

# Human Relations

<http://hum.sagepub.com>

---

## **Empowered Managers and Empowered Workers: The Effects of Managerial Support and Managerial Perceived Control on Workers' Sense of Control over Decision Making**

Louise E. Parker and Richard H. Price  
*Human Relations* 1994; 47; 911  
DOI: 10.1177/001872679404700803

The online version of this article can be found at:  
<http://hum.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/47/8/911>

---

Published by:

 SAGE Publications

<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



The Tavistock Institute

**Additional services and information for *Human Relations* can be found at:**

**Email Alerts:** <http://hum.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

**Subscriptions:** <http://hum.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

**Reprints:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

**Permissions:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

**Citations** (this article cites 16 articles hosted on the SAGE Journals Online and HighWire Press platforms):  
<http://hum.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/47/8/911>

# Empowered Managers and Empowered Workers: The Effects of Managerial Support and Managerial Perceived Control on Workers' Sense of Control over Decision Making

Louise E. Parker<sup>1,2</sup> and Richard H. Price<sup>1</sup>

---

In this study, we sought to identify conditions under which workers could experience empowered managers as empowering. Within an organizational context, we defined empowerment as the belief that one has control over decision making. Specifically, we proposed that when workers believe that their managers both have a high level of control over decision making and are supportive, workers will report that they themselves are empowered. We reasoned that managers who exercise power in a supportive manner will be an empowering force for their workers. In support of these hypotheses, we found that it is possible for both workers and *supportive* managers to enjoy relatively high levels of perceived control over organizational decisions.

---

**KEY WORDS:** shared decision making; perceived control; supportive management.

## INTRODUCTION

Two broad lines of evidence suggest that high levels of worker control over decision making are associated with high levels of psychological well-being and job satisfaction. First, there is the organizational behavior literature concerning worker control over decision making (see Cotton, Vollrath, Froggatt, Lengnick-Hall, & Jennings, 1988; Dachler & Wilpert, 1978; Ganster & Fusilier, 1989; Hackman, 1986; Miller & Monge, 1986; Schweiger & Leana, 1986; Tannenbaum, Kavcic, Rosner, Vianello, & Weiser, 1974 for reviews). This research demonstrates that the level of

<sup>1</sup>Survey Research Center, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

<sup>2</sup>Requests for reprints should be addressed to Louise E. Parker, who is now at the Department of Social Policy, RAND, 1700 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, California 90407-2138.

worker control over decision making is positively associated with worker satisfaction and emotional well being (e.g., Tannenbaum et al., 1974) and inversely associated with stress (e.g., Karasek, 1979).

A second line of evidence regarding the effects of control comes from the psychological literature on perceived control. Blumberg (1969) proposed that people's desire for increased participation at the workplace reflects a more generalized need for control. Indeed, there is a long standing interest in the psychological literature concerning the effects of control on a variety of cognitive, affective, and physiological variables. For example, White (1959) proposed that people have an innate need to control their environments. More recently, several theorists have proposed that control is desirable simply because it ensures that there will be a reliable relationship between effort and outcome (Bandura, 1986; Rodin, Rennert, & Solomon, 1980).

Much of the psychological research has concerned the effects of perceived rather than objectively observed control. Research has demonstrated that people both feel and perform better when perceived control is high. Perceived control appears to enhance confidence, make tasks less stressful (Bandura, 1986), and more intrinsically rewarding (DeCharms, 1968; Deci, 1975; Lepper & Greene, 1978). In addition, perceived control has been associated with physical and mental health, longevity, concentration, task persistence, and athletic, academic, and job performance (Bandura, 1986; 1986; Gatchel, 1980; Miller, 1980; Lefcourt, 1980; Rodin, Rennert, & Solomon, 1980; Seligman, 1975). Perceived control has also been associated with the ability to endure a variety of stressors. Findings from both laboratory and field experiments have demonstrated that when people believe they can control adverse events, they cope far better than when they believe these events are beyond their control (Bandura, 1986; Seligman, 1975).

Until recently, the perceived control literature has been concerned primarily with the effects of perceived control on the perceiver. For example, there is a great deal of research concerning the relationships among workers' perceived control, well-being, job satisfaction, and performance. Many modern work places, however, require a high degree of coordination and interdependence between individuals (e.g., see Emerson, 1987; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Because organizational members are interdependent, the experiences and perceptions of one member can influence those of another. In this study, we examined how managers' levels of perceived control might influence workers levels of perceived control. In order to understand how this relationship might function, it is necessary to understand how perceived control and a related term, empowerment, are distributed among organizational actors. We will now explore this issue.

The terms control, perceived control, and empowerment are widely used by organizational researchers (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). These terms have also entered the common parlance. Despite, or perhaps because of their widespread usage, confusion over the precise meaning of these terms has arisen. In light of this confusion, we will begin with a few definitions.

Although control over decision making is often measured in terms of perceptions, it is not a perception itself. Rather control refers to the actual exercise of power. Tannenbaum (1986a, p. 323) offers the following concise definition: "To control means to 'determine outcomes,' 'act as a causal agent,' 'have an impact.'" Put more colloquially, control is the ability to influence decisions. Nonetheless, perception can be a useful way to measure control (Tannenbaum, 1986a). Moreover, Langer (1983) and Miller (1980) have proposed that control must be perceived by the actor, if it is to be experienced and have an effect on the actor.<sup>3</sup>

Empowerment refers to the belief that one has control (i.e., the belief that one can influence decisions). This definition is similar to that offered by other writers (e.g., Conger & Kanungo, 1988; cf, Spreitzer, 1991; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). We will use the terms empowerment and perceived control interchangeably throughout this paper.

Having defined control over decision making and the perception of such control or empowerment, we now focus on the distribution of both control and perceived control over decision making within organizations. There are at least two plausible models for the distribution of control over

<sup>3</sup>Much of the research on worker control over decision making relies only on the workers' own perceptions. Because of this, Wagner and Gooding (1987) have proposed that common method variance may account for part of the observed relationship between control and outcomes such as job satisfaction. Although the observed relationship between satisfaction and control, for example, is reduced when multi-source methodologies (e.g., both workers' and managers' perceptions) are used, a significant relationship remains (also see Leana, Locke, & Schweiger, 1990 and Miller & Monge, 1986). This suggests that common method variance cannot account for all of the observed variance between control and satisfaction. Further, it is difficult to distinguish between variance due to common method variance and variance due to functional relationships (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). As a solution to the common method variance problem, Wagner and Gooding (1987) have proposed collecting data from multiple sources. The most common "second" source for information about workers are their supervisors. It is not clear, however, that a supervisor's rating of a worker's level of control is measuring the same construct as a worker's rating of her control. In fact, Parker and Price (unpublished data) have found that workers' and managers' reports on such constructs differ in systematic ways. Similarly, Podsakoff and Organ (1986) have observed that similar problems can occur even when the multiple reports are obtained from peers. Different workers, for example, have very different experiences even within the same organization or when working under the same supervisor. Finally and perhaps most importantly, Spector (1987) has argued that properly developed instruments are "resistant to the method variance problem" (p. 438). He proposes that method variance may be more of a "myth" than a "significant problem."

decision making in organizations. First, control over decision making could be a "zero-sum" game. If this were true, then a high level of control for one individual would be associated with a low level for at least one other. For instance, in the simplest case, a zero-sum game involving two role incumbents (e.g., workers and managers), we would expect that a high level of control for managers would necessarily be paired with a low level of control for workers and *vice versa*.

It is possible, however, that the distribution of control is not zero sum. There are several ways that this could be the case. First, a high level of control for one group might result in a high level of control for another. It is also possible that level of control of one group has no effect on the level of control of the other. For example, it is possible that level of worker influence could increase (or decrease) without affecting the level of manager influence. Underlying both of these scenarios is the assumption that the size of the "influence pie" is not fixed. In other words, it is assumed that the total amount of control within an organization can change.

According to Tannenbaum, the distribution of control within an organization, should be reflected in the perceptions of the organization's actors. In their classic cross-cultural study of industrial workers, Tannenbaum and colleagues (Tannenbaum et al., 1974) provide evidence that at least perceived control over decision making, and possibly by extension actual control, need not be a zero-sum game (also see Conger & Kanungo, 1988, Hall, 1982; Kanter, 1979). In the organizations Tannenbaum and colleagues studied, when lower level employees had relatively high levels of perceived control over decision making, managers also had high levels of perceived control. Because Tannenbaum believes that perceived control reflects actual control, he has concluded that the actual "influence pie" is expandable (Tannenbaum, 1968, 1986b; Tannenbaum et al., 1974). Such expansion might be accomplished in the following manner. If managers assume that the amount of control is expandable, they are likely to encourage subordinates to participate. Thus, worker control is increased. And, workers who are encouraged to participate in decision making are more likely to cooperate with management's policies. Thus, managerial control is increased.

In this study, we sought to identify conditions under which workers could experience empowered managers (i.e., managers with above the median or high levels of perceived control) as empowering. Specifically, we proposed that when workers believe that their managers both have a high level of control over decision making and are supportive, workers will report that they themselves are empowered (i.e., have a high level of control over decision making). We expected that the relationship between workers' perception of their own level of control over decision making and of their

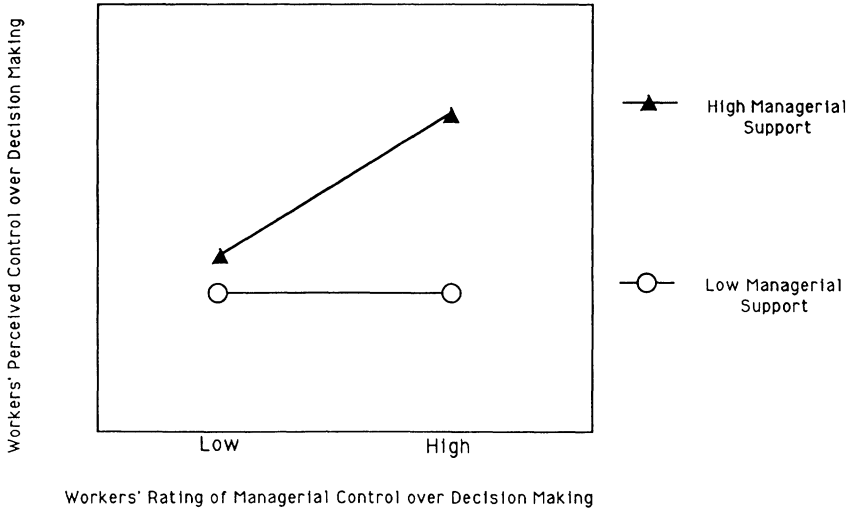
managers' level of control is moderated by workers' perceptions of managerial support. On the other hand, we predicted that if managerial control is rated high in the absence of managerial support, workers will be less likely to perceive that they have much control over decision making. We reasoned that managers who exercise power in a supportive manner will be an empowering force for their workers.

We also expected that the amount of control that managers believe they possess will influence how supportive they are able to be. This is because when managers believe they have a great deal of control over resources, they are likely to also believe they are in a good position to share those resources with their subordinates. On the other hand, if they believe they have little control, they will be less inclined to share their limited resources and control. Quite simply, it is difficult to share what you do not believe you possess.<sup>4</sup>

We offer the following model for shared empowerment at the workplace (i.e., a shared sense of control over decision making). First, we begin with managers' perceptions of their own control over decision making. We propose that managers' perceived control will predict workers' perceptions of managerial support and control. As discussed above, we expect that managers who are themselves empowered (i.e., have a high level of perceived control over decision making) are more likely to be in a position to share control over decision making precisely because they have more to share. We suspect that the sharing of control would be viewed as a supportive act. Therefore, we hypothesize that workers are likely to view empowered managers as supportive. Finally, workers and managers have access to some of the same information when making judgments about the level of managerial control. Therefore, we also propose that managers' assessments of their own level of control will be related to workers' perceptions about managers' control.

As discussed, Miller (1980) and Langer (1983) have argued that control has little power to influence an individuals' behavior, thought, or action unless it is perceived. Therefore, we propose that managerial perceived control will affect worker perceived control indirectly through workers' per-

<sup>4</sup>This does not mean that powerful managers will necessarily share power with their employees. Rather, we merely mean to imply that powerful individuals are in a better position to share power than those who are not powerful. Consider, for example, that the leaders of sociopolitical movements concerned with promoting a more equitable distribution of power and resources are often drawn from the ranks of the privileged (Parker, 1993). This does not mean that all privileged individuals will call for a "redistribution of the wealth." It is likely that many, if not most privileged individuals, would want to maintain the status quo. On the other hand, giving up some of one's power is a luxury that the underprivileged cannot afford. Thus, we are left with the sad state of affairs in which one poor group such as, ethnic American Whites feels threatened by the gains of another such group, African Americans.



**Fig. 1.** Hypothesized interaction effect of workers' ratings of managerial control and support on workers' own perceived level of control over decision making.

ceptions of managerial control. This mediated relationship is the center of our model. As discussed above, however, we expect that although empowered managers can empower their workers, this is more likely to occur if these managers are also supportive. Thus, we also propose that (a) workers' perceptions of managerial support will affect workers' own level of perceived control and that (b) the interaction between workers' perception of their managerial support and control will affect workers' own level of perceived control. Specifically, we expect a synergistic interaction such that when workers' perceptions of managerial control and support are both high, worker perceived control will be substantially higher than when perceptions of either managerial support alone or managerial control alone are high. Figure 1 depicts this hypothesized interaction relationship.

In summary, we hypothesize the following. First, we expect that managers' perceived level of control will predict workers' perception of managerial control and support. Second, we propose that the workers' perceptions of managerial control and support, as well as the interaction between these two perceptions, will predict workers' own level of perceived control.

The context for testing these hypotheses is a survey of workers and managers who work in small community based group homes for the severely mentally ill and developmentally disabled. The worker role consists



of dressing, feeding, transporting, administering medication, and teaching basic life skills to severely disabled persons. This sample provides a particularly good context for testing our hypotheses. The work typically is enacted in small teams and thus is inherently interpersonal. Furthermore, these teams are hierarchical in nature, with basic care giving tasks carried out by the workers, while home management and supervision is carried out by managers. In addition, managers and workers must cooperate in making and implementing a variety of decisions concerning client care, client rights, staff assignments, and budget allocations. The present sample consists of both managers and workers who work in an interdependent, and hierarchical organizational context.

## METHOD

### Respondents

Survey respondents were workers and managers from group homes in 11 counties in Michigan. Eligible group homes included all those that provided special care to adult severely developmentally disabled and mentally ill clients. Workers averaged 13 years of education and 30 years of age. Seventy-six percent of the workers were white (the remainder were predominantly black), 78% were female, and 36% were married. Managers averaged 14 years of education and 31 years of age. Eighty-seven percent of the managers in the sample were white (the remainder were predominantly black), 84% were female, and 49% were married.

We used a multistage recruitment procedure. Administrators from 73 nonprofit corporations who operated group homes were invited to orientation sessions outlining the research project objectives. In all orientations, assurances of confidentiality were provide and the importance of participation was emphasized. Data were collected from respondents in group homes using self-administered surveys that were sent to each staff member at the group home where they were employed. A payment of \$5 was included with each survey form to compensate respondents for the time spent filling out the survey. Six hundred ninety-two workers and 141 managers from 118 group homes completed the survey for a response rate of 65.3%.

### Measures

*Perceived Control over Decision Making: Empowerment.* Perceived control over decision making (empowerment) was measured using Likert scales asking the respondent to judge (1 = not at all, 5 = a great deal) how much "say" managers and workers had about several different decision are-



nas. The decision arenas were managers' and workers' "say" about (1) budgets, (2) planning and carrying out programs for clients, (3) decisions regarding client rights, (4) decisions regarding hiring new staff, and (5) decisions regarding pay, benefits, and promotions. Workers rated the amount of "say" they believed both workers and managers had in each of the five decision areas described above. The total amount of "say" in all five decision areas was summed to obtain a measure of workers' perception of the level of control over decision making both workers and managers had. In addition, managers rated their own level of "say." Cronbach's alpha for worker perceived control was .67 and for manager perceived control was .72. Because the reliability coefficients were adequate for these scales and because in subsequent analyses, all five decision arenas revealed identical patterns of results, all findings reported here are collapsed across the five decision arenas.

*Managerial Support.* Managerial support was measured using a five-item scale developed by Caplan and colleagues (1989). Workers rated various aspects of managerial support on 5-point scales (1 = none at all, 5 = a great deal). Workers were asked to rate how much: (1) useful information, (2) care and concern, (3) help in thinking through problems, (4) help in getting materials, supplies, and services, and (5) praise and appreciation they received from their managers in the last four weeks. Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .89.

### Managerial Perceptions

In approximately half of our organizations there was only one manager. In these cases we used that single manager's rating of their own perceived control to predict workers' ratings of managerial perceived control within the same organization. In the remaining organizations there were two (or in two instances, three) managers. Because we had no reason to select one manager over another, we averaged the managers' scores and assigned the mean to the organization and used it to predict the workers' scores within the organization.

### Demographic Control Variables

In order to reduce the possibility that results might be affected by demographic or work role factors irrelevant to the hypotheses under consideration, control variables were entered into the analyses reported here. These were age, sex, education, and ethnic background.

Table I. Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero Order Correlations for Major Variables

Workers' Ratings of:	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. Worker control over Decision making	2.31	.72			
2. Managerial control over decision making	3.98	.73	.33**		
3. Managerial support	2.99	1.08	.45**	.17**	
Managers' rating of:					
4. Managerial control over decision making	3.97	.62	.17**	.21**	.19*

\* $p < .01$ .\*\* $p < .001$ .

## Data Analysis

Generally, interaction terms are introduced into regression equations by including a multiplicative composite. Recently, however, this practice has been called into question. Evans (1990) and Jaccard, Turrisi, and Wan (1991) have observed that multiplicative terms are generally highly correlated with their component parts. In our analyses, we computed standard scores for our two independent variables (i.e., perceptions of managerial control and support) prior to forming our multiplicative terms to avoid problems of multicollinearity (see Jaccard et al. (1991) for a more detailed description of this method).

## RESULTS

The means and standard deviations for and intercorrelations between all the major variables are reported in Table I. As can be seen in Table I, workers' ratings of managerial support has a small but significant correlation with workers' ratings of total management control. Thus, in the workers' eye, managerial support, and empowerment are somewhat dependent on each other.

As described above, we proposed a mediated model. Specifically, we proposed that managers' rating of their own control would predict workers' ratings of their own control through workers' ratings of (a) managerial support, and (b) the interaction between ratings of managerial support and

Table II. Standardized Regression Coefficients for Predicting Worker Control Over Decision Making and Mediating Variables (Worker Perceived Managerial Support and Control)

Independent variables used in equations 1-7 <sup>a</sup>	Dependent variables														
	For equations 1-5; Workers' perceptions of worker control over decision making							For equations 6 and 7; Workers' perceptions of managerial: Support Control							
	Equation 1	Equation 2	Equation 3	Equation 4	Equation 5	Equation 6	Equation 7	Equation 1	Equation 2	Equation 3	Equation 4	Equation 5	Equation 6	Equation 7	
<b>Workers' ratings of:</b>															
Managerial control over decision making	—	.35***	—	—	.30***	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Managerial support	—	—	.44***	—	.39***	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Interaction between managerial control and support	—	—	—	.16***	.13***	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
<b>Managers' ratings of:</b>															
Managerial Control over decision making	.21***	.10*	.13***	.21***	.04	.19***	.19***	.19***	.19***	.19***	.19***	.19***	.19***	.19***	.19***
<b>Demographic Controls:</b>															
Workers' age	.004	.001	.01	.01	.02	.02	.02	.02	.02	.02	.02	.02	.02	.02	-.05
Workers' education	.005	.03	.02	.02	.05	-.06	-.03	-.03	-.03	-.03	-.06	-.06	-.06	-.03	-.03
Workers' gender	-.05	-.07	-.04	-.05	-.05	.06	-.01	-.01	-.01	-.01	.06	.06	.06	-.01	-.01
Workers' ethnicity	.02	.02	.02	.02	-.01	.02	.08	.08	.08	.08	.02	.02	.02	.02	.08
<b>R</b>	.22***	.40***	.48***	.27***	.57***	.21***	.22***	.22***	.22***	.22***	.21***	.21***	.21***	.22***	.22***

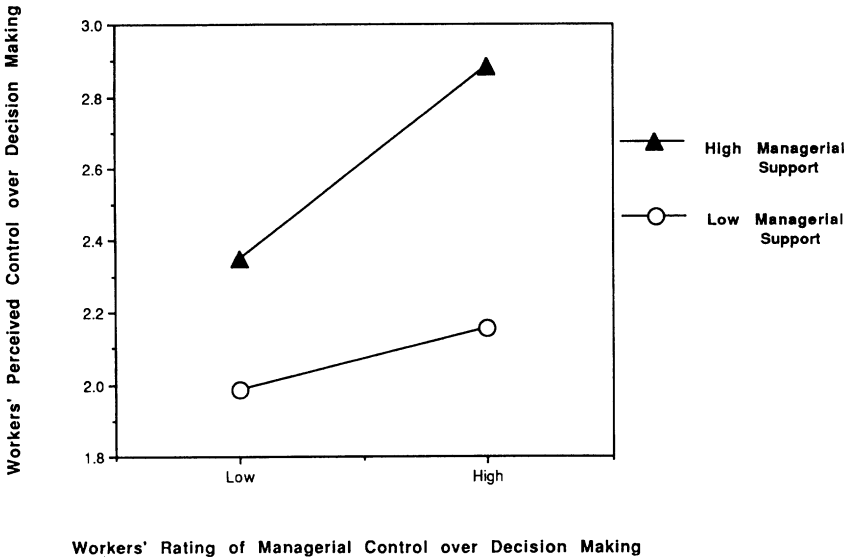
<sup>a</sup>Dashes indicate that an independent variable was not used in the equation listed in that column. For example, equation 1 uses only managers' ratings of managerial control over decision making.  
 \**p* < .05.  
 \*\**p* < .01.  
 \*\*\**p* < .001.

control. To test this model, we estimated seven regression equations. First, to determine if there was a relationship between managers' perceived control and workers' perceived control, we regressed managers' perceptions of their own control on workers' perceptions of their own control (equation 1). As expected, managers' ratings of their own control did predict workers' ratings of their own control when no other independent variables were included in the equation (see Table II, Eq. 1).

Next, we sought to determine what variables, if any, mediate the relationship between managers' rating of their own control and workers' ratings of their own control. Thus, we regressed (a) managers' ratings of their own control and workers' ratings of managerial control on workers' ratings of their own control (Eq. 2), (b) managers' ratings of their own control and workers' ratings of managerial support on workers' ratings of their own control (Eq. 3), and (c) managers' ratings of their own control and the interaction between workers' ratings of managerial control and support on workers' ratings of their own control (Eq. 4).

We found that managers' perceived control accounted for a smaller proportion of the variance in workers' perceived control when workers' ratings of managerial control were also included in the equation. The inclusion of worker rated managerial support in the equation similarly lowered the proportion of variance in worker perceived control accounted for by manager perceived control. This suggests that workers' perceptions might mediate, or partially mediate, the relationship between managers' sense of their own control and workers' sense of theirs. Of course, to determine if such a mediated relationship exists, it is also necessary to determine if managers' ratings of their own control predict workers' ratings of managerial control and support. As can be seen in Table II, Eqs. 6 and 7, this was indeed the case. Including the interaction term without the main effects did not change the proportion of variance in workers' perceived control accounted for by managers' perceived control. The interaction term, however, does contribute to the variance in workers' perceived control over and above the contribution of managers' perceived control (see Table II, Eq. 4).

Thus, so far, we have discovered that managers' perceptions of their own control predicted workers' perceptions of managerial control which in turn predicted workers' perceptions of their own control. The full model regressed all the independent variables (managers' ratings of their own control, workers' ratings of managerial control and support, and the interaction between workers' ratings of managerial control and support) on workers' ratings of their own control (Eq. 5). As can be seen from Table II when workers' perceptions of managerial control and support and the interaction between these two perceptions were all included in the equation, managers'



**Fig. 2.** Observed interactive effect of workers ratings of managerial control and support on workers' own perceived control over decision making.

own ratings are no longer a significant predictor of workers' ratings of their own control. This suggests that the relationship between managers' ratings of their own control and workers' ratings of theirs is indeed mediated through workers' perceptions of managers. Finally, none of the control variables were significant predictors.

### The Nature of the Interaction Between Control and Support

It was proposed that managerial control would be most beneficial for workers when support is high. As indicated above, workers' ratings of managerial support and control produced a significant interaction term that predicted worker control. As expected, workers' ratings of managerial support and control had a synergistic effect on each other (see Fig. 2). In other words, workers' perceived control was highest when workers believed that their managers were both supportive and empowered.

## DISCUSSION

Several writers (e.g., Kanter, 1979; Hall, 1982; Tannenbaum, 1986) have postulated that control over decision making can be shared. Moreover,

they have suggested the control is not a zero-sum game and that increased control for managers could, under certain circumstances, lead to encrusted control for workers and vice versa. We have argued that these authors are correct but that it matters whether or not this level of control is perceived by the workers. As Langer (1983) and Miller (1980) have shown, control can have little effect unless it is perceived. Accordingly, we found that managers' perceptions of their own control did predict workers' perceived control, indirectly through workers' perceptions of managers' control. We also predicted that if an additional condition (i.e., that managers were supportive) was met, this relationship would be even stronger. We reasoned that it matters greatly what form managerial control takes in workers' eyes. As expected, we found that not only do workers' and manager's senses of empowerment covary but that managerial support and control interacted such that there was a synergistic effect on workers' perceptions of their own level of control. Thus, workers feel most empowered when they perceive that their managers are both empowered and supportive.

There are several plausible explanations for the observed synergistic effect of workers' perceptions of managerial control and support on worker perceived control. First, it is possible that when managers have control, they may be perceived as individuals who can provide resources. It is also possible that working for a manager with "clout" affords one "clout" as well. Working for an influential manager may give one the appearance of being influential, oneself. Ultimately, this appearance may give way to reality. Finally, control over decision making may be conceptualized in two ways. The difference between the two provides some clues about how to interpret our findings. We will now explore these two conceptualizations.

### Ways of Being Powerful: Power Over and Power To

To say that an individual has a high level of control over decision making within an organization might mean that the individual has a high level of control over others working within the organization. Such an individual has high control precisely because he or she can and does make decisions without consulting others. On the other hand, one can have a high level of control over *decisions* (power to) without having a high level of control over other *individuals* (power over). Rather, organizational decision making could be structured such that many organizational members exert influence over the decision making process (see Israel, House, Schurman, Heaney, & Mero, 1989) or in other word, share power. It is possible that those workers in our study who rated their managers both as supportive and as having a high level of control were members of an organization in which many actors share influence. Therefore, support may reflect the

level of shared influence within an organization. Managers who are viewed as supportive may be those who listen to their workers and hence are perceived as sharing control.

The relationship between how supportive managers are and the decision making practices of an organization should provide an interesting avenue for further study. Specifically, it is important to examine these relationships in other contexts. For instance, although we do not find gender effects, it is important to note that the organizations we studied had a largely female workforce. It is possible that organizations in which women predominate create organizational cultures which are hospitable to sharing power. Similarly, people who select mental health care careers may have different attitudes towards power sharing than does the general public. In addition, it is important to determine if there are differences between upper and middle level managers and between public and private sector organizations. Organizational size might also play an important role. The organizations we studied were in the public sector and relatively small. In addition, we studied middle level managers who worked closely with workers. It is possible that these public sector managers working closely with workers in a small organization felt closer to their workers' circumstances than would upper or even middle level managers in, for example, large private sector organizations such as banks and automotive companies. In public sector organizations, such as schools and mental health agencies, it might be argued that managers and workers are more likely to share a common mission than in private sector organizations. For example, teachers and principals might feel more united in their desire to educate children than do executives and factory workers feel in their desire to produce marketable products.

The Weberian distinction between collegial and bureaucratic organizations is relevant here (Parsons, 1964; Waters, 1989; Weber, 1964). Classic collegial organizations include universities, research centers, professional associations, intellectual and artistic associations and networks, courts, and legislators. According to Weber, collegial organizations are value rational. That is, they are directed toward an ethical or aesthetic principal for its own sake. In addition, within collegial organizations, authority is derived from expertise. Because members' areas of expertise cannot be subordinated to others, equality is a defining characteristic of collegial organizations. In bureaucratic organizations, such as corporations and governmental agencies, authority is derived from an actor's position within a hierarchy. Although the organizations we studied cannot be considered classically collegial, neither can they be considered classically bureaucratic. As described above, workers and managers shared a common mission. This mission (providing quality care) is based on an ethical principal and thus



is value rational. Therefore, although there is formal chain of command running from managers to workers, the existence of a guiding ethical principal may have promoted a respect for workers' expertise. This respect, in turn, may have produced organizations that were informally less hierarchical than classic bureaucracies.

### Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the observed relationships among workers' perceptions of their own control, their managers' control, and their managers' support may reflect a global level of overall job satisfaction. Generally positive feelings towards one's job may produce a halo effect such that all aspects of a worker's job, including his/her manager, are rated positively. Future research should explore this possibility.

Second, most studies concerned with empowerment, perceived control, and a related construct, workplace democracy have focused almost exclusively on positive outcomes. The authors of this study have been no exception. It should be noted, however, there are potential problems associated with decreasing organization hierarchy. For example, Weber has argued that collegial organizations are less efficient than bureaucratic ones. In addition, it is possible that when organizations possess only limited formal lines of authority, informal networks become extremely powerful. Depending upon the demographic composition of an organization, as well as its culture, such networks could serve to marginalize certain groups. For instance, the informal "old boy networks" found in many occupational groups have generally excluded women and minorities.

Finally, because our data are cross-sectional, we cannot definitively determine causal direction. We proposed that managers' sense of empowerment can influence workers' sense of empowerment. Although our data are consistent with this hypothesis, it is also possible that causal direction might be reversed. It may be workers who are influencing managers. It is likely, however, that there is a reciprocal relationship between managers' and workers' perceived control. Moreover, when we propose that empowered managers can empower their workers, we do not mean that empowerment can only occur from the top down. Certainly, people can become empowered, not because of, but rather in spite of, the beliefs and actions of those higher in an organizations' hierarchy. For example, members of dissident organizations do not derive their sense of empowerment from those above them in societal or organizational hierarchies but from the comraderie, support, and collective strength of their peers. Along these lines, Gruver and Trickett (1987) have observed that there may be ". . . a fundamental paradox in the idea of people empowering others because the

very institutional structure that puts one group in a position to empower also works to undermine the act of empowerment" (p. 370).

Nonetheless, we propose that although the empowerment of managers may sometimes come at the expense of their workers, this state of affairs need not be the case. Using longitudinal and experimental designs, future research should be able to clarify the causal direction of the relationships observed in this study. In the meantime, we believe that our findings give reason to be optimistic about the ability of workers and *supportive* managers to share control over decision making.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research was supported by grants from the Michigan prevention Research Center (5P050MH38330) and the National Institute of Mental Health (T32MH16806). Preparation of this manuscript was partially supported by the Department of Social Policy at RAND. We would like to thank Tom D'Aunno, C. V. Harquail, Robert Hooijberg, Kathryn MacGonggale, Debra Meyerson, Peter Muhlberger, Deborah Salem, Gretchen Spreitzer, Arnold Tannenbaum, P. C. Urka, Tom Vaughn, and two anonymous reviewers for their comments on several earlier drafts and Shirley Cromb for assistance in preparing the manuscript. We would also like to thank the participants in this study for giving so generously of their time.

## REFERENCES

- BANDURA, A. *Social foundations of thought and action*. Englewood cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1986.
- BLUMBERG, P. *Industrial Democracy: The sociology of participation*. New York: Schocken, 1969.
- CONGER, J. A., & KANUNGO, R. A. The empowerment process: Integrating theory and practice. *Academy of Management Review*, 1988, 13, 471-482.
- COTTON, J. L., VOLLRATH, D. A., FROGGATT, K. L., LENGNICK-HALL, M. L., & JENNINGS, K. R. Employee participation: Diverse forms and different outcomes. *Academy of Management Review*, 1988, 73, 103-112.
- DACHLER, H. P., & WILPERT, B. Conceptual dimensions and boundaries of participation in organizations: A critical evaluation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1978, 23, 1-39.
- DeCHARMS, R. *Personal causation: The internal affective determinants of behavior*. New York: Academic Press, 1968.
- DECI, E. L. *Intrinsic motivation*. New York: Plenum Press, 1975.
- EMERSON, R. M. *Social exchange theory*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1987.
- EVANS, M. G. The problem of analyzing multiplicative composites. *American Psychologist*, 1990, 46, 6-15.
- GANSTER, D. C., & FUSILIER, M. R. Control in the workplace. In C. L. Cooper and I. Robertson (Eds.), *International review of industrial and organizational psychology*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 1989, pp. 235-280.

- GATCHEL, R. J. Perceived control: A review and evaluation of therapeutic implications. In A. Baum and J. E. Singer (Eds.), *Advances in environmental psychology*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1980, pp. 1-22.
- GRUBER, J., & TRICKETT, E. J. Can we empower others: The paradox of empowerment in the governing of an alternative public school. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 1987, 15, 353-371.
- HACKMAN, J. R. The psychology of self-managed organizations. In M. Pallack and R. Perloff (Eds.), *Psychology and work: Productivity, change and employment*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1986, pp. 89-136.
- HALL, R. H. *Organizations: Structure and process*. Englewood cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1982.
- ISRAEL, B. A., HOUSE, J. S., SCHURMAN, S. J., HEANEY, C. A., & MERO, R. P. The relation of personal resources, participation, influence, interpersonal relationships and coping strategies to occupational stress, job strains and health: a multivariate analysis. *Work and Stress*, 1989, 3, 163-194.
- JACCARD, J., TURRISI, R., & WAN, C. K. *Interaction effects in multiple regression*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1991.
- KANTER, R. M. Power failure in management circuits. *Harvard Business Review*, 1979, 57, 65-75.
- KARASEK, R. A. Job demands, job decision latitude and mental strain: Implications for job redesign. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 1979, 24, 285-301.
- KOOPMAN, P. L., DRENTH, J. D., BUS, F. B. M., KRUYSWIJK, A. J., & WIERDSMA, A. F. M. Content, process, and effects of participative decision making on the shop floor: Three cases in the Netherlands. *Human Relations*, 1981, 34, 657-676.
- LANGER, E. J. *The psychology of control*. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1983.
- LEANA, C. R., LOCKE, E. A., & SCHWEIGER, D. M. Fact and fiction in analyzing research on participative decision making: A critique of Cotton, Vollrath, Froggatt, Lengnick-Hall, and Jennings. *Academy of Management Review*, 1990, 15, 137-146.
- LEFCOURT, H. M. Personality and locus of control. In J. Garber and M. E. P. Seligman (Eds.), *Human helplessness: Theory and applications*. New York: Academic Press, 1980, pp. 245-259.
- LEPPER, M. R., & GREEN, D. Overjustification research and beyond: Toward a means-ends analysis of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In M. R. Lepper and D. Greene (Eds.), *The hidden costs of reward: New perspectives on the psychology of motivation*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1978, pp. 109-148.
- MILLER, K. I., & MONGE, P. R. Participation, satisfaction, and productivity: A meta-analytic review. *Academy of Management Journal*, 1986, 29, 727-753.
- MILLER, S. M. Why having control reduces stress: If I can stop the roller coaster, I don't want to get off. Personality and locus of control. In J. Garber and M. E. P. Seligman (Eds.), *Human helplessness: Theory and applications*. New York: Academic Press, 1980, pp. 71-95.
- NICHOLSON, N., & WALL, T., & LISCHERON, J. The predictability of absence and propensity to leave from employees' job satisfaction and attitudes toward influence in decision making. *Human Relations*, 1977, 30, 499-514.
- PARKER, L. E. When to fix it and when to leave: The relationships among perceived control, self-efficacy, dissent, and exit. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 78, 949-959.
- PARSONS, T. Introduction. In Max Weber (Ed.), *The theory of social and economic organization*. New York: Free Press, 1964, pp. 1-86.
- PFEFFER, J., & SALANCIK, G. R. *The external control of organizations: A resource dependence perspective*. New York: Harper & Row, 1978.
- PODSAKOFF, P. M., & ORGAN, D. W. Self-reports in organizational research: Problems and prospects. *Journal of Management*, 1986, 12, 531-544.
- RODIN, J., RENNERT, K., & SOLOMON, S. K. Intrinsic motivation for control: Fact or fiction. In A. Baum and J. E. Singer (Eds.), *Advances in environmental psychology*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1980, pp. 131-148.

- SCHWEIGER, D. M., & LEANA, C. R. Participation in decision making. In E. A. Locke (Ed.), *Generalizing from laboratory to field settings*. Lexington: Lexington Books, 1986.
- SELIGMAN, M. E. P. *Helplessness: On depression, development, and death*. San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1975.
- SPECTOR, P. E. Method variance as an artifact in self-reported affect and perceptions at work: Myth or significant problem? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 1987, 72, 438-443.
- SPREITZER, G. M. When Organizations Dare: The Dynamics of Individual Empowerment in the Workplace. School of Business Administration, University of Michigan, 1991. Unpublished manuscript.
- TANNENBAUM, A. S. *Control in organizations*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968.
- TANNENBAUM, A. S. Back to basics: Beyond perception. In R. N. Stern and S. McCarthy (Eds.), *International yearbook of organizational democracy for the study of participation, co-operation and power: Volume III, The organizational practice of democracy*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1986, pp. 323-331. (a)
- TANNENBAUM, A. S. Controversies about control and democracy in organizations. In R. N. Stern and S. McCarthy (Eds.), *International yearbook of organizational democracy for the study of participation, co-operation and power: Volume III, The organizational practice of democracy*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1986, pp. 279-303. (b)
- TANNENBAUM, A. S., KAVCIC, B., ROSNER, M., VIANELLO, M., & WEISER, G. *Hierarchy in organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1974.
- THOMAS, K. W., & VELTHOUSE, B. A. Cognitive elements of empowerment: An interpretive model of intrinsic task motivation. *Academy of Management Review*, 1990, 15, 666-681.
- WAGNER, J. A., & GOODING, R. Z. Shared influence and organization behavior: A meta-analysis of situational variables expected to moderate participation-outcome relationships. *Academy of Management Journal*, 1987, 30, 524-541.
- WATERS, M. Collegiality, bureaucratization, and professionalization: A Weberian analysis. *American Journal of Sociology*, 1989, 94, 945-972.
- WEBER, M. *The theory of social and economic organization*. New York: The Free Press, 1964.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

LOUISE E. PARKER received her PhD in Psychology from Stanford University and is currently as Associate Behavioral Scientist in the Department of Social Policy at RAND. Formerly she was a Research Fellow in the Survey Research Center of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. Dr. Parker has also been a consultant for the UAW-Ford Education Development and Training Program at the University of Michigan and the Reform Assessment Project in the School of Public Policy and Public Administration at the University of Southern California. Her research interests include worker participation in decision making, workplace democracy, worker empowerment, exit and voice at the workplace, worker dissent, intrinsic motivation, collective efficacy, and collective action. She is also interested in the social, legal, economic, and institutional barriers to the utilization of alternative health care providers.

RICHARD H. PRICE is a Professor of Psychology and Chair of the Organizational Psychology Program at the University of Michigan. Professor Price is also a Research Scientist in the Survey Research Center of the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan and the Director of the Michigan Prevention Research Center. His research interests include: the organization of health and mental health care, preventive strategies in mental health, organizational correlates of effectiveness, institutional theory, organization competition and collaboration, and the relationship between working life and psychological well-being.