behavioral changes that result from participation. Behavioral change resulting from participation should be particularly likely to lead people to rate change efforts in congruence with their activities (Hypothesis 3); thus, some of the impact of participation (Hypothesis 1) should occur because of the behavioral changes engendered by it. Behavioral changes have many of the characteristics Salancik (1977) describes: They are observable, public, of one's own volition, and irrevocable. Furthermore, behavioral changes serve as the basis for later sense making about the activity (Weick, 1995).

*Hypothesis 4:* The relationship between level of participation in the change initiative and ratings of its effectiveness is partially mediated by behavioral changes.

## METHOD

### Data Sources and Sample Characteristics

We used both archival and survey data to test the hypotheses. We gathered archival data from two sources: the NFDC's records of its activities during its first 3 years of operation and the central office that coordinates the network. We gathered survey data during the sixth year of the NFDC's operations. These data sources are discussed in more detail below.

NFDC archival data—from the group's first 3 years—were used to identify the NFDC activities to which individual teachers had applied and/or in which they had actually participated. These activities included applying for, helping to prepare, and/or participating in a faculty institute; submitting or publishing a paper (on any topic) in and/or serving as an editor or reviewer for *NJE*; serving as a contact person in a school; or applying to or serving on the NFDC. Wagner (1994) has found that the apparent effectiveness of participation is inflated when measures of participation are collected from the same source (often questionnaire measures) from which measures of effectiveness are collected. The fact that we used archival data for our measures of participation and totally separate questionnaire measures for its rated effectiveness strengthens confidence in the accuracy of any relationships we find.

We used archival data from the network's central office to assess whether teachers had published information in the network about the innovative activities they had carried out that were directly relevant to their teaching. For this purpose, we used the *Network News*, the informal (nonrefereed and with a minimal lag time) newsletter published in the network two to three times per year. This newsletter was the primary outlet through which employees in the various schools shared information with other network schools about activities in which they were involved. Teachers who made changes related to their teaching customarily described them in the *Network News* even if they wrote about them more formally elsewhere. Examples of some of the activities teachers wrote about included a drama teacher's experiments with literary

gender change in his attempt to produce a major Shakespearean drama that had female leading roles; another teacher's use of computers to help students work with issues that relate to production, manufacturing, communication, and transportation; and the efforts of an entire school's staff to organize a regional conference on girls' education.

We mailed questionnaires to all of the administration, faculty, and other staff members in each of the 19 network schools during the NFDC's sixth year ( $N =$  approximately 1,600). The response rate to the questionnaire was approximately 51% (819 responses). Each questionnaire was given a code number (which respondents could remove if they chose) so that individual questionnaire data could be linked to the archival data for each respondent. Of the respondents, 613 were either teachers or in educational services (such as school librarians and school psychologists, i.e., other school personnel who work primarily with students and toward whom the change initiative was also directed). Of these 613 respondents, 315 had been employed in one of the network schools when the NFDC began more than 5 years previously. Because we were assessing changes over a multiyear time period, these 315 teachers and educational services personnel formed the sample. Consistent with the network as a whole, 87% of the sample was female. On average, sample members were 47 years old and had 11½ years of continuous experience in the school in which they worked at the time of questionnaire administration, or about 6 years of continuous experience in the school at the time the NFDC began.

#### **Independent Variable: Participation**

From the archival data, we identified four nonoverlapping levels of participation in the change initiative during its first 3 years. The first category, nonparticipants, included all respondents who had neither applied for nor participated in any of the NFDC activities during its first 3 years ( $n = 262$ ). The second category, applicants, included all respondents who had applied to but had not participated in any of the NFDC activities ( $n = 18$ ) during its first 3 years. Anyone who had applied to a faculty institute, submitted an article to *NJE*, applied to join the NFDC, or served on the editorial board of *NJE*, but who in the end did not participate in any of these activities (because of rejection or their own decision) was included in the applicant category. The third category, participants, included all respondents who had participated in at least one of the NFDC activities ( $n = 27$ ) during its first 3 years. Any respondent who had planned or participated in a faculty institute, published in or served as editor or peer reviewer for *NJE*, or served as a school contact person was included in the participant category. The fourth category, change agents, included all those who had been NFDC members ( $n = 8$ ) during its first 3 years. Because neither of the NFDC founders was teaching in the network schools when the questionnaire was administered, they did not participate in the study.

#### **Mediator Variables: Behavioral Changes**

As noted above, we included two measures of behavioral change. The first measure was taken from archival records of whether teachers had written about innovations

they had carried out that were related to their teaching. One of the authors searched all issues of the *Network News* published during the time period of the study for articles written by teachers about their classroom-related innovations. The total number of articles a teacher wrote during the first 2 years of the NFDC's work was used as a control measure. The total number of articles a teacher wrote from the fourth through early in the sixth year of the NFDC's work (i.e., after the change initiative had been established and up to the questionnaire administration) was used as an index of behavioral change. (We did not include articles written during the NFDC's third year. The NFDC had been sufficiently active by this time that a few articles written that year were obviously a result of the authors' having participated in the group's activities. Thus, it would have been inappropriate to include them as controls for writing.)

The second measure of behavioral change, whether respondents participated in a local FDC in their schools, was derived from a combination of archival data and the questionnaire measures. A question was asked on the questionnaire about whether the respondent's school had a local FDC. In addition, the NFDC members were familiar with all the schools in which such committees existed. If a majority of the teachers and a majority of the administrators in a given school agreed that the school had such a committee, the presence of the committee was checked with the NFDC. In each case, there was agreement that such a committee did exist. We were then interested in whether the respondents had participated as members in local FDCs. There was no way to measure this using the archives because formal records in the individual schools had not been kept. Thus, we measured participation in a local FDC by a questionnaire item that asked whether participants had, in the past 5 years, "served on a committee in their own home school that addresses faculty/staff development." If respondents answered yes to this question and their schools had local FDCs, they were recorded as participating in a local FDC.

#### **Dependent Variables: Ratings of Effectiveness**

Three effectiveness measures were used to assess the respondents' evaluations of the change initiative. Each was a composite of five questions developed jointly by the members of the NFDC and the researchers that identified how positive the impact of the NFDC had been in the network ( $\alpha = .95$ ), in the individual school ( $\alpha = .96$ ), and on the individual respondent ( $\alpha = .96$ ). All questions were assessed on 7-point Likert-type scales anchored by *strongly disagree* (1) and *strongly agree* (7) and included an additional option to state "don't know." "Don't know" responses were treated as missing data. The questions are presented in Table 1.

## **RESULTS**

Table 2 presents the number of cases, means, standard deviations, and correlations for all the measures.

**TABLE 1**  
**Questions Used to Assess the Impact of the**  
**Network Faculty Development Committee (NFDC)**

<i>The Impact of the NFDC on:</i>	<i>Specific Questions Used</i>
The network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. In general, the NFDC has been effective in the Network.</li> <li>b. In general, the NFDC's work has empowered teachers in the Network.</li> <li>c. The NFDC has provided a forum for teachers' interests and voices in the Network.</li> <li>d. The NFDC's work has had positive effects on teacher-administration relationships in the Network.</li> <li>e. The NFDC's work has resulted in increased commitment to faculty and staff development in the Network.</li> </ul>
Your school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. In general, the NFDC's work has had positive effects on my school.</li> <li>b. The NFDC's work has helped teachers in my school to feel more empowered.</li> <li>c. The NFDC has provided a forum for teachers' interests and voices in my school.</li> <li>d. The NFDC's work has had positive effects on teacher-administration relationships in my school.</li> <li>e. The NFDC's work has resulted in increased commitment to faculty and staff development in my school.</li> </ul>
You	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. In general, the NFDC's work has had positive effects on my own work.</li> <li>b. The NFDC's work has helped me feel more empowered.</li> <li>c. The NFDC has provided a forum for my interests and voice.</li> <li>d. The NFDC's work has had positive effects for me on teacher-administration relationships.</li> <li>e. The NFDC's work has increased my commitment to faculty and staff development.</li> </ul>

Hypothesis 1 proposed that respondents with greater participation in the change initiative would evaluate its impact more highly than would respondents who were not as involved. The results from a MANOVA, summarized in Table 3, show a significant main effect of participation on ratings of the effectiveness of the change initiative. Results of univariate ANOVAs, also shown in Table 3, indicate that respondents who were more involved in the change initiative had significantly higher ratings of the impact of the NFDC on themselves as individuals than did respondents who were less involved. We used Helmert contrasts, in which the effect of each category of a predictor variable except the last is compared to the mean effect of prior categories, to tease out specific between-group differences. Results of the Helmert contrasts indicated significant differences between those who did not apply and all others ( $t = 3.56, p < .001$ ) and between those who applied and those who participated ( $t = 2.50, p < .01$ ). There was no significant difference between those who participated and change agents.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that respondents who were more involved in the change initiative would make more behavioral changes. One of the behavioral changes, number of articles about the results of innovative classroom approaches, was a continuous variable; the other, whether the person had belonged to a local FDC, was a dichotomous variable.

**TABLE 2**  
**Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among the Measures**

<i>Variables</i>	n	M	SD	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>
Independent variable									
1. Level of participation	315	0.30	0.73						
Dependent variables									
2. Effectiveness in network	176	4.59	1.46	.16*					
3. Effectiveness in school	191	4.12	1.60	.05	.83**				
4. Effectiveness on individual	224	4.03	1.76	.29**	.78**	.75**			
Control measure									
5. Early publications	315	.05	.24	.23**	.10	.12	.11		
Mediator variables									
6. Publications of work (4th to 6th year)	315	.15	.40	.11*	.16*	.16*	.18**	.01	
7. Participation in local faculty development committee	315	1.23	.42	.12*	.16*	.23**	.28**	.03	.06

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

**TABLE 3**  
**Impact of Participation Level on Effectiveness Ratings**

<i>Ratings of the Effectiveness of the NFDC on the:</i>	<i>Mean Scores of Groups</i>				<i>ANOVA Results</i>	
	<i>Nonparticipants (n = 262)</i>	<i>Applicants (n = 18)</i>	<i>Participants (n = 27)</i>	<i>Change Agents (n = 8)</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F<sup>a</sup></i>
Network	4.46	4.82	5.13	5.10	3, 148	1.22
Individual school	4.07	4.32	4.46	3.80	3, 148	0.51
Individual participant	3.80	3.90	5.26	5.47	3, 148	4.10**
Multivariate test					9, 444	2.81**

a. Using Pillai's trace, which is a standard multivariate test of significance. It can be transformed to approximate an *F* statistic (cf. Burns, 1984).  
\*\**p* < .01.

Writing about innovative classroom-related activities was assessed by an analysis of covariance, with writing during the first 2 years of the initiative as the covariate, level of participation in NFDC activities during the first 3 years as the independent variable, and writing during the 3 years subsequent to participation as the dependent variable. Results of this analysis indicated that, even controlling for the covariate (which had no significant impact on later writing), level of participation in the initiative had a significant impact on writing,  $F(1, 314) = 3.85, p < .01$ . The average number of articles about innovative classroom-related activities increased from those who had not applied (.12) to those who had applied but not participated (.22) to those who had participated (.37). Somewhat surprisingly, however, no one on the NFDC during its first 3 years later wrote about classroom-related innovations. A one-way ANOVA using Helmert contrasts indicated a significant difference between those who participated in the initiative and the change agents,  $t(311) = 2.34, p < .05$ .

Because participation in a local FDC was a dichotomous measure, logistic regression was the appropriate statistical test to determine whether participation in the change initiative had an impact on such participation. The results of a logistic regression analysis indicated that participation in the NFDC initiative did not have a significant effect on participation in a local FDC, although the effect was in the expected direction (i.e., those who participated more in NFDC activities were somewhat more likely to have participated in local FDCs).

Hypothesis 3 predicted that behavioral changes would lead to higher evaluations of the impact of the initiative. This hypothesis was supported. Results of regression analyses indicated that writing about innovative classroom-related activities was a significant predictor of perceptions of the effectiveness of the NFDC in the network ( $\beta = .16, p < .05$ ), in the school ( $\beta = .16, p < .05$ ), and on the self ( $\beta = .18, p < .01$ ). Participation in a local FDC also had significant impact on ratings of the effectiveness of the NFDC in the network ( $\beta = .22, p < .001$ ), in the school ( $\beta = .28, p < .001$ ), and on the self ( $\beta = .16, p < .05$ ).

Hypothesis 4 predicted that the relationship between level of participation and evaluation ratings would be partially mediated by behavioral changes. Because participation in the initiative had a significant impact only on one outcome variable, ratings of the effectiveness of the initiative on the self, and only on one behavioral change, writing about one's innovative activities, it was only possible to test whether writing about one's innovative activities mediated the impact of participation in the change initiative on ratings of its effectiveness on the self. Following Baron and Kenny (1986), we used a series of regression analyses to determine whether writing as a result of the change initiative mediated the relationship between participation and assessment ratings. In Step 1, we used the analyses previously conducted for Hypothesis 2 to establish that the independent variable, participation, had a direct effect on the mediator, writing about one's innovative activities. In Step 2, we used the analyses conducted to test Hypothesis 1 to establish that the independent variable, participation, had a direct effect on the dependent variable, effectiveness of the initiative on the self. In Step 3, we conducted a third analysis to determine whether adding the mediator, writing about

classroom-related innovations, to the second equation affected the previously significant relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

In this third analysis, the dependent variable, effectiveness of the initiative on the self, was regressed on participation, the behavioral change of writing about one's innovative teaching activities, and a third variable in which we controlled for initial writing. The results from this analysis showed that the mediator, writing about one's innovative teaching activities, had a significant effect on ratings of the effectiveness of the initiative on the self ( $\beta = .14, p < .05$ ) and that the effect of participation remained significant ( $\beta = .26, p < .0001$ ) but was significantly reduced,  $t(224) = 2.04, p < .05$ . Thus, the behavioral change partially mediated the impact of participation in the initiative on later ratings of its effectiveness on the self.

## DISCUSSION

Somewhat consistent with Hypothesis 1, level of participation in the change initiative had a significant positive effect on ratings of its impact on the individual. Level of participation also had a significant positive impact on likelihood of writing about innovative classroom-related activities (Hypothesis 2). Both writing about innovative activities and participation in a local FDC had significant positive impact on all three ratings of effectiveness (Hypothesis 3). In addition, writing partially mediated the impact of participation on ratings of the effectiveness of the change initiative on the self (Hypothesis 4).

Although these results were consistent with the hypotheses, other results were not. Participation in the NFDC's initiatives did not have a significant impact on participation in a local FDC, although the results were in the expected direction. In addition, although there was a significant positive impact of participation in the change initiative on writing about one's innovative activities, it was those who participated as recipients of the change initiative who wrote the most. Those who had been members of the NFDC did not, afterward, write about their innovative classroom-related activities in the network's outlet for such writing.

### Limitations of the Study

This study (like most organizational change research) did not include a control group. Although such a group would have enabled us to more clearly establish causal direction, it would have been impossible to include. Thus, we took several precautions in the construction of our measures. We controlled for impacts of prior behavior by counting NFDC membership only in the early years of the change initiative and by counting writing about innovative activities only in subsequent years, followed in turn by the questionnaire administration. The majority of the activity associated with local FDCs occurred during the fourth to the sixth year of the NFDC's work. Thus, there is considerable clarity about the direction of causal effects in this study.

### **Implications for Understanding Effects of Participation in Organizational Change**

The hypothesized effects of participation as outlined by the consistency framework were partially upheld. We discuss both supportive and nonsupportive outcomes below.

Level of participation in the change initiative was linked to writing about one's innovative classroom-related activities but not to involvement in a local FDC. In addition, participation in NFDC activities significantly predicted later ratings of the NFDC's impacts on the self but not ratings of the NFDC's impact beyond the individual (the school and network). Thus, although the results provide some support for the consistency argument that participation affects later behaviors, they suggest that this impact occurs within a circumscribed frame.

Although initial participation had partial impact on later behavioral changes, behavioral changes had significant positive impacts on all the later ratings of the effectiveness of the initiative. This was the case with both behavioral measures, regardless of the fact that members of the local FDCs were not significantly more likely to have participated in NFDC activities. Moreover, writing about one's innovative activities partially mediated the impact of participation on later ratings. This outcome provides strong support for the assertion that later judgments are strongly affected by earlier behaviors (e.g. Weick, 1995); furthermore, the impact of the behaviors during change efforts may be strong enough that the original impetus of the behaviors (such as participation in the change initiative) may be comparatively unimportant.

A major surprise in the findings was that none of the NFDC members during the first years of the change initiative followed the committee's own advice about making public their classroom-related innovations in the network during the next 3 years. According to virtually all consistency explanations, this group, which had made the most public commitment to the initiative, should have been the most likely to do such writing.

One possible reason for the discrepancy is that the early NFDC members saw themselves and acted as managers of their initiative more than as recipients of it. While they were NFDC members, they were preparing and leading the first faculty institute and beginning publication of *NJE*. Perhaps leading these efforts changed their sense of their relationship with their initiative. They may have seen themselves as executing these tasks for the sake of other teachers who were expected to respond, rather than for themselves.

Based on his assessment of a quality-of-work-life initiative, Nurick (1985) has argued that, contrary to much writing, there are multiple types, not only levels, of participation in an organizational change initiative, and that to assume that different levels of participation reflect a linear scale is not always useful. Consistent with Nurick, the results from this study suggest that if researchers simply assume that more participation is better, they are likely to miss important dimensions of the participative experience. Serving as a direct agent of change and serving as a recipient of the change may represent very different types of experiences with qualitatively different types of expectations for self-consistency involved.

In addition, this study demonstrated that opportunities for participation in a change initiative (such as the faculty institutes) may generate creative ideas for application of the initiative that eventually involve people who never have the original participative experience, such as happened with the local FDCs. Carrying out these one-step-removed creative ideas (e.g., Lewis & Seibold, 1993) may lead to high evaluations of the original initiative, even on the part of people who have no direct experience of it.

### **Implications for Empowerment Efforts in Organizations**

We noted above that there have been relatively few empirical studies of large-scale organizational change initiatives aimed at empowerment. Thus, this study is significant for several reasons. It is significant because it describes successful behavioral outcomes of a large-scale empowerment initiative. It is significant because of the organizational levels of those who led the effort and because of the complex organizational setting in which it was accomplished. A small number of teachers, comparatively low-level personnel, led a successful centralized empowerment effort in a federation, a type of organizational setting in which the central office typically has relatively little power. Finally, it is significant because the findings show that organizational empowerment initiatives may have a positive impact at the individual level but not at the organizational level. We noted above that there is an implicit expectation in most organizational change initiatives aimed at empowerment that the introduction of an empowerment initiative will have a positive impact on the organization as a whole (Bushe et al., 1996; Ford & Fottler, 1995). However, in this study, participation in the NFDC's initial activities affected teachers' ratings of the impact of the change initiative on themselves but not on the schools or the network.

### **Implications for Research on Organizational Change**

The results suggest the value of increased scholarly attention to the complex role of consistency in organizational change efforts. We noted that this construct has not frequently been used in research on change. However, the pressure caused by making a public commitment was an original reason participation in decision making was considered to have positive effects (Lewin, 1947). In this study, using consistency as a conceptual basis enabled exploration of the ways in which the findings were consistent and inconsistent with a consistency explanation.

Consistency (or inconsistency) has played a major role in multiple organizational change initiatives, although researchers have not explicitly focused on this. For example, Pondy and Huff (1985) described a successful change attempt in which an internal change agent focused on making innovations seem routine and consistent with already existing practices. In contrast, change initiatives oriented toward second-order change, or transformation (e.g., Bartunek & Moch, 1987; Tushman & Romanelli, 1985) often explicitly create major inconsistencies. If Bacharach et al. (1996) are correct, the need to re-create consistency may be a major driver of these types of change efforts and, thus, a reason that large-scale organizational changes involving punctuated equilibria are completed so quickly (Romanelli & Tushman, 1994).

The results also show the importance of attending to the particular outcomes associated with change agents' visions of change and ways that these outcomes may be modified as a result of the change process. We could assess the pertinent behavioral changes because the NFDC change agents' vision of what their efforts should accomplish was so well articulated and because we paid attention to activities that evolved from their original ideas, especially the local FDCs. This approach enabled us to see that actions one step removed from those introduced by the change agents (i.e., the local FDCs), and not necessarily engaged in more by change participants than by others, may lead to higher ratings of the change agents' work. It is important for research on change to attend not only to predicted outcomes but also to those that evolve from the change initiative.

## REFERENCES

- Atchison, T. (1991). The employment relationship. *Academy of Management Executive*, 5(4), 52-62.
- Bacharach, S. B., Bamberger, P., & Sonnenstuhl, W. J. (1996). The organizational transformation process: The micropolitics of dissonance reduction and the alignment of logics of action. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 41, 477-506.
- Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51, 1173-1182.
- Bartunek, J., Bradbury, H., & Boreth, C. (1997). Attending to difference: A social interpretivist approach to empowerment. In W. A. Pasmore & R. W. Woodman (Eds.), *Research in organizational change and development* (Vol. 10, pp. 63-104). Greenwich, CT: JAI.
- Bartunek, J. M., Lacey, C. A., & Wood, D. R. (1992). Social cognition in organizational change: An insider-outsider approach. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 28, 204-223.
- Bartunek, J. M., & Moch, M. K. (1987). First order, second order and third order change and organization development interventions: A cognitive approach. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 23, 483-500.
- Burns, P. R. (1984). Multiple comparison methods in MANOVA. In *Proceedings 7th SPSS Users and Coordinators Conference* (pp. 33-66). Chicago: ISSUE.
- Bushe, G. R., Havlovic, S. J., & Coetzer, G. (1996). Exploring empowerment from the inside-out (part two). *Journal for Quality and Participation*, 19(3), 78-84.
- Cialdini, R. B. (1988). *Influence: Science and practice* (2nd ed.). Glenview, IL: Scott Foresman.
- Conley, S. C., & Bacharach, S. B. (1990). From school-site management to participatory school site management. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 71(7), 539-544.
- Cummings, T. G., & Worley, C. G. (1997). *Organization development and change* (6th ed.). Cincinnati, OH: South-Western.
- D'Aunno, T. A., & Zuckermann, H. S. (1987). A life cycle model of organizational federations: The case of hospitals. *Academy of Management Review*, 12, 534-545.
- Festinger, L. (1957). *A theory of cognitive dissonance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Festinger, L. (1964). *Conflict, decision, and dissonance*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Ford, R. C., & Fottler, M. D. (1995). Empowerment: A matter of degree. *Academy of Management Executive*, 9(3), 21-31.
- Kiesler, C. A. (1971). *The psychology of commitment*. New York: Academic Press.
- Kraus, S. J. (1995). Attitudes and the prediction of behavior: A meta-analysis of the empirical literature. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 21, 58-75.
- Lewis, L. K., & Seibold, D. R. (1993). Innovation modification during interorganizational adoption. *Academy of Management Review*, 18, 322-354.
- Lewin, K. (1947). Frontiers in group dynamics. *Human Relations*, 1, 5-42.

- Locke, E. A., & Schweiger, D. M. (1979). Participation in decision-making: One more look. In B. Staw (Ed.), *Research in organizational behavior* (Vol. 1, pp. 265-340). Greenwich, CT: JAI.
- Maeroff, G. I. (1988). *The empowerment of teachers: Overcoming the crisis of confidence*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- McDonald, J. P. (1988). The emergence of the teacher's voice. *Teachers College Record*, 89, 471-486.
- McLagan, P., & Nel, C. (1995). *The age of participation: New governance for the workplace and the world*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.
- Miller, K. I., & Monge, P. R. (1986). Participation, satisfaction, and productivity: A meta-analytic review. *Academy of Management Journal*, 29, 727-753.
- Neumann, J. E. (1989). Why people don't participate in organizational change. In R. W. Woodman & W. A. Pasmore (Eds.), *Research in organizational change and development* (Vol. 3, pp. 181-212). Greenwich, CT: JAI.
- Nurick, A. J. (1985). The paradox of participation: Lessons from the Tennessee Valley Authority. *Human Resource Management*, 24, 341-356.
- Oliver, C. (1990). Determinants of interorganizational relationships: Integration and future directions. *Academy of Management Review*, 15, 241-265.
- O'Reilly, C. A., & Chatman, J. A. (1996). Culture as social control: Corporations, cults, and commitment. In B. M. Staw & L. L. Cummings (Eds.), *Research in organizational behavior* (Vol. 18, pp. 157-200). Greenwich, CT: JAI.
- Pasmore, W. A., & Fagans, M. R. (1992). Participation, individual development, and organizational change: A review and synthesis. *Journal of Management*, 18, 375-397.
- Pondy, L. F., & Huff, A. S. (1985). Achieving routine in organizational change. *Journal of Management*, 11, 103-116.
- Porras, J. I., & Hoffer, S. J. (1986). Common behavior changes in successful organization development efforts. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 22, 477-494.
- Porras, J. I., & Robertson, P. J. (1992). Organization development: Theory, practice, and research. In M. Dunnette & L. Hough (Eds.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (2nd ed., Vol. 3, pp. 719-822). Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Powell, T. (1995). TQM as competitive advantage. *Strategic Management Journal*, 16, 15-37.
- Provan, K. G. (1983). The federation as an interorganizational linkage network. *Academy of Management Review*, 8, 79-89.
- Quinn, R. E., & Spreitzer, G. M. (1997). The road to empowerment: Seven questions every leader should consider. *Organizational Dynamics*, 26(2), 37-47.
- Randolph, W. A. (1995). Navigating the journey to empowerment. *Organizational Dynamics*, 23(4), 19-32.
- Robertson, P. J., Roberts, D. R., & Porras, J. I. (1993). Dynamics of planned organizational change: Assessing empirical support for a theoretical model. *Academy of Management Journal*, 36, 619-634.
- Romanelli, E., & Tushman, M. (1994). Organizational transformation as punctuated equilibrium: An empirical test. *Academy of Management Journal*, 37, 1141-1166.
- Salancik, G. R. (1977). Commitment and the control of organizational behavior and belief. In B. M. Staw & G. R. Salancik (Eds.), *New directions in organizational behavior* (pp. 1 - 54). Chicago: St. Clair.
- Shujaa, M. J. (1989). Essay review of "The Empowerment of Teachers." *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 25, 410-414.
- Spreitzer, G. M. (1996). Social structural levers to individual empowerment in the workplace. *Academy of Management Journal*, 39, 483-504.
- Spreitzer, G. M., Kizilos, M. A., & Nason, S. W. (1997). A dimensional analysis of the relationship between psychological empowerment and effectiveness, satisfaction, and strain. *Journal of Management*, 23, 679-704.
- Spreitzer, G. M., & Quinn, R. E. (1996). Empowering middle managers to be transformational leaders. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 32, 237-261.
- Tushman, M. L., & Romanelli, E. (1985). Organizational evolution: A metamorphosis model of convergence and reorientation. In L. L. Cummings & B. M. Staw (Eds.), *Research in organizational behavior* (Vol. 7, 171-222). Greenwich, CT: JAI.
- Wagner, J. A. III. (1994). Participation's effect on performance and satisfaction: A reconsideration of research evidence. *Academy of Management Review*, 19, 312-330.

- Weick, K. E. (1987). Perspectives on action in organizations. In J. W. Lorsch (Ed.), *Handbook of organizational behavior* (pp. 10-28). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.