DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 207 266 EA 014 167

AUTHOR Louis, Karen Seashore; Kell, Diane
TITLE The Human Factor in Dissemination: Field Agent Roles in Their Organizational Context. Linking R&D with Schools.
INSTITUTION Abt Associates, Inc., Cambridge, Mass.
PUB DATE Jul 81
CONTRACT 400-78-0002
NOTE 248p.; Some tables and parts of Appendix A may be marginally legible. For related documents, see ED 188 314, ED 192 437, ED 196 134, and EA 014 118-131.

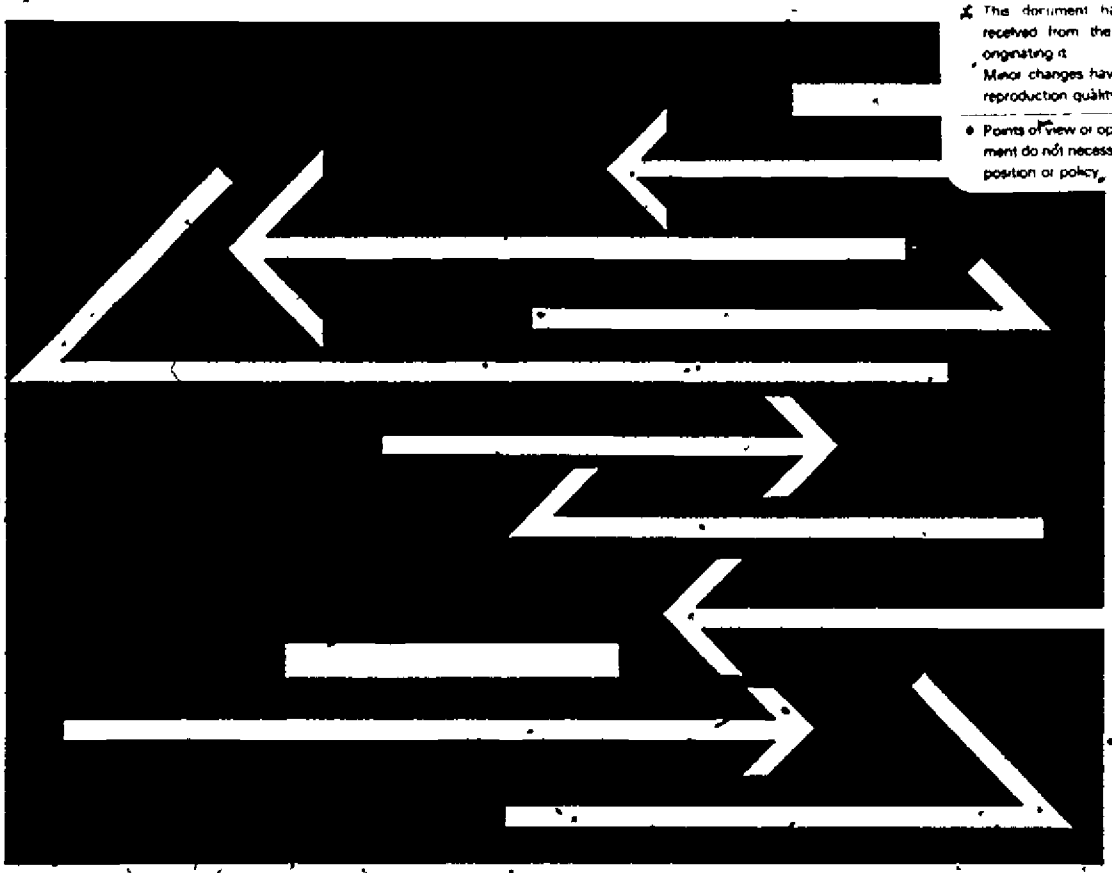
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC10 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrative Organization; Case Studies; Change Strategies; Elementary Secondary Education; Individual Characteristics; *Interprofessional Relationship; *Job Development; *Job Performance; Job Training; *Linking Agents; Program Attitudes; Program Effectiveness; Questionnaires; Research Utilization; *Role Conflict; Tables (Data)
IDENTIFIERS *Research and Development Utilization Program; Support Systems

ABSTRACT

Linking agents, called "field agents," coordinated and provided educational improvement services to schools participating in the National Institute of Education's Research and Development Utilization (RDU) program. To assess the field agents' roles, attitudes, behaviors, and client relations, researchers surveyed and interviewed agents, surveyed 746 client educators, and compiled case studies from individual RDU projects. Variables examined included agents' personal characteristics, role dilemmas, training and support, attitudes toward change, and relationships with clients, as well as the design of the agent's job and agents' and clients' perceptions of project outcomes. Three sections each present, first, the results of agent and client surveys and, second, a case study illuminating the issues explored by the surveys. The three sections discuss organizational influences on the agent role, including job design, training and support, and job attitudes; agent-client relations and agents' attitudes and strategies; and the effects of agent activities in program outcomes. Among the findings are that job design best predicts agents' job stress and that agents' activities are limited by their support systems and client attitudes. Field agent survey questionnaires are appended. (Author/RW)

Linking R&D with Schools

The Human Factor in Dissemination: Field Agent Roles in Their Organizational Context



Abt Associates Inc.
55 Wheeler Street
Cambridge, Mass. 02138

LINKING R&D WITH SCHOOLS

THE HUMAN FACTOR IN DISSEMINATION: FIELD AGENT ROLES IN THEIR ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

KAREN SEASHORE LOUIS

DIANE KELLY

with:

Gregory Spencer
Richard Carlson
Beverly Loy Taylor
Assunta Young

July, 1981

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

(continued)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

(concluded)

PART I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1

ISSUES IN THE MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE OF FIELD AGENT ROLES

Educational field agents are personnel located outside the boundaries of client school systems; their objective is to assist clients--individuals, groups, or schools--in order to enhance each client's functioning as an educator or educational system (Louis, 1981). Field agents generally have some organizational base, such as an intermediate or state educational agency or regional educational laboratory, whose mission includes technical assistance to local schools and school systems in order to foster school improvement. Thus, educational field agents regularly move between the organizations sponsoring and receiving this assistance, and they qualify for a more generic term in the organizational literature: "boundary spanner."

In this volume, we explore the nature of the field agent role in education. We analyze how the role emerged in a particular federal program, how the nature of the role affected those who performed it, and how the role was perceived by those who were intended to be its primary beneficiaries--teachers and principals. Special emphasis is placed upon a variety of role characteristics which differentiate "boundary-spanning" positions from positions more centrally located in an organization. Most of these characteristics are not unique to field agents. Rather, they are role dilemmas that are particularly salient for all people who must interact extensively with clients located outside their own organizations. An understanding of these role dilemmas can, however, contribute a great deal to our understanding of how and why field agents behave in certain ways and have certain attitudes about their jobs. Managers of field agents might be especially concerned with the extent to which the field agents' attitudes and behavior affect their performance, or even their survival in an unusually stressful role. If these attitudes and behavior can be altered through job design or providing professional support, then the implications for role management are increased.

Our approach to these issues is exploratory, largely because the state of knowledge about educational field agents--often referred to as "external change agents" or "linking agents"--is still pitifully underdeveloped. Hortatory or normative articles based on personal experience or theory alone seem to multiply rapidly, while more painstaking attempts to develop comparative, empirical studies of those occupying such roles emerge

only slowly. (See Louis, 1981, and Paul, 1977, for recent reviews of empirical research.) This lack of serious attention is all the more surprising when we consider that empirical evidence has, for some time, strongly supported the notion that change agents from outside a school system may be highly important to the school improvement process (see, for example, Louis and Sieber, 1979; Emrick and Peterson, 1978; Moore et al., 1977).

The lack of interest in research on the field agent role may stem, in part, from the profound skepticism of some federal policy makers about the value of such roles in school improvement (Chabotar et al., 1980). Aside from concerns that federal support of change agents may look like "federal meddling," some members of Congress and others in highly placed positions within the Department of Education tend to believe that materials development is more important than technical assistance. And, as one congressman recently commented, "We paid for the materials (through Title I and other federal programs). If they want these linking agents, they should pay for them themselves" (personal interview, 1980). However, such a view is shortsighted. Studies of school change programs have found that external change agents are of importance in a range of activities, from organization development (Miles et al., 1978) to implementation of carefully packaged exemplary programs (Stearns, 1976) to radical school reforms (Moore et al., 1977). It makes little sense, then, to continue to develop programs, packaging, and marketing strategies, while ignoring or neglecting the human conduits and catalysts that may significantly affect both diffusion and sound implementation of exemplary practices.

In general, lack of research interest in the role of field agents in education is all the more inexplicable when the relative attention given to similar roles in non-school settings is uncovered. The notion of boundary-spanning roles has captured the attention of organizational psychologists and management researchers for a number of years. By now, the empirical bases for understanding what affects role performance of salesmen, public relations specialists, organization development practitioners, and others who have substantial responsibilities for managing external relations have been well established. Indeed, the empirical literature on boundary-spanning roles has become extensive enough to warrant a substantial chapter in a recent annual review of organizational research (Adams, 1976). This literature is deeply

connected both with change practice and theory and with the more abstract theory of role design and performance.

In this volume, we take the value and impact of external change agents in education as given.[2] Instead of attempting to justify the field agent role, our objective is to contribute to an immediate need to understand how and why field agents behave in certain ways and have certain attitudes about their jobs. In addition, the relationship between field agents' behavior and attitudes and their relationships with client schools is examined. In sum, we seek to know more about the occupant of educational boundary-spanning roles, both as an individual and as an actor in a complex universe of local schools.

This volume also seeks to address policy concerns. It highlights factors that can be affected either by individuals in field agent roles or by those who select, manage and support field agents. In particular, three general questions serve as the report's organizing focus:

- How do educational organizations design field agent roles and manage their agents, and how do these choices affect the agents' attitudes about their jobs?
- What kinds of relationships do field agents develop with their clients, and how do these affect their attitudes and their effectiveness?
- What do field agents actually do, and how does their behavior affect outcomes for both field agents and sites?

While such practical questions reflect a managerial perspective, our approach is also influenced by the existing literature about the occupants of boundary-spanning roles. Thus, we have attempted to examine issues that are often raised about the nature of the role. In the remainder of this chapter, we briefly define some of these significant issues, each of which relates to the questions around which the report is organized.

Definition and Characteristics of "Boundary-Spanning" Roles

Boundary-spanning roles occur at the margins of educational organizations, and serve as a systematic means of connecting the school, the intermediate education agency, the regional laboratory, or other organizations to another organized group in the environment (Kahn et al., 1964). A person in a boundary position is, more than most members of an organization, influenced

both by the people within the agency that employs him or her, and by those in the outside organizations to which he or she relates. Consequently, the occupants of such roles are the target of potentially conflicting demands. Boundary-spanning roles are so common in educational settings that it requires thought to list more than a few roles that do not have a boundary-spanning component. Unlike industrial settings, or even most service delivery organizations, schools have constant relationships with a public constituency that require a great deal of contact at all levels--teachers with students and parents; principals with teacher unions, PTAs, and other organized constituencies; and district office staff with the local governance structures as well as the multitudinous social service structures that articulate with schools.

However, most roles in educational organizations are designed so that only a small component of the role involves boundary-spanning activities. Thus, simply engaging in such activities on a regular basis may not qualify the role occupant to meet the following criteria defining a boundary-spanning role (Adams, 1976):

- greater distance, psychologically, organizationally, and often physically from other members of his organization, and greater closeness to the external environment and to the agents of outside organizations;
- a role which prominently involves representing the organization to the outside world;
- acting as the organization's "agent of influence" over an external organization.

The above criteria more clearly relate to a specific kind of role in which the emphasis is upon the provision of services to clients in their own setting. In this report we adopt the term "field agent" to refer to an "external agent...located outside of the boundaries of the client system, whose objective is to assist client(s)--individuals, groups,... or schools--to enhance the clients' functioning as educators or an educational system" (Louis, 1981, p. 18). A "linking agent" is a specialized field agent, who focuses on creating ties between the worlds of research and development and of practice.

Role Dilemmas for Field Agents: The Nature of Boundary Positions

A variety of role characteristics differentiate occupants of boundary-spanning positions from those in more central organizational roles. Havelock's (1969) classic examination of linkage systems in education mentions only two particular role dilemmas for field agents: role overload and marginality. However, more recent empirical examinations of the field agent role both in educational and other settings have identified a broader set of stresses in the role. These include:

- role conflict;
- role ambiguity and lack of formalization;
- marginality;
- impermanence of the role set;
- multiplicity of strategies for role performance.

Each of these is defined briefly below.

Role Conflict. Until the mid-1950s; social science theory emphasized social consensus about how roles should be performed (Gross et al., 1958). With the "discovery" that role occupants were subjected to a variety of conflicting expectations, however, much research attention was turned to articulating different ways in which role occupants could experience conflicting demands.

Miles (1976) in a review of the literature has defined role conflict as the "degree of incongruity or incompatibility of expectations in their performance of an assigned role." Additionally, role conflict can be experienced in such different ways as:

- "person-role" conflict; defined as a perceived incongruence between the role requirements placed on a focal person and his/her orientations, interests, and values;
- "intrasender" conflict, in which two or more mutually incompatible role expectations are held (or "sent") by one of the person's role partners;
- "inter-sender" conflict, in which two or more of the person's role partners hold ("send") opposing role expectations; and
- "role overload," or the extent to which the various role expectations communicated to a role occupant exceed the amount of time and resources available for their accomplishment (Miles, 1977).

Ambiguity and Lack of Formalization. In addition to conflict in expectations, many have noted that field roles--particularly roles involving "change agentry"--tend to be very poorly explicated. Louis and Sieber (1979), for example, documented some of the problems that educational field agents had in defining their role to potential clients. The problem with explaining the functions of "linkage" has also been noted in other occupational areas (Hamilton and Mothard, 1975). Ambiguity is particularly a problem in a well-developed area like education, where the basic role structure has existed since the early part of this century, with the development of the modern school district.

Ambiguity is usually compounded by lack of formalization, or the absence of formal job definitions, clearly defined feedback and review procedures for field activities, and identified organizational positions whose main component involves providing field-based services. Because field agents in education are a relatively new phenomenon, criteria for role definition and assessing effectiveness are generally absent. The prevalence of soft-money funding for field agent positions can also contribute to ambiguity. A number of studies outside of education have found that ambiguity and low formalization lead to role conflict and job dissatisfaction (Kahn et al., 1964; House and Rizzo, 1972).

Marginality. In this study the term "marginality" is used to refer to the extent of organizational distance between role occupants and others to whom they relate. As Havelock has noted, linkage (field agent) roles are probably inherently marginal:

> Marginality may well be inherent in the linking role for strategic reasons. The linker is necessarily and by definition an in-betweener...He can attain partial membership in either the practice or research world by overlapping memberships while not achieving full membership....(Havelock, 1969, p. 7-37).

The marginality of an individual in a boundary-spanning role has both benefits and costs. On the one hand, it may allow the role occupant to gain access to the client system more easily (Louis and Sieber, 1979) and may increase his or her credibility as "objectivator." On the other hand, marginality may lead to other forms of job stress, such as increased ambiguity and lack of formalization, or even loneliness.

Impermanence of the Role Sets. Field agents also suffer from another source of role stress: the need to constantly negotiate new roles with new clients. As Miller and Rice (1970) have noted, this aspect of the salesman's role accounts for the very high levels of turnover in this type of job. Of course, as Sieber (1974) points out, having a multiplicity of role partners, or sequences of role partners, may also serve to buffer failures, and stimulate the role occupants who like change. However, this impermanence implies a constant need to negotiate role expectation with new clients (Louis and Sieber, 1979).

Multiplicity of Strategies for Role Performance. Field agents are constantly bombarded with advice about how to carry out their roles, and are presented with numerous typologies about how the roles could or should be performed. Thus, even before the agents are put in a position where they must decide what to do with a client school, they must consider an enormous variety of "game plans." Should they be "process helpers," "resource finders," or "solution givers," using the Butler and Paisley (1978) classification? How much attention should be given to "front-end" (problem identification) vs. "back-end" (implementation) roles? (Crandall, 1977) Should they, as suggested by Organ (1971) learn to be political animals, or, as suggested by the work of Hall et al. (1975) should they put their energies into understanding the concerns of individuals confronted with change? The question of effective strategies for [illegible] agents is among the most hotly debated, and yet remarkably few empirical data address the strategies that are actually adopted (see Madey, 1979, and Decad et al., 1980), much less the impacts of these strategy choices (Corton et al., 1977).

Effective Field Agents: The Relative Importance of Training, Support, and Selection

Once it is agreed that the role has certain inherent dilemmas, the question of how to manage role stress for field agents arises. Some have claimed that, in addition to the content information educational field agents may need, a key requirement for effective functioning is training in the management of various aspects of the role (Havelock, 1969; Crandall, 1977). It has been assumed that training is an appropriate mechanism for clarifying roles, for providing the analytic skills to help agents choose

effective strategies in a given situation, and for generally helping to legitimize the role. In addition, training is also considered a vehicle for developing needed consultation and other skills.

Others, however, have contended that a support system may be more important, since regular communication and feedback may reduce marginality and the daily stresses of role conflict (Louis and Sieber, 1979). In addition, it has been argued that on-the-job socialization is probably more effective than formal training in learning a role as complicated and poorly defined as that of a field agent.

The relative importance of training versus support may, nevertheless, be a moot debate. Some have argued that effective field agents have particular personality and skill profiles that allow them to thrive within the set of role characteristics described earlier. In this view, what is generally perceived as damaging role stress can be a positive experience for some people who enjoy challenge, being in positions that require objectivity, having many role partners, and so forth (see Sieber 1974). Others have suggested (in personal communication) that older educators make better field agents, because they have fewer problems with a marginal role and have greater legitimacy as advisors than teachers fresh from a few years of classroom experience. Thus, there are a variety of arguments suggesting that it is probably better not to invest too much in the training and support of field agents, but simply to select the individuals who can be happy and effective in the job.

Overview of the Volume

In the remaining chapters of this volume we explore the role characteristics and role management issues mentioned above. The volume is divided into five parts. The first consists of this introductory chapter and Chapter 2, in which the reader is introduced to the specific group of field agents who were the subjects of our investigation.

Each of the next three sections consists of two chapters, one of which analyzes survey data obtained from the field agents about their role, and the second of which presents a case illuminating some of the issues explored in the quantitative analysis. Part II focuses on the organizational context in which the field agent is located. It explores the ways in which

the design and management of the field agent role can affect the role occupant's job attitudes (such as sense of efficacy) and perceptions of job-related stress. The analysis focuses on techniques that are typically used by managers to affect the role performance of their employees: employee selection (for certain personal characteristics), job design, on-the-job training, and personal and task-related support.

Part III is concerned with the quality of relationships between field agents and schools and the attitudes which agents have about the best ways to achieve change in schools. The agents' relationships with schools (for example, the degree of influence agents have over local decisions and activities) and perspectives on change (for example, a political orientation) are examined in relation to the agents' job attitudes and perceptions of job-related stress, as well as to measures of field agent effectiveness, including the agents' perceptions of program success at the school level, and client assessments of the quality of agent performance.

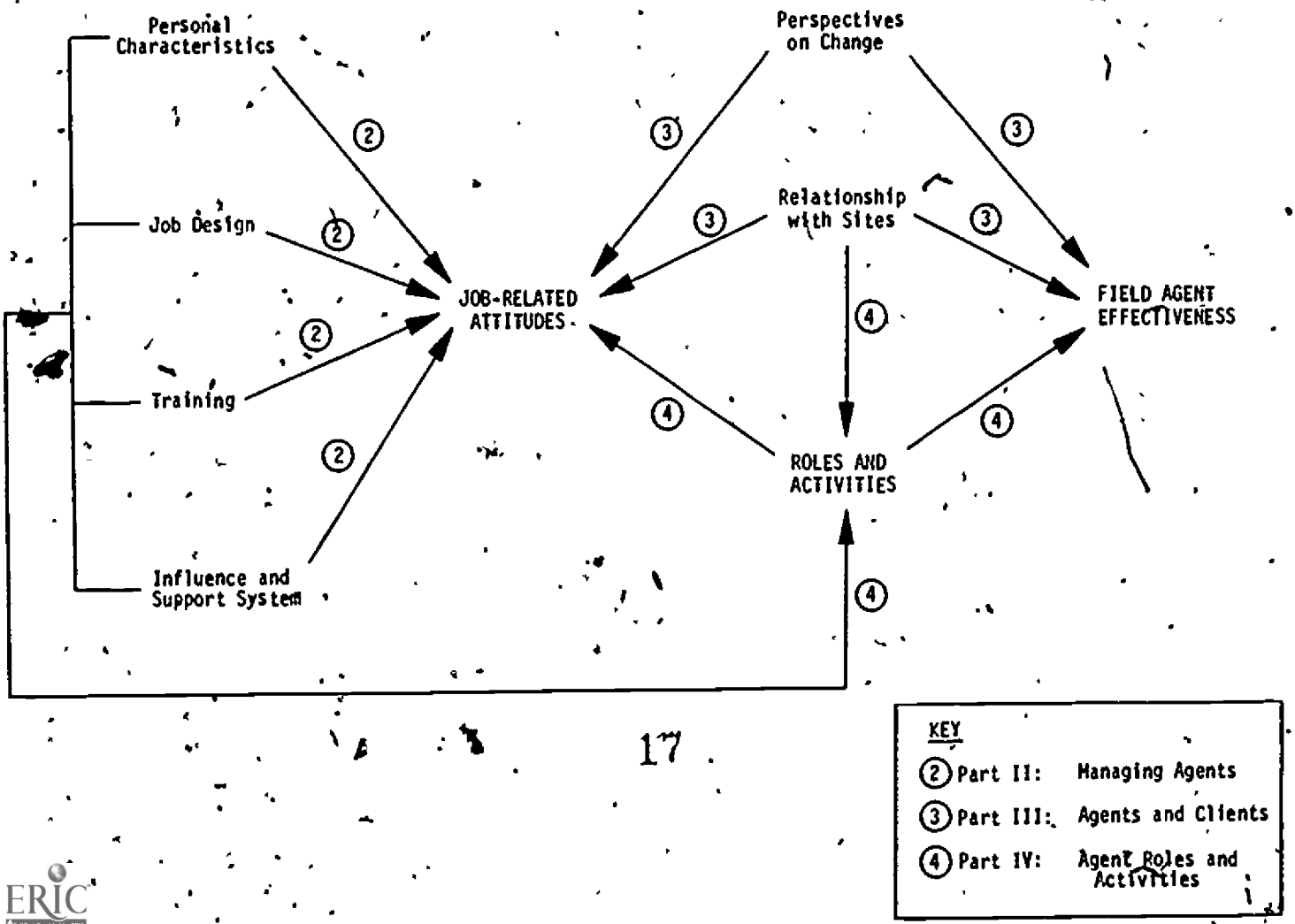
Part IV looks more closely at the specific roles performed by field agents and the activities in which they engage, relating these to both field agent effectiveness and job attitudes. In addition, potential influences on field agent roles and activities are examined--namely, personal characteristics, job design, the training and support structure, and the agents' relationships with client schools. Figure 1-1 summarizes the organizational and conceptual framework for the analyses in this volume.

Corresponding to the different foci of the three analytic sections, the cases presented in this volume are written from several different perspectives and emphasize different aspects of the relationships between field agents, their supervisors, and clients. Each case stands alone and is primarily intended as a means for bringing to life the concepts discussed in the analytic sections of the volume.[3] While the cases themselves are primarily descriptive, each one is followed by an epilogue which summarizes the highlights of the case, focusing particularly on the issues introduced in the quantitative analysis.

Finally, Part V consists of one chapter, in which the findings of both the quantitative analysis and the case studies are briefly summarized, along with implications for the design and management of field agent roles.

Figure 1-1

ORGANIZATIONAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
FOR ANALYSES IN THIS VOLUME



CHAPTER NOTES

1. Despite the recent dates on these publications, their findings have been in circulation since the early 1970s.

2. Another report of the RDU study (Louis, Rosenblum and Molitor, 1981) documents the impacts of RDU field agents in site schools.

3. Two of the three cases (Chapters 6 and 8) were adapted from much longer case studies prepared by independent researchers and not originally intended for this volume. The original case studies generally included a much more complete analysis, conforming, however, to the authors' own conceptual frameworks. In general, these analyses are excluded from the edited case studies presented in this volume.

CHAPTER 2

FIELD AGENTS IN THE R&D UTILIZATION PROGRAM

The subjects of our investigation were field agents in the R&D Utilization (RDU) program, which was supported by the National Institute of Education for a three-year period, 1976-79. In this chapter we describe the backgrounds and role characteristics of the RDU field agents, as well as the nature of the data base for the analyses in this volume.

The Emergence of the RDU Field Agent Role

From 1976 to 1979, the National Institute of Education funded a major demonstration program designed to help local schools improve their curricula and their staff development practices. This effort, known as the R&D Utilization (RDU) program, was deeply affected by emerging theories about how best to create linkages between resources outside of the school district and the school personnel who might benefit from using them. The program design did not require the extensive use of field agents to help coordinate resources and guide participating schools through the process of identifying and solving local problems; nevertheless, each of the seven demonstration projects that were ultimately funded proposed an assistance strategy which rather prominently featured such a role.[1] One hundred field agents (known variously as "linking agents," "generalists," "coordinators," and "facilitators") were supported during the course of the program.

The role, partly by coincidence, but mostly as a consequence of the program's focus on knowledge utilization and school improvement, had several common features across projects. First, in all of the projects, field agents were expected to provide on-site coordinating and assistance services to schools.

Second, in all cases, they were physically located outside an RDU project office, in a "host organization" that was physically closer to their client schools. The host organizations were predominately intermediate service agencies serving one or more school districts within a state; there were, however, some other agencies that housed field agents.[2] Problems of managing the field agent role were compounded both by the need to span more boundaries (agents were seen as representatives of their host organizations

as well as of the project) and by the need to relate to an extra set of professional colleagues in the intermediate service units that served as the agents' organizational homes.

Third, in all cases, the field agents were viewed as providers or coordinators of the process assistance that schools would need if they were to choose and implement improved curriculum and staff development practices. Process assistance typically involved, at minimum, orienting school personnel to a rational problem-solving model that sites were expected to use. While the models varied slightly among projects, they all adhered to basic features that have been described by many authors. (See, for example, Paul, 1977; Bennis, Benne and Chin, 1969; Rosenblum and Louis, 1981.) In some cases, the field agents were also expected either to participate in training school staff, or to provide the staff with substantial process consultation as they implemented the problem-solving model.

Fourth, agents were <u>not</u> expected to take responsibility for finding exemplary programs for the client schools to implement. This function was performed by specialists located elsewhere in the project structure. However, they were expected to provide schools with assistance in making decisions from among alternative new practices, and to help them locate human resources that could assist the schools with implementation.[3]

Finally, field agents in the RDU program were all educators, and almost all had had some relatively recent experience working with school districts, either as independent consultants or as staff of a state education association. They were, on the whole, much closer to the world of practice than to the world of research and development.

Data Sources for Studying Field Agents

Four data sources provided the basis for this report. The most important of these was a three-wave mailed survey which was sent to a sample of 69 of the 100 field agents. The 69 agents represented the universe of agents in six of the seven RDU projects, and a sample of 18 in the Michigan project. Fifty-three field agents responded to the first survey, which was sent out in June 1978 (a return rate of 78%), with a 100% return rate from four of the seven projects. The somewhat lower response rates from the Michigan and NEA projects were not unexpected, given the very small part of these respondents' jobs represented by their participation in the RDU program.

The second and third surveys, sent out in January and April of 1979, were completed only by those field agents who responded to the first survey and who remained in the program (there was some job turnover in the fall of 1979). By the end of the survey period, 43 had returned all their instruments. The surveys were each 13-14 pages long and took respondents approximately 30 to 45 minutes to complete. Copies of the instruments may be found in Appendices A, B and C.[4]

A second data source for this report consisted of intensive, in-person interviews conducted with 11 field agents during the summer and fall of 1978, and a follow-up conference with the same group in the spring of 1979. The interviews lasted about two and one-half hours and were relatively unstructured in nature. At least one agent from each project was selected to be in the interview sample. These agents were selected by staff members of the Abt Associates research project in conjunction with the project directors on the basis of their being exemplars of different field agent styles. Also, some attempt was made to minimize respondent burden by not selecting field agents already involved with case study efforts within each of the seven projects. The follow-up conference, which involved group discussion of agent role management, lasted for a day and a half.

The primary purpose of the interviews and conference was to orient the research staff to the world of the field agent in ways that could not easily be tapped through survey instrumentation. These data were used in the study largely to inform the questions that were asked, to assist us in interpreting survey findings, and to provide insights for designing the second and third survey instruments.

The third data source consisted of "linkage case studies" prepared by the seven RDU projects, reports to the National Institute of Education, and data collected by Abt Associates Inc. on site visits to schools involved in the program.

The fourth data source was a mailed survey of teachers and principals, distributed in the fall of 1979. Data from this survey provided measures of client satisfaction with the agent and the problem-solving process. One hundred and fifty two principals (a 76% return rate) and 594 teachers (48%) responded to the survey.

Analysis Strategies

Because the number of respondents was relatively small, and item non-response to some questions further reduced the sample available for analysis, inferential statistical techniques had limited utility. Therefore, our primary strategy has been to describe the field agents and to conduct bi-variate correlation analysis. In some instances, the approach has been supplemented with canonical correlations, in order to test the strength of relationships between groups of variables.

Who Were the RDU Field Agents, and What Did They Do?

People became involved as field agents in the RDU program in a variety of ways. Some assumed the position by nature of their present jobs--simply adding one more set of responsibilities to an already full complement of activities. Others were hired from the ranks of teachers and administrators to become full-time field agents--essentially leaving their old responsibilities behind. And for a few who were unemployed at the time, the position was the first suitable job to become available. For some, the field agent position offered the potential for individual challenge and professional development, while for others it was extra work which elicited less enthusiasm.[5]

The field agents were highly educated: of the 53 respondents to the first survey, all but one had an advanced degree beyond the baccalaureate; 70% had achieved a master's degree, and 30% held a Ph.D. The field agent job came at varying times in their careers. For some, this was their first "real" job after obtaining their most recent degree; for others this would be the last "formal" job prior to retirement. While these extremes did exist, the average age at the time of the first survey was 41--very much a mid-career stage in life. The average age of the field agents varied widely by project, from 34 in the Pennsylvania and the NETWORK Consortium projects to 47 in the NEA project. (However, projects with the highest average age--NEA, Michigan, and Florida--also show the largest standard deviations, indicating that their agents actually fell into a very broad age span, including both younger and older agents.) Of the respondents who answered all three surveys, there were more male (24) than female (19) field agents.

Since the seven projects all began at the same time--though some were slower in hiring than others--there were no marked differences by project in the number of months of experience as an RDU field agent. At the time of the first survey, 16 months was the average length of time in the position. It should be noted, however, that a number of the respondents came to this position from backgrounds that were quite relevant--for example, a few were associated with National Diffusion Network facilitator projects or were consultants based in local school districts or intermediate service agencies. Seventy-five percent of the respondents to the first survey had had experience with other federally funded programs, 65% had had experience with other "linking" roles, and 35% had had experience with R&D products or outcomes.

Table 2-1 presents the previous teaching and administrative experience of the RDU field agents, along with their average age, by project. In all projects the field agents had had more experience in teaching than in administrative positions. Another point worth noting is that teaching experience varied significantly by project, from an average of 2.8 years in the Georgia project to an average of 10.2 years in the NEA project. In general, the older, more experienced field agents of the NEA, Michigan, and Florida projects heavily weight the average for all respondents. Thus, while the average number of years in teaching is 7.4, this figure is substantially higher than the averages for four of the seven projects.

The field agents in our sample varied enormously in their time commitment to the RDU projects, ranging from 1% to a full-time commitment. The 53 respondents to the first survey fell into three groups of approximately equal size: 1-10%, 20-50%, and 80-100%. The average time commitment to RDU varied significantly across the seven projects (Table 2-2), with agents in the NRC, Pennsylvania, and the NETWORK Consortium projects devoting full- or nearly full-time to the project, while agents in the Michigan and NEA projects devoted only 7.2% and 12% respectively. (Again, the standard deviations for some projects--Georgia and Florida, in particular--are much higher than others.) Note that agents in the Michigan and NEA projects were expected to provide similar, though less intensive, services as agents in the other projects.

Table 2-I

RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR RDU FIELD AGENTS BY PROJECT

	Age		Average Years Experience				Number of Respondents
	Avg.	S.D.	Teaching	School Administration/ Staff	District Level Administration/ Staff	State or Regional Units or Association	
All Respondents	41	11	7.4	3.1	1.2	4.1	53
RDU PROJECT:							
Pennsylvania	34	3.5	6.0	0	0	0	2
Network	34	3.5	4.7	.7	.5	1.0	6
Georgia	35	6	2.8	1.2	.7	3.0	6
NRC	38	13.3	4.8	4.8	1.2	.8	4
Florida	43	11.2	9.8	4.4	1.5	3.9	8
Michigan	45	8.6	7.8	2.5	2.9	5.3	13
NEA	47	13.8	10.2	5.2	.2	7.1	14
Significance of the Difference	.08		.008	.67	.25	.13	

Table 2-2

PERCENTAGE TIME COMMITMENT TO RDU FOR FIELD AGENTS BY PROJECT

	Percentage of Time Devoted to RDU		Number of Respondents
	Average	S.D.	
All Respondents	44.1	40.9	53
RDU PROJECT:			
NRC	100.0	0	4
Pennsylvania	97.0	2.8	2
Network	92.0	9.4	6
Georgia	67.5	35.4	6
Florida	64.7	29.3	8
NEA	12.0	12.9	8
Michigan	7.2	8.4	13
Significance of the Difference Among Projects	.001		

Field Agent Roles. As indicated in Chapter 1, there are many different perceptions of what educational field agents should do. The research literature usually describes the field agent role in terms of the problem-solving/knowledge utilization process. For example, Havelock (1973) has identified four roles, labelled "catalyst," "solution giver," "process helper," and "resource linker." The field agent can serve as a catalyst by helping school district personnel to overcome their reluctance to change. He or she can then simply proffer a solution, or guide local staff through the stages of a logical problem-solving process. The agent's access to human, financial, or other resources is also of great importance. Butler and Paisley (1978) also describe the roles of "process helper," "solution giver," and "resource finder," and Madey (1979) has most recently suggested three role categories: "facilitator," "resource finder," and "communicator."

In our research we attempted to discover the extent to which the field agents in the RDU program perceived themselves as fitting into a fixed list of role categories, chosen to reflect the roles described in the literature and our perceptions of actual variations among agents in the RDU program. The field agents were asked to assess the extent to which they had expected to perform certain aspects of the field agent role, and the extent to which they actually performed those roles. Responses to these questions for the 43 agents who responded to all three surveys are summarized in Table 2-3, with the potential roles listed in descending order of actual performance.

It is clear that the field agents perceived themselves primarily as resource persons and coordinators. One agent described the job as follows:

> (It's) very much like "general supervision"...assist(ing) teachers in finding solutions to stated problems, without being a line person, without having authority over the teachers, establishing a trust relationship and a helping relationship (McCutchan, 1980:215).

Some of the activities that the field agents neither perceived as important nor actually performed were active involvement in program implementation, involvement in evaluation, and providing content specialist assistance. These activities are highly specialized, and involve skills that many of the agents did not feel they had.

For the most part, their actual role performance was consistent with their own expectations. There is, however, this exception: the field agents felt that they should be performing the role of an expert in assessing

Table 2-3

RANKS AND MEAN RATINGS OF FIELD AGENTS' EXPECTED AND ACTUAL EXTENT OF PERFORMANCE OF VARIOUS FIELD AGENT ROLES

(N = 43)

	Field Agents' Expectations			Actual Performance		
	Rank	Mean*	S.D.	Rank	Mean*	S.D.
a. Resource Person	1	4.5	.7	1	4.2	.94
b. Coordinator	2	4.3	.9	1	4.2	1.0
c. Process Trainer	3	3.5	1.1	3	3.3	1.1
d. Observer/Historian	6	3.2	.93	3	3.3	1.1
e. Counselor or "Hand-Holder"	6	3.2	1.2	3	3.3	1.1
f. Expert in assessing the match between innovations & problems	3	3.5	.9	6	3.0	.95
g. Conflict Resolver	5	3.3	1.2	6	3.0	1.2
h. Basic skills, career education or inservice specialist	8	3.0	1.2	6	3.0	1.2
i. Program Implementor	10	2.6	1.2	9	2.6	1.3
j. Evaluator	9	2.8	1.2	10	2.5	1.1

*Response Scale:
5 = to a very great extent
4 = to a great extent
3 = to some extent
2 = to a little extent
1 = not at all

the match between innovations and problems to a greater extent than they were actually performing that role. This may have been due, to some degree, to the perceived conflict between helping sites to find an appropriate solution, and becoming an advocate for or against particular programs--something that almost all agents felt was inappropriate. For example, one agent found herself on several occasions in a situation where schools wished to adopt a reading program that she felt was inappropriate:

> (The agent) did not like the ECRI program, and privately remarked that she would not want her own child in an ECRI class. Even so, she assumed a professional neutrality and pushed for a fair consideration of it. (Kraus, 1980:204)

In sum, the agents' perceived themselves as providers of relatively low-key, supportive forms of assistance. They emphasized being a "helping hand" rather than obvious change agentry. Nevertheless, the "non-intrusive" role that they adopted could have significant impacts on local schools, as will be seen later.

Field Agent Activities. The above discussion of role definition has focused on the more global parameters of the roles field agents play. Yet, from the perspective of a job occupant, the activities that make up the day-to-day cycle of events are in many ways more salient and more likely to stimulate positive or negative reactions than the more general role definitions. A sample weekly log for one agent (Table 2-4) shows the type and range of activities for a typical agent employed full time.

Based upon interviews with a sample of agents, a list of routine field agent activities was generated and included in the first survey. The RDU field agents were asked to rate the importance of each activity, and the amount of time spent on it. The results are shown in Table 2-5. On average, the field agents were spending the greatest amount of time in (1) meetings with small planning groups at the sites, (2) writing reports and filling out forms, (3) arranging, designing, or conducting workshops, and (4) travelling from site to site.[6]

In general, there is little discrepancy between the amount of time the field agents were spending on various activities and the degree of importance they attached to these activities. There are, however, these notable exceptions: developing themselves professionally and reading materials about R&D products were both thought of as more than moderately important,

Table 2-4

SAMPLE COMMUNICATION LOG

DATE	PROJECT ACTIVITY	TYPE OF COMMUNICATION					
		Phone	Memo	Letter	Travel	Meeting	Other
MONDAY	Complete monthly reports and mail		X				X
	J.C.: RE: LEA participant on Reading Panel	X					
	A.M.: RE: LEA participants on Reading Panel; other arrangements for Nov. 18 and 19 meetings	X					
	L.R.: Copy of revised budget		X				Encl.
	J.C. and K.S.: Information on Reading Panel from A.M.		X				Encl.
	K.S.: Requested four copies of flow charts on project		X				
	A.M.: RE: Call for information on data on District A		X				
	M.P.: Needs assessment handbooks for District B (as requested)						X
	L.R.: RE: Newsletter for project			X			
	K.S.: Needs assessment progress and assistance					X	
TUESDAY	K.S.: Request for needs assessment charts		X				
	K.S.: Follow-up on request	X					
	A.M.: Dates for Reading Panel, problems with above and conflict R & R training; videotape information for Reading Panel	X					
	L.R.: Feedback on problems with Reading Panel dates and participants; suggestions requested for broadening district viewpoint of project	X					
	A.M.: Arrangements for sending information to LEA participants in Reading Panel	X					
	Order document on Reading in the Middle Schools at request of District B						X
	K.S.: Follow-up on suggestion that a teacher not in R & R training be involved on the Reading Panel	X					
WEDNESDAY	ERIC Document on Exemplary Reading Programs (compiled by NCTE) scan for information; check on progress for TAR (in-house request)						X
	Complete production order processes for videotaping Reading Panel		X				
	Work on newsletter articles						X
	Graphic representative ideas for aiding district comprehension of scope of project						X
	A.M.: Demonstration of EDL materials for teaching Reading—talk to representative					X	
	L.R.: "Secondary Reading Skills Center..." handout		X				
	L.R. and A.M.: Information on Washington, D.C. conference and information from T.I.		X				
THURSDAY	R.W. and D.S.: Cross-examine comprehension research summaries to be used for Reading Panel and for knowledge base (group of 7 Reading Faculty)					X	
FRIDAY	A.M.: RE: Possibility of meeting on November 23rd; work on newsletter articles	X					X
	Review of research summaries on comprehension generated by R.W. for Project						X
	R.W.: Meet to discuss teacher statements on comprehension problems					X	
	Complete and send out revisions on Policy Statements						
	RE: Linker Tasks		X				X
	J.C.: Shared information on secondary reading		X				Encl
	L.R.: Budget revisions; self-assessment for secondary teachers, newsletter mailing list		X				Encl.
	PIPS training materials received						

X = Incoming

Table 2-5

RANKS AND MEAN RATINGS OF PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE AND ACTUAL AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT ON VARIOUS FIELD AGENT ACTIVITIES (N = 43)

Field Agent Activities	Importance			Amount of Time Spent		
	Rank	Mean*	S.D.	Rank	Mean**	S.D.
a. Meetings with small planning groups at the sites	1	2.8	.5	1	2.5	.6
b. Writing reports/filling out forms	11	2.1	.6	1	2.5	.7
c. Arranging, designing or conducting workshops	3	2.6	.6	3	2.2	.8
d. Travelling from site to site	10	2.2	.8	4	2.1	.7
e. Promoting or explaining the RDU program	4	2.5	.6	5	2.0	.6
f. Working with individual administrators	4	2.5	.7	5	2.0	.8
g. Organizing, preparing, and delivering materials	6	2.4	.7	5	2.0	.6
h. General meetings with site staff	6	2.4	.5	5	2.0	.7
i. Developing yourself professionally	2	2.7	.5	9	1.9	.7
j. Meetings with RDU central project staff	9	2.3	.5	9	1.9	.7
k. Reading materials about R&D products	6	2.4	.7	11	1.7	.6
l. Managing budgets	11	2.1	.7	12	1.6	.7
m. Designing, administering, and analyzing evaluation materials	13	2.0	.7	12	1.6	.7
n. Observing teachers	13	2.0	.7	14	1.5	.7
o. Working with individual teachers	15	1.8	.8	15	1.3	.6
p. Working with parents or volunteers	16	1.6	.7	16	1.0	.3

*Response Scale:

3 = very important
2 = somewhat important
1 = of little of no importance

**Response Scale:

3 = a great deal of time
2 = a moderate amount of time
1 = little or no time

ranking second and sixth respectively among the 16 possible activities, and yet they consumed relatively little of the field agents' time. This finding is consistent with the earlier finding that field agents felt they should be performing the role of an expert in assessing the match between innovations and problems to a greater extent than they were actually doing. The field agents appear to have taken seriously the notion of themselves as links to knowledge about R&D products or innovations, at the same time feeling somewhat inadequate in the extent to which they performed this function and, perhaps, in the extent to which they currently had the knowledge and expertise for doing it well.

There is also a discrepancy between the importance of, and the amount of time spent, writing reports or filling out forms and travelling from site to site. That is, both these activities rank low in importance but high in the amount of time they consumed. Indeed, writing reports and filling out forms is the only activity which was rated lower in importance than in the amount of time it consumed. The conflict between "paper work" and "people work" was one that arose again and again in interviews and discussions with agents.

This problem is, as Louis and Sieber (1979) have pointed out, a perennial one for organizations that rely extensively on field-based staff. As we will discuss in later chapters, the need for developing mechanisms of agent accountability (largely effected through paper work) and the development of local loyalties and support systems do not always complement one another. While the problem of documentation may be somewhat greater in a "research" program like RDU (one agent even resigned from his project in protest over the need to document activities and client progress), the tension between people work and paper work is similar in many other dispersed organizations.

Conclusion

This chapter has briefly reviewed the nature of our data collection procedures and some of the characteristics of the field agents in the study--both personal attributes and expected and actual role performance. Because they were part of a federally funded demonstration activity, these agents probably show considerably less variation in many of the role and activity characteristics than if the sample had been drawn from a population of field agents operating in more permanent roles. However, even within the delimited

framework of a demonstration, there is at least some variance among agents in what they did and how they perceived their activities grouping into different role segments.

Moreover, although agents were very consistent in their reporting of the extent to which they performed various roles and activities, we know that other factors had a great impact on the intensity of the field agents' relations with sites and the strategies that field agents employed in performing their roles. Thus, for example, each project designed the role differently--in some cases it was full time, in others it represented a small fraction of what the individual was expected to do in his or her job. Projects differed greatly in their communication mechanisms and in the degree to which expectations for agents were formalized. In addition, client schools also differed, and agents adopted different strategies for playing out their role in response to client demands. In the remainder of this volume, we examine some of the factors that affect how the agent role is played out, and how these ultimately affect the client school's assessments of field agent performance.

CHAPTER NOTES

1. The seven RDU projects were regionally distributed, and included the following:

- The Northwest Reading Consortium; involving the state department of education and other agencies in Washington, Oregon, Alaska, and Idaho.
- The National Education Association Inservice Education Project, operated in collaboration with the departments of education and corresponding state education associations in 12 states: Alabama, California, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming;
- The Consortium, operated by the NETWORK, a non-profit research and service organization that coordinated the efforts of agencies in six states: California, Connecticut, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, and Washington;
- The Georgia Research and Development Utilization Program;
- The Pennsylvania School Improvement Program;
- The Florida Linkage System; and
- The Michigan Career Education Disseminatioin Project. This project was operated by the state department of education, as were the projects in Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Florida.

For more details on project structure and operation, see Louis and Rosenblum, 1980.

2. The project sponsored by the NEA placed two linkers in each of 12 states. One was located in the state department of education, while the other was an employee of the state education association. The NETWORK project located its agents in a variety of settings, ranging from a single school district to a regional laboratory. While the nature of the NETWORK's host organizations varied, their functions were similar to intermediate service agencies.

3. If we attempt to classify the RDU linking agents using Butler and Paisley's (1978) typology, we find that they were expected to perform as "process helpers" and "resource finders," but not as "solution givers." In addition, using Crandall's distinction, they were all expected to perform some "front-end" support for their clients.

4. The surveys were pretested face-to-face with two field agents. Following minor modifications in wording and graphic design, the surveys were mailed to all respondents along with a cover letter, a cover page with general instructions, and a postage-paid return envelope. Each survey was identified with a numerical code to facilitate confidentiality.

5. Both the Michigan and NEA projects designed the field agent role as an extension of already existing positions. In the Michigan project, the role was assigned to Career Education Planning District Coordinators--usually vocational-technical education directors in intermediate service agencies. In the NEA project, the field agent role was given to inservice specialists in state departments of education and corresponding state teachers' agencies.

6. Since these data were gathered after the agents had been in the project for approximately a year and a half, we believe that the responses represent fairly stable generalizations of time use and role allocation.

PART II

MANAGING AGENTS

INTRODUCTION

This section of the volume will focus on a question of basic concern both to managers of field agents and to organizational theorists interested in testing the power of organizational design. Simply put, the question is whether the design and management of the field agent role can (1) improve the role occupant's job-related attitudes, and (2) reduce role conflict.

The first chapter in this part (Chapter 3) will present the findings from our analysis of field agent surveys. The analysis, which focuses on characteristics of the role structure and its occupants that are most easily affected by project management, produces a number of findings. First, with only a few exceptions, the individual agent characteristics seem to have little association with job-related attitudes and role conflict. Second, job design characteristics appear to have significant potential as factors affecting field agents' perceptions of job stress and satisfaction. Finally, we find that the formal training provided by projects for agents had little impact in ameliorating the strains of acquiring and enacting a new role, and that high levels of support and communication from the central project office may actually increase stress.

The case study that follows the quantitative analysis (Chapter 4) elaborates on a number of points that are introduced through survey analysis. In particular, the case study is intended to shed some light on the surprising finding that training, communication, and support from project staff members can actually increase job stress. The case draws attention to some of the ways in which the multiple loyalties of the agents to locally based supervisors and to more distant project directors may affect their relationships with a central office, and how the factor of physical distance impedes the effective provision of timely support. In addition, the case points out that role ambiguities can be addressed through intervention by project management, but that formalization of expectations may be more important than providing episodic skills training.

CHAPTER 3

ORGANIZATIONAL INFLUENCES ON THE FIELD AGENT ROLE

In recent years, a number of significant studies have examined the relationship between role characteristics and the job-related attitudes of occupants of boundary-spanning roles (Miles and Perreault, 1976; Tosi, 1971; Prudden and Stark, 1971; House and Rizzo, 1972). These studies have conceptualized job satisfaction and other variables, such as sense of efficacy, as the consequences of role conflict, marginality, role formalization, and individual characteristics (see also Keller and Holland, 1975; Kahn et al., 1964; Lyons, 1971). These studies are, however, drawn from non-educational settings and tend to focus on individuals who operate from a centralized organizational base or branch offices of the central organization. Our own analysis examines the effects of role design and management on field agents in education, permanently located at some distance from the office sponsoring their activities--in host organizations that have only informal or temporary ties with the central organization.

The basic question posed above can be refined by looking at techniques that are typically used by managers to affect the role performance of their employees. The three most commonly used techniques are employee selection, job design, and ongoing management.

Selection. The field of occupational psychology provides managers with scientific procedures for picking employees who are likely to succeed in their roles. In this chapter we examine the effects of a number of easily identifiable individual characteristics upon the job-related attitudes of educational field agents. Our purpose is to test whether the often voiced belief that "it takes a special type of person to be a linker" is supported. (See, for example, Zaltman and Duncan, 1976.)

Design. The choices managers make can strongly affect the nature of the job. For example, a manager who believes marginal field agents are more effective will draw up a job definition quite different from that designed by a manager who feels marginality leads to lowered effectiveness. Our approach in this chapter is to look at central characteristics of the field agent role which can be affected by design choices. In particular we consider the percentage of time devoted to the job, the formalization of the job, and the marginality of the field agent with regard to the project

office.[1] We then determine the degree to which these affect job-related attitudes.

Ongoing Management: Training and Support. In addition to selection and design, organizations engage in ongoing relationships with their employees, which are structured in a variety of ways that can either support or undermine job satisfaction and performance. This chapter concentrates on two aspects of ongoing management: on-the-job training, and personal and task-related support. We examine the ways in which training and support are associated with the agents' attitudes about their jobs.

The analytic model used in this chapter involves three variables that are treated as desired outcomes for agents:

- sense of efficacy;
- job satisfaction; and
- reduced role conflict.

The remainder of the chapter examines the relationship between these outcomes and several sets of potential predictor variables. The predictor variables--corresponding to the management strategies of selection, job design, and ongoing management--include:

- individual characteristics of the agent--age, teaching experience, innovativeness, change skills, communication skills, and use-of-power skills;
- job design characteristics--formalization, marginality, and percentage of time committed to the RDU position; and
- training and support structures--amount and perceived usefulness of training, amount of communication received from significant role partners, and amount of influence over agent roles exercised by the same role partners.

The predictor variables are treated in more detail in the analytic sections of this chapter. The following section provides the operational definitions and measures of job-related attitudes and role conflict.

Job-Related Attitudes and Role Conflict: Concepts and Measures

In this analysis job-related attitudes have been operationally defined in a number of survey items, which have been grouped into two separate scales measuring field agent job satisfaction and field agent sense of efficacy.

Job Satisfaction. The job satisfaction scale is composed of two items, each measured on a five-point scale:

- -To what extent is the following statement about your job as a linker/facilitator true? It uses my skills and abilities--lets me do the things I do best.[2]
- On the whole, to what extent are you satisfied with your present job?

The scale composed of these two items has a reliability of .81, using Cronbach's standardized alpha coefficient.

Sense of Efficacy. Sense of efficacy was measured by asking each agent to judge his/her importance to site outcomes in four phases of the problem-solving process:

- To what extent were you important to the accomplishments achieved by (specific site) during each of the following activities:
  - -- problem identification
  - -- solution selection
  - -- planning for implementation
  - -- implementation

These measures were combined into a single measure, which has a range of 4 to 20 and a mean of 12.78, indicating that the average field agent felt moderately important in the problem-solving process. The standardized alpha for this scale is .76.

Role Conflict. In our original design, role conflict was classified as a structural characteristic of the boundary-spanning role. This classification was consistent with the literature; however, our observation of the occupants of field-based boundary-spanning roles suggests that role conflict may have an ambiguous place in real world activities. Role conflict appears to be in part a function of organizational design and in part an outcome of the ways in which individual occupants of a field agent role determine how they will relate to clients (Louis and Sieber, 1979). In this section we discuss role conflict as an outcome of organizational design on a par with job-related attitudes. (The relationship of role conflict to the negotiation of role relationships between the field agent and the client is discussed in Chapter 5.)

Role conflict was measured exclusively by surveys of field agents.[3] Thus, while we shall refer to our construct as role conflict, it should be remembered that it refers only to perceived rather than actual role conflict. Role conflict is operationalized through two separate scales, one which refers to directly reported role conflict, and one which uses measures of inferred role conflict.[4]

Reported role conflict is measured by asking field agents to assess not only "inter-sender" role conflict but also role overload and ambiguity. The items in the scale, which has a standardized alpha of .71, are:

- To what extent do people around you have different opinions about what you should be doing?
- To what extent do people around you have different opinions about how you should be doing your job?
- To what extent are you clear about what people expect you to do on your job?
- To what extent are you expected to do more than you are able or have time to do?

The mean response on the role conflict measure, which could theoretically range from 4 to 20, was 10.2, with a standard deviation of 4.1, indicating that agents perceived modest role conflict, on the average, though there is a great deal of variability between individuals on this construct. We may conclude from this simple descriptive finding that role conflict is not always associated with the boundary-spanning role, although such roles may typically be characterized by more conflict than those which do not involve frequent interaction with individuals outside the employing organization.

In addition to the direct assessment of role conflict, role conflict was inferred from questions that asked each field agent to rate the degree to which central project staff and clients expected him/her to perform in 10 different roles, such as "evaluator," "conflict resolver," and "expert in matching problems to innovations." An inferred role conflict score was computed by subtracting the differences in expectations between the agent and the two types of role partners on 7 of the 10 items. (See Appendix A, Question 10.) The possible range of this scale was 0 to 28. The mean response was 4.24 (indicating a high average consistency between agents and supervisors in most instances) with a standard deviation of 3.0.

Field Agent Characteristics: Can Good Field Agents Be Selected?

We now examine the effect of field agent selection on job-related attitudes and role conflict. As noted in Chapter 1, the literature abounds with arguments concerning the importance of individual field agent characteristics. The characteristics included in our analysis are ones that could be easily identified in an interview prior to hiring a field agent. All of the correlations between variables discussed in this analysis may be found in Table 3-11 at the end of this chapter.

Measures of Field Agent Characteristics. The field agent characteristics examined in our analysis include age, sex, and teaching experience--a factor that is often thought to be important in relating to teacher problem-solving teams. (For descriptive data on these characteristics, see Chapter 2.) In addition, we examined one self-reported personality characteristic (innovativeness) and a number of self-reported skills.

The measure of innovativeness used in this analysis was judged by Price (1972) to be among the most valid organizational measures available. The procedure involves forced-choice selection between pairs of adjectives describing the respondent's behavior. Four innovative characteristics (independent, flexible, original, and self-reliant) are paired with four conventional characteristics (dependable, cooperative, industrious, stable). The battery is scored by adding the number of times an innovative adjective is selected over a conventional adjective. (For further documentation of this measure, see Price, 1972. The item appears in Appendix B, Question 2.) The mean response on the innovativeness scale was 7.7, out of a possible range of 0 to 16, indicating that the typical agent views him or herself as being somewhat innovative. The standard deviation was quite high, however (3.7), and agents could be found at both extremes of the scale.

Field agents were also asked to rate themselves on a seven-point scale from "very weak" to "very strong" in 24 skill areas. Results are reported in Table 3-1. Sample skill areas included: "ability to organize myself and others," "listening and understanding," "group team building," and "facilitating implementation." These items were subjected to a principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation. Three significant factors emerged. The first factor, which loaded highly on items measuring skill in problem identification, solution selection, facilitating implementation, and evaluation and follow-up we have called change skills (reliability = .80).

Table 3-1

RANKS AND MEAN RATINGS OF SELF-REPORTED FIELD AGENT SKILLS

Skill Areas	Rank	Mean*	S.D.
Openness	1	5.9	0.9
Listening and understanding	1	5.9	1.0
Ability to organize myself and others	3	5.8	0.9
Influencing through supportive reinforcement	3	5.8	0.9
Oral communication	5	5.7	1.0
Process helping	5	5.7	0.9
Ability to write at appropriate level	7	5.6	1.2
Group problem-solving	7	5.6	1.0
Gaining acceptance at all levels of the system	7	5.6	1.0
Facilitating implementation	7	5.6	0.9
Group team building	11	5.4	1.1
Effective use of formal and informal power structure	11	5.4	1.2
Skills in problem identification	11	5.4	1.0
Skills in solution selection	11	5.4	0.9
Counseling	15	5.3	1.2
Interviewing	15	5.3	1.0
Goal setting	15	5.3	0.9
Skills in curriculum development	18	5.1	1.4
Ability to live a low profile	19	5.0	1.1
Conflict resolution	20	4.8	1.2
Evaluatin/follow-up	20	4.8	1.4
Skills in content area (reading, etc.)	22	4.6	1.6
High tolerance for ambiguity	23	4.3	1.5
Influencing through confrontation and advocacy methods	24	3.9	1.3

*Means are on a seven-point scale, where 1 = very weak and 7 = very strong.

The second factor, which we have called communication skills, loads highly on "listening and understanding," "oral communication," "interviewing," "influencing through supportive reinforcement," and "influencing through confrontation and advocacy methods" (reliability = .86). The final factor is called effective-use-of-power skills, loading on "gaining acceptance at all levels of the system," "effective use of formal and informal power structure" and "openness to change" (reliability = .86).

There was less variation on the skills scales than on the measure of innovativeness. On each of these scales, which could theoretically range from a low score of 1 to a high of 7, the actual lowest score was 2.6. In the case of communication, for example, the mean self-rating was 6.4 (standard deviation, .96). Agents viewed themselves as having slightly lower change and use-of-power skills, but the means are still relatively high (5.25 and 5.18) and the standard deviations are modest (.9 and .8).

Analysis and Findings. Table 3-2 displays the significant Pearson correlation coefficients between measures of the field agents' job-related attitudes and role conflict, and individual characteristics. It can be seen that the agents' personal characteristics have some relationship to job attitudes (including role conflict) but that these tend to be somewhat scattered. While the sex of the agent is not related to any of the dependent measures, age and teaching experience are both moderately associated with lower levels of inferred role conflict; and, in addition, teaching experience is related to lower levels of reported role conflict. Agents who rate themselves high on effective-use-of-power or communication skills are also less likely to report role conflict, while more innovative agents tend to be less satisfied with their jobs. (These latter correlations are, however, significant only at the .10 level.)

Taken together, these findings provide only limited support to those who contend that "it takes a special person to be a linker." This should, of course, be relatively good news to most managers of educational field agents since, in most cases, it is not feasible to hire an entirely new set of staff members to perform these roles. Rather, most agencies that attempt to develop or expand boundary-spanning functions must call upon the staff that they already employ. The findings of this report, both in this and later chapters, suggest that, on the whole, the need to "retool" existing staff will not pose a problem to the expansion of boundary-spanning roles in

Table 3-2

SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS OF PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS WITH JOB ATTITUDES AND ROLE CONFLICT

Personal Characteristics	Sense of Efficacy	Job Satisfaction	Inferred Role Conflict	Reported Role Conflict
Innovativeness		-.25*		
Communication Skills				-.26*
Use-of-Power Skills				-.23*
Change Skills				
Sex of Agent				
Teaching Experience			-.32**	-.23*
Age			-.38**	

*Significant at .10

**Significant at .05 or better

educational service agencies, so long as managers attend to important features of role design and management.[5]

The findings do indicate, however, that with experience come the tools for reducing job-related stress. This finding is consistent with studies of many other occupations. The interesting issue here, of course, is that the field agent job was novel for most of the participants. Even the most experienced agents had never held a full-time field agent position before, and even for those who had held positions that required significant boundary spanning, the definitions of the agent role posed new challenges. Under these conditions of apparently equal uncertainty for all, older and more experienced individuals were better able to cope with stress. The statistical finding is confirmed by interviews with both older and younger agents: younger agents tended to describe the job as a "burnout" role, full of tension. Older and more experienced agents found it less stressful.

Before the manager of field agents jumps to the conclusion that utilizing experienced educators will facilitate the development of more effective boundary spanners, we must foreshadow findings to be presented later. In Chapter 7, data are presented which indicate that older and more experienced agents may be less likely to engage in boundary-spanning behavior. Thus, while undergoing less stress, they may be no more, nor less, effective.

Job Design: Can the Structuring of the Role Affect Job-Related Attitudes?

While there are many role characteristics that can be manipulated in a new role, our discussion here is limited to three variables that are prominent in the literature on educational field agents. First, we follow up on the persistent question of whether the agent's time commitment to the boundary-spanning role--i.e., full-time, part-time, or very part-time--affects job attitudes. (For a discussion of the relevance of time commitment, see Sieber et al., 1972.) Second, we examine the degree to which the agent role is codified or formalized, and how this affects job attitudes. Lack of role formalization has, of course, been defined as one of the characteristics of the educational agent role. Finally, we examine the effects of marginality, which has been viewed as a serious source of stress for educational field agents. (See Havelock, 1969, for a discussion of the more significant features of the field agent role.)

Measures of Job Design. The agent's time commitment to the field agent job was measured by asking, "What percentage of your working time do

you devote to RDU project activities?". The responses to this question fell into three groups of approximately equal size: 1-10%, 20-50%, and 80-100%. Not surprisingly, the projects differed on this characteristic, as discussed above in Chapter 2.

An index of role formalization was developed using six items:

- Is there a written job description for you as an RDU linker/facilitator?
- Did this description exist when you were hired?
- Are there any procedures for receiving formal job assessments or evaluations from your RDU project director?
- Are there any procedures for receiving formal job assessments from your supervisor in the organization in which you are located?
- If federal funding to support your linker/facilitator role were to be discontinued, how likely is it that the organization in which your office is located would attempt to retain you?
- If federal funding to support your linker/facilitator role were to be discontinued in the near future, how likely is it that the organization in which your office is located would continue to engage in linking activities similar to those you now perform?

An analysis of responses to these individual items revealed that relatively few of the field agents (25%) indicated there was any procedure for formal job assessment from the RDU project itself, but a considerably higher proportion (59%) indicated that formal assessments were made by supervisors in their host organizations. Thus, we suspect that the field agent role is more formalized at the level of immediate supervision than at the level where project objectives are set. Despite the fact that 72% of the agents had been employed by their host organizations prior to becoming RDU field agents, only 59% indicated that they would definitely be retained when RDU funding was terminated. Only 30% of the agents perceived their host organizations to be firmly committed to maintaining the field agent role, while 39% perceived either no clear commitment, or an unlikely commitment to continue to sponsor field agent activities.

A role formalization score with a range of 0 to 8 was constructed by assigning a value of 1 for each "yes" response regarding formal job descriptions and formal assessment procedures, a value of 2 for each response indicating definite job security and a definite commitment to the future support of field agent activities, and a value of 1 for probable job security and commitment to field agent activities. The mean for all agents was 3.6, with a standard deviation of 2.2.

Marginality as used in this study is defined structurally as the extent of organizational distance between the field agents and their significant role partners. Survey respondents were asked to indicate graphically how close they felt to one or the other organization in three organizational pairs: school/host organization, school/project, and project/host. The more the agents saw themselves as not part of either organization in each pair, the higher their marginality score. For example, they received a 1 if they located themselves inside one of the organizations, a 2 if they located themselves on the boundary of one organization, and up to a 6 if they put themselves equidistant between the two organizations. This visual graphing technique was adapted from Cotton et al., 1977.

A score of total marginality was computed by adding the scores for the three pairs, thus yielding a possible range of 3 to 18. We found that the mean marginality using this measure was 9.9, with a standard deviation of 2.8. However, the Cronbach's standardized alpha for this index revealed that it was not unidimensional. Rather, it was composed of two types of marginality, marginality between the project and the other two role partners (project marginality), and the single item reflecting marginality between the host organization and the school (local marginality). In this chapter we examine only project marginality, since this is the feature of organizational design over which there may be the greatest control by the managers of dispersed field staff.[6] The standardized alpha coefficient for this variable is .70.

Analysis and Findings. As was discussed in Chapter 2, the field agents in our sample varied enormously in their time commitment to the agent role, ranging from full time to 1%. The amount of time devoted to the role, however, correlates significantly with few of the measures of job-related attitudes or role conflict (Table 3-3). The only significant relationship is a negative one between the agent's time commitment to the role, and his or

Table 3-3

SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS BETWEEN FEATURES OF JOB DESIGN AND JOB-RELATED ATTITUDES

Design	Sense of Efficacy	Job Satisfaction	Inferred Role Conflict	Reported Role Conflict
Percentage RDU				-.40**
Formalization				.40**
Marginality (Project)	-.25*	.26*		-.31**

*Significant at the .10 level.

**Significant at the .05 level.

her reported role conflict (r = -.40): agents who spend more time on the job apparently perceive fewer competing role definitions and role overloads.

The field agent job was generally compatible with other roles that field agents played in their host organizations. However, one of the major role dilemmas mentioned by agents who spent very little time as RDU field agents was that their supervisors generally forgot the new obligations that were added through RDU, and did not reduce their expectations of other parts of the job. The agents who reported in personal interviews the least strain between part-time field agent roles and other roles in the agency were likely to be located in organizations that were already highly client-oriented. In fact, full-time field agents who were placed in settings where their peers and colleagues were doing quite different things were among those who expressed the greatest concerns about the value and security of their jobs, and they frequently had a difficult time becoming integrated into the host organization. (The importance of communication and collaboration with peers is discussed further in the section on field agent training and support.)

The formalization of the agent's job, unlike time allocation, tended to be influenced by factors other than overall project design; there is no significant difference between projects on the level of formalization. On the basis of the literature (House and Rizzo, 1972), we predicted a negative correlation between formalization and role conflict and a positive correlation with job satisfaction. The basic argument is that clarification both of what the job entails, through a written description, and of the organizational status of the job and the role occupant, should reduce the level of incompatible expectations, and thus the personal anxiety and ambiguity for the role occupant. Our data suggest, however, that for field-based boundary spanners, the potency of job formalization as a managerial strategy for reducing stress may be more limited. It is not significantly related to job satisfaction measures, nor to sense of efficacy. In addition, reported role conflict tends to increase rather than decrease with formalization (r = .40) (Table 3-3). An interpretation of this finding in light of the recent discussion of the extremely low visibility of the field agent role (Louis and Sieber, 1979) would suggest that formalization may serve to increase the visibility of what agents do. Further, as role partners begin to define the responsibilities of field agents and describe more expectations for performance, the potential for conflict may increase, as does the probability of both negative

and positive feedback. While such feedback is desired by field agents, it can also be the source of stress.

Marginality can be viewed as both an individual characteristic and one which is affected by organizational design. In the RDU program, the measure of project marginality is not significantly related to the project in which the agent was located, but it is significantly associated with another feature of design--time allocation. The more time an agent spent on RDU activities, the more marginal he or she felt ($r = .60$). Marginality is also related positively to satisfaction ($r = .26$, significant at the .10 level) and negatively to reported role conflict ($r = -.31$, significant at the .05 level). In sum, our data contradict the contention (Cotton et al., 1977) that marginality can increase the stress associated with a boundary-spanning role.

Rather, marginality has, overall, the effect of reducing major sources of job stress. This finding is consistent with Sieber's theory about how individuals manage when confronted with the accumulation of many roles and role expectations. One technique for reducing stress discussed by Sieber is using commitments in one role as an excuse for not performing in another. The more marginal an individual is with respect to different organizations or social groups with which he or she interacts, the more easily these excuses may be called into play. Thus, for example, agents who experienced high levels of perceived stress were those whose clients did not understand or respect their marginality--e.g., their obligations to other clients and to the organizations for whom they worked.

The other side of marginality is, however, the assumption that low levels of affiliation may increase the field agent's ability to effectively mediate between two organizations. The effects of marginality on relationships with clients are presented in Chapter 5.

Training and Support: Implications for Ongoing Management of Field Agents

The subject of providing ongoing management support for the educational field agent has received an empirical assessment in a previously published report (Spencer and Louis, 1980). The purpose of this section is to summarize earlier analyses and to put them into the larger context of how organizations influence occupants of the field agent role. The focus of this section is upon the role of actors in the project and host organizations

who relate to the field agent. (The impacts of clients on the agent are discussed in Chapter 5.) The fact that this role set is made up of many individuals may contribute to job stress. Here, however, we look at the ways in which role partners reduce stress by providing resources to the field agents. The three major sets of variables examined in this analysis include:

- on-the-job training;
- influence/support of project-level staff; and
- influence/support of staff in the host organization.

Measures of Training and Support. For the purposes of this volume, training is defined as an organized set of materials and experiences used for orienting and indoctrinating the new role occupant, teaching specific knowledge, skills or attitudes that the role occupant needs to perform the job, and providing opportunities for general education and self-development (Schein, 1970). For the most part, training usually emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge. Hood and Cates (1978) state, "Review or evaluation of actual programs of instruction for linking agents suggests that many programs probably succeed in imparting only orientation levels of competence; that is, they impact (sometimes very effectively) general awareness and understanding" (p. 30).

However, the acquisition of skills--especially interpersonal skills--is equally important, is much more difficult, and occurs much less frequently than knowledge acquisition. Mednick (1964) provides a traditional definition of skill: "precision and timing of movements that are oriented around a task or goal." For example, in learning to swim, the required leg and arm movements are within most individuals' behavioral repertoire. Learning becomes the process of integration and proper sequencing of these behavioral units so that the total skill can be performed as an integral whole without faltering and without forced conscious awareness of individual parts. In following the analogy, field agents use many methods to acquire their process helper, resource finder, and solution giver skills (Havelock, 1973; Piele, 1975; Butler and Paisley, 1978). Some learn by being dumped into the pond and some learn by sequential trial-and-error practice. Others are fortunate enough to receive guided instruction.

Despite differences among the projects, each provided information or skill training in the following areas: the problem-solving process, group dynamics, the use and availability of the knowledge base (the pool of innova-

tive programs) and the administration of the RDU project. A survey question asked field agents to rate, using a five-point scale, the extent to which training was received in these four areas. The results are presented in Table 3-4. As can be seen, the training given by the seven organizations did not vary a great deal in content. (The content of field agent training is described further in the section on analysis and findings.) Follow-up questions asked the respondents to indicate the quality of the training in each area, along several dimensions:

- Was the training useful and relevant to you in your work?
- Was the training provided at the appropriate time?
- Was the amount of training that was provided appropriate to your needs?

Each of these items, including the question on the extent to which training was received, was summed across training topics to form four scales: amount of training, usefulness of training, timeliness, and adequacy of amount.

The impact of the support structure of the project was measured by examining the frequency of interaction of agents with project directors and evaluators in the central project office, the degree of influence that the central project staff had upon the field agents' choice of activities and time allocation, and the amount of feedback received from the projects. The logic here was that agents cannot feel supported by the central office unless (1) there is actual communication on a regular basis, (2) this communication has content that is valued by the agent, and (3) the agent believes that the communication structure actually has an effect on what he or she does, including the provision of corrective feedback.

Frequency of interaction was determined by measuring the amount of face-to-face, telephone, and written interaction on a five-point scale ranging from "never" to "daily." This question was asked separately for the project director and the project evaluator, since each of these provided some supervision and support to field agents in most of the projects. In addition, the agents were asked to rate their immediate supervisors in the organizations in which they were located, and others in the host organizations performing in roles similar to their own. The three modes of communication were added together to obtain a single index of frequency, which could range from 1 to 12, for each role partner.

Table 3-4

MEAN DEGREE TO WHICH TRAINING WAS RECEIVED IN FOUR CONTENT AREAS AS PERCEIVED BY FIELD AGENTS IN EACH PROJECT

	Content Area of Training: Information or Skills Related to:				
	Problem Solving Process*	Interpersonal or Group Dynamics*	Use and Availability of Knowledge*	Project Administration*	ALL AREAS
RDU Project					
Pennsylvania	4.0	3.0	3.0	4.5	3.6
Michigan	3.7	3.2	3.0	4.1	3.5
NEA	3.6	3.1	2.9	3.8	3.4
Georgia	3.8	4.4	2.4	2.7	3.3
Florida	3.3	3.0	3.3	3.1	3.2
NRC	2.8	3.2	3.0	3.8	3.2
Network	3.0	2.5	3.2	3.2	3.0
ALL RESPONDENTS	3.5	3.2	3.0	3.6	3.3

*Scale: 5 = to a very great extent
4 = to a great extent
3 = to some extent
2 = to a little extent
1 = not at all

The means for the four different role partners are shown in Table 3-5. This table shows very clearly that the major sources of communication are the agents' supervisors in the project and host organizations. Not surprisingly, the communication with local role partners is more often through informal, face-to-face mechanisms, than by telephone or in writing.

Influence was measured by asking the agent to rate the project director, project evaluator, host organization supervisor, and peers in the host organization, using a four-point scale ranging from "none" to "a great deal," on the following dimensions:

- How much influence (does the individual) have on the nature of your activities as an RDU linker/facilitator?
- How much influence (does the individual) have on the amount of time you allocate to various RDU related activities?
- How much feedback do you receive from (the individual) about how you are performing your job?

These items were summed to obtain a total influence score for each role partner, ranging from 3 to 12.

Means for each type of influence, and total influence, are shown in Table 3-6. This table indicates that project directors have the strongest influence over agents, and that this influence is centered in the area of determining the nature of the field agents' activities.

Analysis and Findings: Training. As noted, Table 3-4 indicated no significant differences in the general content of training by project. This finding, which is discussed in greater detail in Spencer and Louis (1980), occurred despite the attempts by each project to design a training program that was tailored to its specific program demands and needs. The development of tailored, relevant training proved to be extremely difficult, as is well documented by the case following this chapter.

It is interesting to note that most projects stressed information about project administration and provided little information about the knowledge base. As we saw in Chapter 2, the agent role involved a great deal of reporting, in part because agents were embedded in a demonstration project which had a substantial research component. However, one of the major mechanisms utilized by the managers of dispersed organizations for

Table 3-5

MEAN FREQUENCY OF INTERACTION IN FACE-TO-FACE, TELEPHONE AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION BY VARIOUS ROLE PARTNERS

Role Partner	Mean Frequency of Interaction		
	Face-to-Face*	Telephone*	Written*
Project Director	1.4	1.8	1.6
Project Evaluator	1.0	1.0	1.2
Host Supervisor	3.1	1.4	1.1
Others in Similar Roles	2.3	1.4	0.8

*Scale:

4 = Daily
3 = Weekly
2 = Less than weekly, but at least once a month
1 = Less than once a month
0 = Never

Table 3-6

MEAN LEVEL OF FEEDBACK AND DEGREE OF INFLUENCE OVER ACTIVITIES AND TIME ALLOCATION BY VARIOUS ROLE PARTNERS

Role Partner	Mean Level of Feedback*	Mean Influence Over Activities*	Mean Influence Over Time*	Total Influence** Mean	S.D.
Project Director	2.3	3.0	2.3	7.6	2.9
Project Evaluator	1.8	2.2	1.9	6.5	2.1
Host Supervisor	2.4	2.5	2.5	7.3	2.6
Others in Similar Roles	1.8	1.7	1.6	5.0	2.4

*Scale
1 = None
2 = A Little
3 = Moderate
4 = A Great Deal

**The index was computed by adding scores on feedback, influence over behavior and influence over time. The possible range of scores is from 3 to 12.

increasing the visibility of field-based staff is to institute complex reporting systems (see Louis and Sieber, 1979). Instruction in these reporting systems, thus, constituted a major component of what was training, although it did not necessarily contribute to the agents' acquisition of the skills needed in the boundary-spanning role.

Regrettably, the relatively lower levels of training in the use of the knowledge base proved frustrating for many of the agents. Agents developed relationships with clients under the expectation that there would be a wealth of R&D resources to apply to any problems that were identified at the site. In many cases this turned out to be untrue, and agents, who were not always content experts, often felt frustrated with their lack of access to appropriate materials for their clients (see also Yin et al., 1980, and Louis and Rosenblum, 1981). This issue is addressed to some degree in the cases presented in Chapters 4, 6 and 8.

The results of both a canonical correlation and a set of Pearson correlations between training variables and job-related attitudes and role conflict suggest that the training programs that were designed by the central projects had only modest impact upon the agent's job-related attitudes. The canonical correlation procedure yielded no significant correlations, while an analysis of individual bi-variate correlations (Table 3-7) locates some scattered significant relationships between training variables (total amount and usefulness) and the agents' sense of efficacy. Oddly, however, these correlations are negative ($r = -.28$, and $r = -.50$). We might interpret this an an example of how formal training tends to be selectively effective: agents who had a high sense of efficacy may have been less impressed by the relatively simple training tools and experiences that were provided to them. Agents who felt less sure of what they were doing were more grateful for the information and clarification that were derived through training sessions.

In addition, the amount of training that the agents received was associated with slightly higher job satisfaction, and lower levels of reported role conflict, although it has no relationship with inferred role conflict. Somewhat surprisingly, however, the perceived usefulness of the training had no relationship to job satisfaction. This finding suggests that the provision of training is seen by role occupants as a sign of the organization's desire to attend to their needs--the gesture may be appreciated even when the content is not always "on target."

Table 3-7

SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS OF VARIOUS TRAINING VARIABLES, WITH JOB-RELATED ATTITUDES AND ROLE CONFLICT

Training Variables	Sense of Efficacy	Job Satisfaction	Inferred Role Conflict	Reported Role Conflict
Amount Received	-.28**	.21*		-46**
Usefulness	-.50**			
Timeliness				
Adequacy of Amount				

*Significant at the .10 level.

**Significant at the .05 level.

Training may also have been indirectly useful to agents. In open-ended interviews, agents tended to down-rate the usefulness of training because of its limited immediate applicability to client relationships, and its limited usefulness in helping them to deal with specific aspects of the provision of assistance. However, both agents and project directors said that perhaps the most effective training was that which focused on more general aspects of the organizational change process, and on role clarification, and therefore opened up a variety of options for roles that agents could play on site.

Training from the project, particularly where it focused on role clarification (see, for example, Chapter 4), may also have helped the agent most specifically in reducing role conflict with the host supervisor. Agents could more clearly define project expectations to their local colleagues, and thus reduce tension over the differences between what they did and what others in their host organization did. However, more training is associated with more frequent interaction with the project director, and as will be discussed below, increased contact between the project director and the agent invariably increased role conflict. In sum, training can have the immediate effect of suppressing role conflict with some role partners, but exacerbating it with others--those who are seeking greater influence through the training.

Overall, we may conclude that training did not appear to consistently improve field agents' attitudes about their jobs. Additional analysis reported in Spencer and Louis (1980) also suggests that training has limited impacts upon agent behavior.

Analysis and Findings: Project Support Systems. A canonical correlation between job-related attitudes and the project support variables--including influence and frequency of interaction--was insignificant. However, several individual correlations suggest that support structures at the project level may have greater impacts upon the agents than training procedures.

First, an analysis of variance indicates that perceived influence and supportive interaction from the project director and project evaluator vary significantly by project (see Table 3-8). The Pennsylvania project, which emphasized field contacts between the project staff and the field agents, consistently ranked highest on support and influence. The Michigan project, in contrast, had a divided project leadership that was unable to sustain communications with their very part-time agents during most of the

Table 3-8

MEAN INFLUENCE AND SUPPORT SCORES FOR VARIOUS ROLE PARTNERS BY PROJECT

	Influence**				Support***			
	Project Director	Evaluator	Host Supervisor	Other Staff	Project Director	Project Evaluator	Host Supervisor	Other Staff
All Respondents	7.6	6.5	7.3	5.0	4.6	3.4	5.0	4.5
RDU PROJECT*								
NRC	9.3	7.0	5.5	3.0	7.0	5.0	4.5	3.2
Pennsylvania	10.0	10.0	7.5	6.0	7.0	6.5	6.5	6.0
Network	7.8	5.8	8.6	6.7	3.5	2.2	4.8	4.1
Georgia	9.0	7.3	9.5	5.8	6.3	3.8	4.3	4.6
Florida	7.8	6.2	7.5	5.9	5.9	2.8	5.6	5.2
NEA	7.3	7.1	6.3	4.8	4.1	3.1	4.6	4.2
Michigan	6.2	5.3	7.3	4.5	3.6	2.6	3.5	2.6
Significance of the Differences	.04	.03	.10	.22	.001	.001	.36	.57

*Projects are listed in descending order by percentage time commitment to RDU.
**Scale ranges from 3 to 12.
***Scale ranges from 1 to 12.

project. Not surprisingly, Michigan ranks consistently low on these measures. Thus, there is some evidence to suggest that the agents' perceptions of support and influence are a function of organizational design and the amount of support and influence actually provided.

Second, while an examination of correlation coefficients shows few significant relationships for project support and influence variables as a whole, project director influence and support are associated with several of the outcome measures (Table 3-9). Again, however, some of the results are counterintuitive. On the one hand, support from the project director is negatively related to sense of efficacy ($r = -.25$) and positively related to both measures of role conflict--reported ($r = .22$) and inferred ($r = .33$). Perceived influence of the project director over the role behavior of the agent is, on the other hand, positively associated with sense of efficacy ($r = .25$), although it is also positively associated with reported role conflict ($r = .61$).

The finding that support from the project director and influence of the project director have opposite imacts on sense of efficacy deserves some additional discussion, even though the correlation coefficients are rather small. We believe that this finding stems largely from the presence of two "deviant case" projects in the area of support. The project with the highest average support score (NRC) was also one in which the demands for documentation and information from the central office were particularly high--what was designed as a support system ended up as a burden, and further contributed to the generally low sense of efficacy in this project (see Rosenblum and Louis, 1981, for greater detail). On the other hand, the NETWORK, which employed agents with an exceptionally high sense of efficacy, had the lowest level of project director support. This was true because the project included a specific role for a "linker support specialist," who took responsibility for most of the communication with agents. In sum, we believe that the negative relationship between project director support and agent sense of efficacy is explained largely by these two projects.

Many of the measures of support and influence are highly associated with features of job design (see Table 3-10). For example, the percentage of time devoted to RDU is positively related to levels of supportive interaction from all role partners, both marginality and the percentage of time committed are positively related to influence from peers in the host organization but

Table 3-9

SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS BETWEEN MEASURES OF SUPPORT AND INFLUENCE AND JOB-RELATED ATTITUDES

Measure of Influence or Support	Sense of Efficacy	Job Satisfaction	Inferred Role Conflict	Reported Role Conflict
Influence/Director	.25*			.61**
Support/Director	-.25*		.33**	.22*
Influence/Evaluator				
Support/Evaluator				
Influence/Host Supervisor				
Support/Host Supervisor			-.35**	
Influence/Other Host Staff			-.22*	
Support/Other Host Staff				

*Significant at the .10 level

**Significant at the .05 level

Table 3-10

SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS BETWEEN MEASURES OF SUPPORT AND INFLUENCE AND JOB DESIGN

Measure of Influence or Support	Percentage RDU	Formalization	Marginality
Influence/Director	-.40**	.61**	-.34**
Support/Director	.48**	.24*	
Influence/Evaluator		.31**	
Support/Evaluator	.39**		.30**
Influence/Host Supervisor			.42**
Support/Host Supervisor	.29**		
Influence/Other Host Staff	.43**		.37**
Support/Other Host Staff	.28**	.54**	.28*

*Significant at the .10 level.

**Significant at the .05 level.

negatively related to influence from the project director; and formalization of the role is positively related to influence from the project director and project evaluator. There are other scattered relationships as well.

It seems that (1) support and influence are not independent of job design (Table 3-10), and (2) flow of communication and support from the central office staff will not necessarily diminish job stress for agents (Table 3-9). In fact, they may serve to increase some forms of tension, particularly role conflict.

This finding indicates that it is difficult to solve the dilemmas inherent in managing the dispersed organization, which revolve largely around the problems of developing effective communication and support systems for dispersed field staff. Leaving agents alone will, as Louis and Sieber (1979) have pointed out, lead to generally unacceptable levels of local adaptation in agent behavior and also to high levels of anxiety among agents who want some affiliation with their funding organization. On the other hand, increasing communication and influence may increase role conflict, largely because the expectations of the project staff are unlikely to be in complete accord with the expectations of others with whom the agent must interact. Although agents who are more influenced by project directors feel slightly more efficacious, they are not more satisfied with their jobs. This finding suggests that role conflict is an inevitable component of the agent role, at least where there is some need to maintain centralized control over the agent's behavior.

Can the "problem" of managing multiple sources of influence over the role behavior of field agents be overcome through job design? It might be argued, for example, that agents who spend a larger percentage of their time in the field agent role (and concomitantly, a smaller percentage of their time in other host organization activities) are more likely to be influenced by the project director, and less likely to be influenced by a host organization supervisor or local colleague.

In fact, Table 3-10 reveals that, while the support of both project director and project evaluator increases as the agent spends more time in the RDU role, the level of project director influence <u>decreases</u> and that of local colleagues <u>increases</u>. Apparently, the more time an agent spends in the field agent role, the more frequently he turns to nearby colleagues for advice. As others become involved as influences on the field agent's behavior, the influence of central project staff may be diminished.

While increases in local influence may make the managers of dispersed field agents uneasy (see the case studies in Louis and Rosenblum, 1981), they do have the result of modestly decreasing the level of inferred role conflict. Influence of colleagues in the host organization is negatively related with inferred role conflict ($r = -.22$), and support/communication from the host supervisor is also negatively related ($r = -.35$).

Support from the host organization may also have a more indirect effect on job-related attitudes of the field agent. To foreshadow the analysis in Chapter 7, agents who have more interaction with their host supervisor and who are highly influenced by the supervisor and others in the host agencies are more likely to report high levels of professional development activities ($r = .26$, $r = .38$). Thus, agents who are firmly embedded in a local support system may find that it has a more direct effect on their overall professional growth, even if it does not directly affect the ways in which they feel about their field agent role.

In summary, the analysis presented in this section suggests that neither training nor support procedures are consistently associated with the reduction of job stress and increase in sense of efficacy. We find no evidence that limited, occasional training procedures such as those used in RDU (which were, if anything, more intensive than those typically provided to educational field agents) have a significant effect on job-related attitudes. There is at least some indication that the support system may be of greater importance; however, the analysis highlights one of the major management dilemmas for dispersed organizations--the central office is often held accountable for the behavior of field agents, but in many cases it has less influence than other more proximate role partners.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have examined the support provided by our data for the use of three common managerial strategies for reducing job-related stress in field-based personnel. We found that, with the exception of "teaching experience," individual demographic characteristics and self-reported skills do not discriminate systematically between lower and higher job stress for agents. This suggests that selection strategy must take into consideration other screening criteria, and may still be only marginally effective as a means for reducing job stress. We found, however, that a number of job design

characteristics are related to some forms of job stress. Both formalization and marginality may affect the stress that accompanies role conflict, for example, the former increases it while the latter reduces it. Finally, there is some evidence that a communication and feedback system may have an effect on job-related attitudes. More specifically, increasing influence from the project director may increase stress, while increasing support from the host organization may reduce it. While the findings presented in this section are not overwhelming, they do suggest that attention to the design and management of field agent roles should not be neglected in the development of dissemination networks.

Table 3-11

CORRELATION MATRIX FOR VARIABLES USED IN CHAPTER V

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
1. Sense of Efficacy																								
2. Job Satisfaction	-.01																							
3. Inferred Role Conflict	-.10	.17																						
4. Reported Role Conflict	.07	-.09	.50**																					
5. Marginality (Project)	-.25*	.26*	.22	-.31**																				
6. Innovativeness	.12	-.25*	-.05	.11	-.42*																			
7. Consolidation Skills	-.09	.05	-.14	-.26*	-.20	.20																		
8. Use of Power Skills	-.09	.06	-.13	-.23*	-.21	.17	.86**																	
9. Change Skills	.09	-.04	.15	.05	.05	.13	.11	.19																
10. Sex of Agent	.05	-.19	-.13	.10	-.00	.20**	-.05	-.26**	-.09															
11. Teaching Experience	-.16	-.11	-.32**	-.23*	.10	.02	.27**	.28**	-.04	-.11														
12. Age	.16	.07	-.38**	-.13	-.09	.08	.25*	.24*	-.05	.05	.54**													
13. Influence-- P D	.25*	.01	.15	.61**	-.34**	.10	-.15	-.24*	.13	.07	-.13**	-.26												
14. Influence-- Evaluator	.04	.05	-.17	.01	.08	.09	-.08	-.11	.01	-.05	.02	.09	.35**											
15. Influence-- Supervisor	.07	.04	.15	-.01	.42**	-.14	.04	-.05	-.15	.22	-.22*	-.09	.07	-.09										
16. Influ.--Others In "Host"	.02	-.01	-.22*	-.04	.37**	-.20	-.08	-.18	-.11	.20	.23*	.36**	.06	.08	.46**									
17. Role Formalization	.19	.15	.04	.40**	-.11	-.06	-.04	-.04	.03	-.16	-.30**	-.10	.61**	.31**	.13	.06								
18. Percentage Time RDU	.19	-.02	-.01	-.40**	.60**	-.03	.04	-.06	-.05	.19	.16	.16	-.40**	.09	.20	.13	-.26*							
19. Training Received	-.28**	.21*	-.07	-.46**	.27*	-.12	.15	.23*	-.13	-.26*	.02	-.14	-.23*	.14	-.05	-.28*	.04	.09						
20. Usefulness of Training	-.50**	.09	-.09	-.21	.20	-.01	-.01	.04	-.18	.09	.10	-.07	-.25*	.03	-.20	-.07	-.17	.14	.70					
21. Support-- Director	-.25*	-.09	.33**	.22*	.22	.22*	.01	-.07	.11	.32**	.00	.04	.28**	.20	.05	.24*	-.07	.48**	-.43**	-.06				
22. Support-- Evaluator	-.12	-.02	.11	.05	.30**	.01	-.23*	-.33	-.08	.12	-.00	.08	.10	.21	-.05	.23*	.02	.39**	-.07	.42**	.50**			
23. Support-Superv. In Host	.06	.05	-.35**	-.19	.00	.02	-.12	-.19	-.12	.20	-.01	.03	.22	.29**	-.08	.17	.19	.29**	-.02	-.06**	.12	.23*		
24. Support-Others In Host	.00	.02	-.07	-.08	.28*	.03	.08	.16	-.29*	-.15	-.08	.00	.10	.27**	.26*	.06	.54**	.28*	.19	-.15	-.09	-.02	.50**	

*Significant at the .10 level.

**Significant at the .05 level.

CHAPTER NOTES

1. We do not use the term marginality in its psychological or social psychological sense, as applied to individuals who are less committed to the core values, norms, and activities of the group. Marginality can also refer to the characteristics of organizational or other social roles. Marginality in this sense can be affected by organizational choice. For example, one can locate field agents within school districts or in organizations outside of a district. This design feature clearly affects the agents' affiliation with the district.

2. Two other items that were intended to form a part of this scale were eliminated because they resulted in reduced standardized alphas. These were: "I can learn new skills" and "It has good chances for getting ahead."

3. We attempted to measure role perceptions of clients using several techniques. First, we attempted to code interviews with clients using the role dimensions included in the inferred role conflict scale. This proved to be impossible because the interviews were not adequately directed at the details of client expectations for field agents. Second, we attempted to measure distinct differences in client assessments of field agent performance in a survey, but found that clients did not distinguish greatly between field agent performance on one set of activities or roles as opposed to another. In sum, client reactions to field agent roles are rather diffuse, and they are not able to easily classify role expectations for these actors.

4. Reported and inferred role conflict are correlated with each other ($r = .30$, significant at the .05 level). However, the correlation is not exceptionally high, indicating that these are two rather different constructs. We believe that they are different because individuals are likely to feel the same levels of actual discrepancies in expectations (inferred conflict) to different degrees. However, it is important to note that the two measures of role conflict behave quite similarly with respect to other variables in the analysis. That is, even where both variables are not significantly correlated with a third variable, the direction of the relationship tends to be similar. In addition, there are no instances of reported and inferred role conflict

having opposite relationships with a third variable. Thus, unlike some other social-psychological properties--such as prejudice--reported and inferred role conflict may be thought of as tapping similar dimensions of the individual's job-related attitudes.

5. It might be pointed out that the data used in this analysis are weak in some respects (e.g., the agents' skills are measured by self-report, rather than objective measures or observation). Nevertheless, the characteristics examined make sense from a policy or management perspective. Unless individual characteristics can be easily identified through non-intrusive interview techniques, they may not be useful in selecting educational field agents. The practical difficulty of selecting agents for particular characteristics was well demonstrated in the RDU project, in which the project directors typically had much less control than they would have liked over who was hired to fill the agent roles. In most cases, the hiring decision was made within the agency in which the agent was housed. Agents were typically chosen for reasons that had little to do with anticipated agent success, such as availability.

6. In general the directors of dispersed field staff have little influence over the marginality that exists between host organization and school. This will be more extensively influenced by factors such as the amount of influence the site has over the agent, the hospitality of the host, and its reputation among client schools. Even in the case of project marginality, design influence will be largely indirect. The case presented in Chapter 4 deals extensively with the ways in which one project attempted to design structures to reduce marginality.

CHAPTER 4

REDUCING JOB STRESS AT A DISTANCE: A CASE

The NETWORK, an independent technical assistance agency located in Andover, Massachusetts, has had a long history of thinking about how best to link schools with knowledge about improved practices. In the course of designing and implementing the RDU project, the NETWORK believed that it had the opportunity to implement its ideal strategy for school change. In the words of the executive director, RDU would "bring it all together--field agents, long-term involvement, complex innovations, problem solving, capacity building." The RDU project was viewed as building both upon the NETWORK's overall organizational mission and upon previous federally funded linking programs the agency had carried out in recent years. In addition, it presented the NETWORK with the opportunity to demonstrate its ability to coordinate a nationwide network of field agents and to provide them with appropriate resources to carry out their work. This case presents the story of how the NETWORK attempted to implement a system for supporting, training, coordinating and monitoring six field agents who were located at distant points throughout the United States, and how the NETWORK's expectations for creating centralized approaches to managing the agents came to founder upon the realities of long-distance communication.

According to David Crandall, the NETWORK's director since 1969, an organization with integrity must have a mission. The mission of the NETWORK, which is shared by its unusually committed staff, revolves around the following beliefs:

- that the power for change rests within the people who are to be changed;
- that schools can become more humane environments; and
- that the curriculum needs constant revision, and can be reformed rather handily when resources are used effectively.

Over the years the NETWORK has been involved with a variety of programs that relate to this mission and reflect the belief structure of the organization. At the center of each of these efforts was a person playing a pivotal role--that of acting as an external consultant to the school and coordinating a variety of resources to assist the school in changing.

In each of the programs, however, one or more components of Crandall's strategy for changing schools was missing. In one, for example, the field agents placed limited emphasis on the use of outside resources for curriculum change; in another, the emphasis on outside resources was strong, but the problem-solving process was externally imposed. In the most important of the NETWORK's recent activities--involvement in a State Facilitator project of the National Diffusion Network--the emphasis on "mass marketing" and achieving many adoptions of NDN products frustrated attempts to engage in building long-term capacity for change.

While the Request for Proposals to develop RDU projects did not specifically mention the role of field agent, it is not surprising that the NETWORK staff saw this as an opportunity to implement their idealized strategy of the external coordinator/consultant role. Thus, the proposal and design for the project featured field agents--called "linkers" or "linking agents"--as the key strategic intervention, and placed great emphasis upon the design and management of "linker support systems" to ensure that these individuals would function most effectively in their jobs.

In fact, the NETWORK did devote the bulk of its management resources toward the implementation of the linker support system during the three-year RDU project. In many ways, they were extremely successful, but the path to success was not an easy one for either the project or the linkers. The purpose of this chapter is, therefore, to present some of the dilemmas associated with the relationship between a central office and dispersed field agents, and how this relationship affects the development of the field agent role.

Project Context

The basic organization of the NETWORK's project was quite simple. The NETWORK served as a prime contractor, coordinating the activities of six field agents. One of these was housed at the NETWORK; the other five, in agencies located in five different states. Each of the agencies involved in the project was an organization that had a reputation for its involvement in national or regional dissemination activities. Moreover, each agency was selected because of previous personal ties with the NETWORK's executive director, in order that it would work well with the NETWORK, despite distances involved. The five subcontracting agencies that employed field agents for the project were:

- The Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, in San Francisco, one of twelve regional laboratories and centers sponsored by NIE;
- The Educational Resources Center (ERC) of the Area Cooperative Education Service (ACES) of New Haven, Connecticut, an intermediate service agency that provides contract services to schools in Connecticut, basically in the area of information;
- Project Link in the Kansas Educational Diffusion/Dissemination System (KEDDS), housed in the Wichita Public Schools, but a soft-money organization involved in state-wide dissemination projects;
- The Exchange at the Minneapolis Public Schools/University of Minnesota Teacher Center;
- The federal grants office of the Yakima, Washington Public Schools, a unit which housed a variety of categorical grant programs for the state of Washington, including the Washington State Facilitator Project.

The design of the project called for two key roles to be filled within each agency. Together these two roles were equal to one full-time equivalent staff member.

A linking agent working at or near full-time was to be the primary manager of the change process at the school level. This linking agent would connect an average of four target schools in the state with a pool of R&D based packaged curriculum innovations in reading which were selected and documented by the NETWORK staff. Working on site, the linker would facilitate each school's efforts to improve its curriculum. To this end, the linker was to form a school decision-making group, take this group through a specified problem-solving process to identify curricular needs in reading, and help it select and adopt an R&D product from the pool of 41 approved innovative programs. Following program adoption, the linking agent was to provide adopting teachers with implementation assistance and resources. The linking agent would also carry out documentation reporting as required and offer practical help and support to other linking agents.

In addition, a formally designated agency supervisor was to serve in a part-time capacity (10-20% time) monitoring and supporting the work of the linking agent. The supervisors also served as members of a project Advisory Panel, which had responsibilities for overall project planning.

To coordinate and monitor linking agent behaviors and performance across all agencies, several roles were established within the prime contractor's office at the NETWORK. These included:

- A linking agent training and documentation coordinator, who was responsible for designing and conducting linker training, for monitoring weekly linker reports and for using these reports to assist linkers in developing each school-level intervention strategy. (The title of this role was later changed to linking agent support specialist.)
- An evaluation coordinator, who was to design all project evaluation instruments, train linkers and target school personnel in the use of these instrumehts, and monitor the collection and interpretation of data. Project documentation was to be conducted primarily by linking agents and was intended to provide information for linker monitoring and support.
- A resource/data management coordinator, who was to consolidate information about the products and furnish linkers with information to help them and schools assess each of the programs available for adoption.

The only other significant role in the central office of the project was that of the project director, who had little direct responsibility for supervising or supporting linkers. Given the role structure of the project and the description of responsibilities for each of these roles, the centrality of the linker role is clear.

Linking Agents: Thumbnail Sketches

Typically, the NETWORK uses intensive and rather formalized selection procedures in order to ensure that new staff members share the organizational mission and are personally compatible with the work styles of the NETWORK. In the case of the critical new project, however, the NETWORK had no control over who would occupy the strategic role of linker. Instead, the agency supervisors had complete autonomy in choosing staff for the linking agent positions. In four cases the linker was chosen from staff who were already working within the subcontracting organizations. In the other, new hiring was done, but even here the central project office had no input into the decisions. Despite these apparently unpropitious circumstances, the linkers were unusually well prepared to assume the job, as almost all of them had previously served as field agents or facilitators. The linkers had the following backgrounds:

- Debbie Bennett[1] was hired specifically for the project by the Far West Educational Laboratory. Her Ph.D. was in education, with an emphasis upon organization development in schools. She also had previous experience in classroom teaching and curriculum development, and had consulted with a number of agencies and schools to develop programs in humanistic education and equal educational opportunity.

- Jim D'Annunzio joined the Educational Resource Center in Connecticut less than a year before the project started, and had worked during that time as a consultant for the NDN State Facilitator project. His role was that of a facilitator for schools adopting early childhood education projects. Dr. D'Annunzio's background included several years of classroom teaching, two principalships, work as a specialist in a district central office, and a variety of research and project management positions in the Connecticut State Department of Education.[2]

- John Connell joined the KEDDS/Link agency in 1971 and had worked in almost every dissemination and diffusion program in Kansas since that time. Prior to 1971, he had accumulated experience as a teacher, a curriculum coordinator, and a consultant, and had served extensively on the Kansas NEA, including a term as the president.

- Laura Hanes, the Massachusetts agent, began her employment at the NETWORK as a field agent for the NDN state facilitator project and also contributed to another Office of Education-funded diffusion project, known as the Management Collaborative. Prior to joining the NETWORK she had held a number of management and field work positions for the Girl Scouts, and had also served as a VISTA volunteer and an independent consultant. In addition, she had accumulated some more formal training in group process and organization development skills as part of her previous work.

- Carla Jones was one of the youngest of the NETWORK agents, with five years of classroom teaching experience and only a year of experience working at the EXCHANGE, where she was involved with the Teacher Center's paraprofessional training program. In this capacity, however, she had reviewed and used a variety of materials produced by the Northwest Regional Laboratory for field agent training--Research Utilization Problem Solving (RUPS), Preparing Educational Training Consultants (PETC), and others. Thus, she brought with her some formal training relevant to the new role.

- Bonnie Vernier had served as a dissemination specialist for the Washington NDN State Facilitator project for a year before she became a linking agent in the new NETWORK project. Bonnie had experience in managing and coordinating schools' innovations, having served as a coordinator for a Title III project for gifted children in the Yakima school district. She also had three years of experience as a classroom teacher.

As the project director of the NETWORK's RDU project has commented:

> Many ingredients critical for effective linking and school-based change support--knowledge of schools and how they work, skills and experience working with people to solve problems, understanding of exemplary programs...and familiarity with the diffusion process--were present in the group of linking agents.
>
> (Harris and Harris, 1977)

The Planned Linker Support System

The NETWORK's design for a linker support system was based on existing research knowledge about the tensions inherent in a field or extension agent role, and also upon the management experience that was accumulating at the NETWORK:

> (We) predicted that the role being prescribed for the Linking Agent...was one which would result in marginality with the client: the Linking Agent would be an external consultant with intimate knowledge of the system. Furthermore, it has been fairly well established that for most people job satisfaction is inversely related to marginality: as marginality increases, job satisfaction decreases, and with it, often, job effectiveness.
>
> (Harris and Harris, 1977)

The design of the linker support system involved attention to the linkers' need for affective support to reduce this sense of marginality, but it also included a significant component of instrumental support--activities, information and assistance to help them perform their jobs more effectively. The linkers' supervisors in their own agencies were supposed to be the primary source of affective support:

> (These) agencies (had) the experience and the resources to provide a nurturant environment--one which could meet many of the needs necessarily frustrated by the social distance required of the Linking Agent in the Client setting.
>
> (Harris and Harris, 1977)

The NETWORK, on the other hand, seemed to the executive director to be the appropriate locus of instrumental support, and it was assumed that all formal training and information assistance would be provided centrally. The design called for a number of structures and activities to carry out this objective:

- Linking agent meetings, to be held semi-annually for three to five days. The first of these meetings, the "joining up workshop," focused primarily on orientation to the project and a discussion of basic role expectation, in addition to training in such administrative details as reporting. The first and second workshops also devoted time to diagnosing linking agent needs, and providing training in consultation skills, curriculum analysis and the field of reading instruction. The content and methods of training were designed by the NETWORK staff. The later meetings focused less on formal training than on clarifying the linking agent's role.

- Linking Agent Support Specialist. In addition to coordinating the semi-annual meetings, this individual was expected to serve as a personal resource for the linkers, by offering technical assistance on site, and individualized assistance by phone. The support specialist conducted "circuit rides" to each linker twice a year, which included going with the linker to school sites. He also initiated calls on a regular basis, and addressed issues regarding linker activities on site which came up in the formal reporting systems.

- The Linking Agent Tool Kit was not part of the original design, but emerged toward the end of the first year as a support tool. This consisted of articles and other written products related to linker and client activities in the problem-solving process. In essence, it was a mini-textbook of reprints.

- Assistance with the resource pool. The pool of acceptable resources for schools to adopt was limited to 41 federally funded curriculum products. The resource coordinator in the NETWORK documented each of these products, and created a descriptor system to allow linkers to access those that would be appropriate for their client schools. In addition, the resource coordinator accumulated additional information and resources that could be used to make decisions about appropriate adoptions.

The Linker Support System in Operation

Although the attempt at training began as early as the "joining up workshop" the NETWORK staff quickly learned that there was little consensus as to what linker training should include, and linker training was not as easy or straightforward (or, they later decided, as critical) as had been initially thought. Nor were the linkers as receptive to the attempts at training as the NETWORK staff had expected.

In part this was so because of the "deficit" approach to training that characterized the NETWORK's initial efforts. The NETWORK's assumption was that the linkers did not have the skills that were needed, and they needed to be taught those skills. This attitude was revealed most clearly in the statement by the project director that he had originally viewed the provision of time for sharing experiences between linkers only as the opportunity for "pooling ignorance." Linkers--particularly the experienced ones--resented this assumption.

The initial training strategies designed by the NETWORK emphasized peer training by NETWORK employees who had served as field agents in other projects. Before the formal skills sessions were held, NETWORK staff members both identified training needs (on the basis of their past experience) and determined the format and presentation. Ironically, while the NETWORK's prescribed problem-solving process for the schools involved participatory approaches to problem identification and solution selection, their design of linker training did not. Unfortunately, the RDU linkers did not necessarily view the NETWORK staff as the legitimate providers of the training. Nor did they look favorably on the planned "buddy system," whereby NETWORK linkers who were physically distant from one another would nevertheless be paired. In response to linking agent reactions, the focus of the semi-annual meetings shifted in 1977 from training to planning and peer support, despite the project director's lingering concern about sharing among linking agents.

In addition, as it turned out, the NETWORK staff began to discover that the linking agents were having serious problems with the definition of their role. This was something that the NETWORK had never previously encountered in training and supporting field staff, largely because of the pervasiveness of Crandall's expectations about organizational intervention and change in the value system of the NETWORK. In addition, the NETWORK usually relied on informal training and consultation between new and experienced staff members to decide how ambiguous or new situations should be handled. The far-flung RDU agents, however, simply did not know what the NETWORK expected of them and found it hard to get answers from anyone. Even the most experienced and independent complained about the ambiguity of expectations.

Role ambiguity and the lack of close personal ties between the linkers led, according to the project director, to another problem. He speculated that, because linkers did not know what was expected of them or by what standards they would be judged, they remained insecure and competitive in group situations for most of the life of the project. The risk of looking bad in training activities with their peers may have represented still another burden on top of an already demanding professional experience. The fact that the linkers believed that the project director was making covert judgments about their performance perhaps added to their unwillingness to open up in NETWORK-directed group training situations.[3] Both the linkers' supervisors and NETWORK staff members observed that linking agents needed and wanted supervision and feedback, yet they reacted negatively when this came from the central office.

As a result of the above conditions, the project leadership began to put together the 16-step definition of linking agent/school milestones, and these became the focus of the next few semi-annual meetings of the linking agents (and the separately-held meetings of their supervisors). The need to develop the milestones was at that time, however, viewed as a side activity and not a key component of linker training or management procedures.

In general, the attempts of the NETWORK to provide formal training to linkers continued to prove disappointing and were both resisted and resented on the part of linking agents and their supervisors. Neither group appeared to view NETWORK staff as appropriate providers of such training, both because it was unilaterally planned and because NETWORK staff, presumably peers in this linkage system, were not viewed as more "expert" in this regard than the others. The NETWORK staff, on the other hand, clung to their belief that they had (or could easily develop) the capacity to provide appropriate training.

This implicit conflict between the goals of the NETWORK and the linkers' actual experiences gradually shifted over the first year, so that by January of 1978, a year and a half into the project, the project director had already made a decision to stress support and not training at the semi-annual meetings. This change involved substantial reallocation of resources within the project, including the development of the Linker Tool Kit, which was indexed to the 16 milestones for linking agent/school relationships. By the end of the project, the project director claimed that a major organizational

lesson that he had learned was that linkers needed role clarification more than training. Whether or not this observation is accurate, it is clear that the linkers were enormously disappointed with this aspect of the project and, as a group, gave the NETWORK's training program the lowest average rating of any of the seven RDU projects (Spencer and Louis, 1980).

The support component of the centralized linker management system was no less turbulent but, in the end, far more successful. The support services were utilized, but were deemed inadequate. Linkers complained about almost every aspect of the formal structure that the NETWORK designed. Several of the linkers, for example, reported that the "circuit rides" of the linker support specialist were burdensome and useless, and did not provide timely assistance with problems that occurred at the school site. They also complained that they did not need counseling (the background of the support specialist), but immediate assistance with content-related questions about reading.

In addition, the role of support specialist was viewed as a barrier to gaining direct access to other human resources within the NETWORK. The support specialist was usually the linkers' point of first and last contact, and he did not broker other resources for them. Several of the linking agents used their own budgets to hire consultants, ostensibly for the school, but also to help them solve role problems that they were encountering. In addition, as linkers grew to know each other better, they began to seek each other out rather than calling up the central office, which seemed out of touch with their immediate, practical needs. By the end of the second year of the project, other linkers outstripped the central office as the most important source of assistance with the process aspects of their role (Spencer and Louis, 1980). The support specialist actively supported this trend rather than fighting it, and by the end of the project it seemed that locally initiated and locally provided assistance predominated.

An unanticipated side effect of the attempt to provide centralized support was an extremely burdensome reporting system. The logic of the NETWORK strategy was that, if the organization was going to provide timely assistance with site-related problems, it would need to know what the agents were doing. Thus, for each contact that the agents had with clients, they were required to fill out an extensive form, documenting preplanning activities, what occurred, and plans for followup. This documentation was required for each

client contact, including telephone calls. While some agents valued this reporting system as a tool for managing their own activities, most found it intolerable. More importantly, the forms seemed to disappear inside the NETWORK--they did not result in prompt feedback, even when they clearly included requests for support. The NETWORK admitted its inability to use a reporting system as a source for diagnosing linking agent needs, and reduced the burden to monthly reporting forms by the middle of the project.

Another support issue that began to surface early in the program was the poor articulation of the linker supervisor role. Interviews with linkers and linker supervisors indicate that neither really understood what their relationship should be like. In addition, there was considerable variability in the nature of the relationship, ranging from almost daily informal contact and consultation on most issues of strategy, to other situations in which formal contact occurred only when the linking agent believed that a problem might arise at the site that could have implications for the image of the agency. Thus, while some linkers felt very attached to their home agencies, others were more insecure. In one case, the linker reported that she was so isolated that she rarely had any contact with other staff members in the agency, outside of rare social chats with her supervisor if they chanced to meet in the halls. By the end of the project, the linkers had typically managed to create a working relationship with the organization, and in all cases they stayed on staff; five moved into new field agent or consultant positions. However, when they most needed the support--early in the project--it was not always clear that they had it.

The support provided by the knowledge base was both valued and the cause of great tensions. The linkers found the assistance provided by the individual who managed the resource base extremely helpful, and valued her suggestions. On the other hand, they did not like the constraints of the small knowledge base, nor the unwillingness of the project to consider allowing schools to adopt alternative curriculum innovations, even where they were certified as valid and useful by some external evaluation procedure. In the end, their dislike of the knowledge base pool won out over their personal liking for the individual who had organized it, and they again began to look for knowledge resources elsewhere.

Perhaps one of the sources of support that was most highly valued by the linking agents--but which was not initially viewed as a source of support by the NETWORK--was the budgetary autonomy that was given to them. The discretion to utilize resources for the school without obtaining approval was perceived by many of the linking agents to be a key to their own ability to cope with role ambiguity, lack of skills in some instances, and even the need for professional development. Because the agents monitored their own budgets, they were able to determine whether a school would profit from a consultant other than themselves, for example. At the end of the project, a key NETWORK staff member reflected that they had deeply underestimated the ability of the linkers to make sensible choices in developing a support and professional development system. As a radical alternative to the centralized approach taken by the NETWORK, he posited that an effective linker support system might provide initial orientation and periodic group contacts, but allow linkers total discretion in purchasing training, consulting or other resources that they might need.

* * *

Epilogue

The design of the NETWORK's "linker support system" was premised on the assumption that, because the organization had a great deal of experience in successfully enacting the field agent or facilitator role, it could easily mount a centralized support system to provide for all of the instrumental and at least some of the affective needs of the widely dispersed agents in the RDU project.

The major issues that arose in implementing this design emerged from the ambiguity about what constituted "successful" behavior on the part of agents. Because the role was ambiguous and poorly defined, the central staff had difficulty in anticipating the needs of the field agents, and the agents had difficulty in relating the training and support activities to what they were doing--or thought they should be doing.

The problem of ambiguity was at least partially eliminated through the articulation of a job definition through the "linker milestones." However, even a well explicated job definition does not remove all of the "fuzziness" surrounding a marginal role like that of a field agent. Because the field

agents felt very distant from the central office, and also believed that the central office did not contain all of the resources that they needed to perform their jobs effectively, they increasingly turned to peers, their agency supervisors, and other sources of assistance that were perceived to be more responsible. As one staff member put it:

> Consortium planners envisioned the central office as the primary source of help for linkers. Linking agents would have preferred the central office to assist them to help themselves.

In addition to the role conflict that was engendered over the issue of locus of support, job-related ambiguity conditioned other types of role problems. The agents tended to believe that the project staff held unrealistic expectations of them--and also that they simultaneously did not value the agents' competence as professionals. This increased the tendency for agents to underreport "problems" or other issues in their work, and to devalue the reporting system. Overt conflict over the documentation expectations was one of the few areas where there was actually substantial disagreement over how the field agents should use their time.

Agent marginality was highly variable in the project. All of the agents felt distant from the central project, some were deeply embedded in their host agencies, while others genuinely felt that they belonged nowhere. While all of the agents were reasonably successful in providing assistance to the schools that they served (see Louis, Rosenblum and Molitor, 1981), the two agents who did not perceive firm support from their home agencies expressed more uncertainty about their job performance. One of these agents actually left to take another job in the same agency before the end of the project.

The implications that may be drawn from this case are several. First, and perhaps self-evidently, the only way to avoid dysfunctional role ambiguity is to negotiate a clear definition of the field agent role. Second, some marginality for dispersed staff located in other organizations is probably inevitable, even where extensive efforts are made to communicate. Third, role occupants in need of assistance are more likely to turn to their peers (who are not in a position to evaluate them) than to supervisors (who are), and this must be taken into consideration when designing a support system. Fourth, dispersed field agents are more likely to value feedback and supervision that is locally provided than that which is provided at a

distance, at least where the local supervisor is perceived as knowledgeable and involved. Fifth, the design of training and support programs for professional staff that do not involve some participation in needs identification and planning are unlikely to be well received, and may be viewed as patronizing and degrading. Finally, the provision of support and training to dispersed field personnel requires flexibility and adaptiveness in providing multiple sources of affective and instrumental assistance through multiple channels.

CHAPTER NOTES

1. Names of all linkers are pseudonyms.

2. Dr. D'Annunzio left the project after one year; his successor Rita Wolk was relatively young--in her late twenties. She came to the job through her previous work connections with Jim D'Annunzio, with whom she had worked in developing and evaluating early childhood education programs. She had no teaching experience.

3. The project director made some evaluative comments about the linkers to a group of external evaluators who visited the project in the beginning of the second year of operations. These got back to the linking agents, and made them extremely distrustful of the NETWORK staff for some time.

PART III

AGENTS AND CLIENTS

INTRODUCTION

In this section we will turn to a new question: how do field agents begin to negotiate and learn their role, and how do the school personnel whom they hope to serve affect the evolution of the role? In Chapter 5, we examine this question from one perspective, relying on agents' self-reports about their relationships with their clients, and the patterns of mutual interaction and influence, while in Chapter 6 we present a comparison between the observed behaviors of two agents within the same project, as they attempted to define their role by actually enacting it.

Chapter 5 reveals several relatively clear findings. First, while agents tend to view the injunction to "work through the administrative structure" as a component of a field-staff's ten commandments, patterns of high mutual influence between agent and local site administrators appear to increase the amount of role stress felt by agents. Involvement with administrators (who typically in the RDU program were not the ultimate intended users of agent information services) tended to increase the degree to which agents experienced role overload and multiple, incompatible responsibilities. Second, the degree to which agents perceived themselves to be marginal to the local schools is also associated with job stress. However, it has no relationship with indicators of the effectiveness of role performance. Like other findings presented in this volume, this suggests that job designs and local conditions that produce satisfied agents are not necessarily the same as those that produce effective on-the-job performance. Finally, there are relatively strong findings indicating that agents who are more conventional and "behind the scenes" in their presentation of self may be better equipped to develop effective relationships with clients.

The case summaries in Chapter 6 expand on this set of findings in several ways. In particular, they provide more details on how the ways in which agents present themselves to, and work with, administrators may affect the entire course of their work in a local setting. The case summaries indicate that it is not so much administrative authority, per se, that affects agent role performance. Rather, what is important is the negotiated role relationship and understandings reached between agent and administrator. Furthermore, the conflicting role expectations portrayed in these cases may

provide program managers with some sense of (1) how and when they might wish to intervene to ensure that participating client agencies understand the nature of the role that agents are intended to play, and (2) the degree to which these role conflicts are a function of the individual uncertainties of those who enter the agent role. The major point of Chapter 6 might be summarized in noting that effective role negotiation between field agents and client schools involves some accommodation of expectations and preferences on both sides: agents who choose to serve local interests fully will, in the end, feel greater stress than those who present their role more firmly..

CHAPTER 5

DEVELOPING ROLE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FIELD AGENTS AND CLIENTS

The purpose of this chapter is to examine survey data from educational field agents to determine how the quality of their relationships with schools and the attitudes which agents have about changing schools affect their success as catalysts for change. In this chapter we confine ourselves to the ways in which agents perceive their overall relationships with schools, rather than their specific functions or activities. The agents' relationships with schools and perspectives on change are examined in relation to three different kinds of outcomes:

- the agents' job-related attitudes;
- the agents' perceptions of program success; and
- client assessments of the quality of agent performance.

The agents' relationships with client schools can be defined by the amount of influence that school personnel have over the agents' behavior as well as by the amount of influence that agents have on the schools' decisions and activities. The high level of influence that clients have over field agent role definition has often been noted (see, for example, Louis and Sieber, 1979): because field agents usually have more contact with client organizations than with the central organization responsible for defining their role obligations, it is felt that they may rely on clients to help them define what they should be doing. In addition, allowing client participation in role definition is often perceived to increase the legitimacy of the marginal agent role. In this chapter, we examine field agent reports about the degree to which site administrators have influence over their behavior, to see whether the level of site influence has any effect on the three types of outcomes mentioned above.

We also analyze the overall level of field agent influence on sites, and the extent to which field agents perceive that their influence is derived from each of the five bases of power first described by French and Raven (1966):

- "reward power," based in this case on the clients' perception that the field agent has the power to mediate rewards;
- "coercive power," based on the clients' perception that the field agent has the ability to mediate punishments;
- "legitimate power," based on the clients' perception that the field agent has a legitimate right to prescribe their behavior;
- "referent power," based on the clients' identification, or friendship, with the field agent; and
- "expert power," based on the perception that the field agent has some special knowledge or expertise.

The "bases of power" constructs have been used in a number of studies to look at the way in which influence patterns affect job satisfaction and performance. For example, Warren (1968) has shown that the types and effects of power relationships between principals and teachers vary as a function of the degree to which teachers feel their activities are visible to their supervisor. Similarly, Organ (1971) has noted that for boundary role occupants, referent power, and occasionally expert power, are more likely to be effective than reward, coercive, or legitimate power. This is due to the structuring of the role relationship, which allows clients to withdraw from the relationship if power is exercised too obviously (see also Corbett, 1980). Finally, Prudden and Reese (1972) found that the extent of influence or power in a boundary-spanning role (salesman) is positively related to perceived performance and satisfaction of the employee. Thus, while the extent of empirical examination of power in the boundary-spanning role is limited, the results suggest that type and amount of power is a critical variable.

We also examine the impacts of the agents' marginality vis-a-vis the site-host pair. In Chapter 3 the issue of role marginality was raised, but that chapter referred only to marginality between the project and other organizations (site and host). Since these measures were highly correlated, we have assumed that they both indicate the agents' marginality relative to the project. However, our observation and interviews suggest that an equally important factor is the agents' marginality relative to their host organizations and sites. Agents who did not feel strongly affiliated with their host organizations often met the greatest role stress in carrying out their jobs.

Finally, in this chapter, we explore the ways in which the attitudes that field agents have about the change process affect their relationships with clients. Based on current literature (see Sieber, 1972; House, 1981; Louis, Kell, and Chabotar, 1981), we have identified three key perspectives on organizational change, which are posited to affect field agent behavior: an individual incentives perspective, a political perspective, and a structural perspective. We classify the agents on the degree to which they subscribe to each of these perspectives, in order to determine how these orientations affect the outcomes described above.

In sum, this chapter considers the effects of:

- client influence over the agent's behavior;
- field agent influence over school decisions and activities;
- bases of field agent power;
- site-host marginality; and
- field agent perspectives on school change

on field agent job attitudes, field agent perceptions of program success, and client assessments of the quality of agent performance. The outcome measures are defined below, while the potential predictor variables are described in the analytic sections that follow.

Outcome Measures: Job-Related Attitudes, Program Success, and Client Assessments of Agent Performance

Job-Related Attitudes. The measures of job-related attitudes used in this study have already been described in Chapter 3. Briefly, the measures consist of four indicators, one describing the field agent's sense of efficacy, one describing overall job satisfaction, and two pertaining to role conflict--a reported measure of role conflict, based on direct questions to field agents, and an inferred measure of role conflict, based on a comparison of expectations held by different role partners, as perceived by the agent.

Agent Perceptions of Program Success. This measure reflects the degree to which the field agent believes that clients feel the RDU program achieved its objectives. The measure is composed of four items:

- In your opinion, to what extent (on a five-point scale) would each of the following individuals or groups rate the RDU program...a success?

- district-level administrators'
- site principal(s)
- teachers on the planning team
- teachers not on the planning team

These indicators were added to form the scale, which has a standardized alpha reliability coefficient of .69. The data were obtained just prior to the end of the RDU program, and thus can be taken as a reflection of the degree to which the agents felt they had been involved in a task that was worthwhile from the clients' perspective.

In general, the agents reported quite high levels of perceived program success at the site level. The most favorable impressions were reported for teachers on the planning team; for these individuals, 30% of the field agents responded "to a very great extent," and 46% "to a great extent." Less favorable impressions were reported for district-level administrators; only 9% of the agents said that district-level administrators believed the program had succeeded "to a very great extent," while 13% said these administrators felt the program had succeeded "to little or no extent," or "not at all."

Site principals were perceived to feel only slightly less positive than teachers on the planning team (66% were reported to fall into the top two categories on the five-point scale), while teachers not on the planning team were perceived to be much less enthusiastic about the program.

Client Assessments of Agent Performance. Principals and teachers were asked to rate the effectiveness of their field agents on 13 dimensions, using a five-point scale ranging from "poor" to "excellent." Questionnaires were mailed out after the sites' involvement with the program had terminated. The battery is reproduced in full in Appendix D. Sample items include:

- helpfulness in specifying, analyzing and diagnosing our particular problems or needs;
- helpfulness in locating alternative solutions to our problem; and
- helpfulness in adapting the R&D program or materials to our school or district.

We originally intended to use this battery to produce client assessments by stage in the problem-solving process. However, intercorrelations between items were so high that only a single scale could be

constructed. This was done by averaging the scores on the individual items, so that for each scale the possible range was 1 to 5. The mean for teachers was 3.5, with a standard deviation of .74, while for principals it was 3.8, with a standard deviation of .86.

In addition to this direct assessment of field agent performance, both teachers and principals were asked for their assessments of the process through which the agents had led them. Client satisfaction with the process was measured differently for teachers and principals. The principals, who were generally more informed about the full range of activities and procedures in each project's problem-solving approach, were asked a direct question about their satisfaction:

- Overall, how would you describe your attitudes toward the kind of problem-solving activities that the team in your school or district engaged in?

Principals were asked to indicate their response on a five-point scale ranging from "very unfavorable" to "very favorable." An additional question asked the principal to rate his or her satisfaction with a number of sources of assistance provided during the problem-solving process: the local school team, the field agent, the RDU project staff, R&D product developers, and other consultants. These were contacts that most schools had during the course of the project, and principals were asked to rate each on a five-point scale ranging from "not satisfied" to "very satisfied." (See Appendix D for a reproduction of the question.) The global item, and the five ratings of service providers, were added to produce an index of principal satisfaction with the problem-solving process. The range of the scale was 6 to 30, mean 19.2, with a standard deviation of 3.6.

Teacher assessments of the problem-solving process were more indirect. A question on the teacher survey asked:

- A major feature of (RDU) is that it attempts to engage school staff in problem-solving activities. In your opinion, did the following activities take the appropriate amount of time?
  - identifying the most appropriate problem or needs;
  - establishing criteria for selecting a solution;
  - searching for an R&D based program or materials;
  - selection of an R&D based program or materials;
  - planning for implementation of the R&D based program.

Each time a respondent indicated that the level of effort for one stage of the process was appropriate, he or she received a score of 1; any other response was scored as 0. Responses were added to produce a range of 0 to 6. The mean score for the teachers was 3.4, with a standard deviation of 1.27. (The question is reproduced in its entirety in Appendix D.)

The Relationship between Field Agents and Sites

Measures of Influence and Marginality. Measures of influence on the field agent were obtained by asking agents to rate site administrators using a four-point scale ranging from "none" to "a great deal" on:

- How much influence do (the site administrators) have on the nature of your activities as an RDU linker/facilitator?
- How much influence do (the site administrators) have on the amount of time you allocate to various RDU-related activities?
- How much feedback do you receive from (the site administrators) about how you are performing your job?

These items were summed to obtain a total influence score.

The means for the individual items and the total index of site influence over the agent are presented in Table 5-1. In order to facilitate comparison of site influence and project influence, the table also includes previously reported responses for other major role partners (the project director and host organization supervisor). The table clearly reveals that site administrators have significant influence over field agents, even relative to the agents' supervisors. Of particular importance is the finding that site administrators are the major source of feedback to the agent, and also the major source of influence over time allocation. It appears that, while the overall strategies and tactics of the agents' change activities are influenced by their supervisors, more immediate influence accrues to the client.

Agent influence over the site was measured by asking the field agents to indicate, for a specific, randomly selected school, the "extent to which I have influence over decisions and activities at this site." Ratings were based on a five-point scale, ranging from "not at all" to a "very great extent." In addition, types of influence were measured by items intended to

Table 5-1

MEAN LEVEL OF FEEDBACK AND DEGREE OF INFLUENCE OVER ACTIVITIES AND TIME ALLOCATION BY SITE ADMINISTRATORS

Role Partner	Mean Level of Feedback*	Mean Influence Over Activities*	Mean Influence Over Time*	Total Influence Index**
Site Administrators	2.6	2.1	2.6	7.2
Project Director	2.3	3.0	2.3	7.6
Host Supervisor	2.4	2.5	2.5	7.3

*Scale:

1 = None
2 = A Little
3 = Moderate
4 = A Great Deal

**The index was computed by adding scores on feedback, influence over behavior and influence over time. The possible range of scores is from 3 to 12.

reflect French and Raven's five "bases of power": reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, and expert. The agents were asked to rate the degree to which they had each type of influence in a randomly selected specific site using a five-point scale ranging from "not at all" to "a very great extent."

The eight items included in the battery were subjected to a principal components factor analysis in order to verify the existence of the five bases of power within the sample. Five factors emerged, each loading highly on a single item corresponding to one of the bases of power:

- I am viewed as someone who can influence whether or not RDU funds are allocated to the site (coercive power).
- I am viewed as someone who has the experience and background to be able to provide help in solving problems (expert power).
- I am viewed as someone who can help them raise the image and performance of the district (reward power).
- I am viewed as someone who has a right to influence their decisions because of my position in the RDU program (legitimate power).
- I am viewed as a friend whom they would like to please (referent power).

Each of these is used as a single item in the analysis.

On the whole, the field agents believed they had moderate influence over their client schools (see Table 5-2). Congruent with Organ's (1971) hypothesis, agents viewed themselves as generally lacking in both coercive power and legitimate power. However, the hypothesis that they would be high on referent power is not supported. Their greatest sources of influence over the sites appear to arise from expertise and reward power.

The measure of local marginality--i.e., marginality vis-a-vis the site and host organization--was introduced in Chapter 3. Briefly, the measure is based on the agent's graphic representation of his or her position relative to the host organization and a typical site. (The full item is included in Appendix A. See also Chapter 3.)

Analysis and Findings. Site influence over the field agent may be inevitable--particularly for the agent who is involved in relatively intensive relationships with clients over a long period of time. It is not beneficial, however, from the perspective of improving the agent's job attitudes or effectiveness. Agents who indicated higher levels of influence by site administrators

Table 5-2

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR MEASURES OF FIELD AGENT INFLUENCE OVER THE SITE

Influence/Base of Power	Mean*	S.D.
General Influence	3.08	.85
Coercive Power	2.74	1.37
Expert Power	3.7	.76
Reward Power	3.15	.71
Legitimate Power	2.74	1.06
Referent Power	2.84	.91

*Scale:

5 - To a very great extent
4 - To a great extent
3 - To some extent
2 - To a little extent
1 - Not at all

also indicated a lower sense of efficacy (r = -.35), lower levels of program success (r = -.43), and higher levels of inferred role conflict (r = .49) (see Table 5-7 at the end of this chapter). In sum, influence is apparently tantamount to interference, and on the basis of interviews with agents, we may hypothesize that it occurs in situations where site administrators are unwilling to allow the agent (and the teachers) to implement a team-based problem-solving process as was intended by the program. (This problem is well illustrated in the case of the field agent described in Chapter 6.)

The field agents' report of the overall amount of influence they have over their client schools does not correlate significantly with any of the outcome measures. Moreover, there are few significant relationships between these outcome measures and the agents' perceptions of what gives them influence over the schools--i.e., their bases of power. What these relationships seem to suggest, however, is that high levels of any sort of power tend to be accompanied by greater job stress (Table 5-3).

For example, both coercive power and referent power are associated with higher levels of inferred role conflict (r = .47 and .30), and coercive power is also related to higher levels of reported role conflict (r = .31). Reward power is negatively related to job satisfaction (r = -.61), and referent power is negatively related to the agent's sense of efficacy (r = -.25). The relationships between bases of power, success, and client perceptions of the agent and the process are not so consistent. Reward power and legitimate power are positively associated with success (r = .25 and .38), and reward power is also positively related to teacher satisfaction with the process (r = .35). However, legitimate power is negatively related to teacher satisfaction with the agent (r = -.26).

Since the findings are rather sparse, our conclusions must be somewhat speculative, though they are also supported by interview data. In general, the findings suggest that the best "survival mode" for agents who wish to influence their sites is not to exercise any one type of power in any strong degree, but rather to use all the bases of power to a more modest extent.

How does perceived influence of the site over the agent relate to the agent's bases of power over the site? It might be expected that agents who perceived site administrators as exercising strong controls over their behavior

Table 5-3

SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS OF BASES OF POWER WITH JOB ATTITUDES, PROGRAM SUCCESS, AND CLIENT ASSESSMENTS OF AGENT PERFORMANCE

Type of Power Base	Job Satisfaction	Sense of Efficacy	Inferred Role Conflict	Reported Role Conflict	Perceived Program Success	Teachar Satisfaction with Process	Teacher Satisfaction with Agent	Principal Satisfaction with Process	Principal Satisfaction with Agant
Coercive Power			.47**	.31**					
Expert Power									
Reward Power	-.61**				.25*	.35**			
Legitimata Power					.38**		-.26*		
Referent Power		-.25*	.30**						

*Significant at the .10 level.

**Significant at the .05 leval.

might have adopted less obtrusive and threatening bases of influence, such as referent power, or expert power. However, the only significant correlation between site influence and a power base is with coercive power (r = .24). Thus, it might appear that agents and sites could easily become locked in power struggles, where site administrators attempt to turn external agent activities to their own agendas, while agents reiterate their abilities to withdraw services if the site does not comply with the requirements for participating in the organization's service program. In fact, however, this sort of situation rarely occurred.

Local marginality, the last characteristic of the agent's relationship with sites, is predictive of all types of agent job stress. The relationships are, however, not totally consistent (see Table 5-7 at the end of this chapter). More marginal agents reported lower levels of efficacy (r = -.25) and job satisfaction (r = -.22), but less role conflict (r = -.39 for inferred conflict and -.57 for reported conflict). We also find a strong cluster of reinforcing job-related characteristics--marginality has a strong negative relationship to both role conflict and coercive power, while role conflict and coercive power are positively associated. These findings, in conjunction with agent interviews, lead to the conclusion that local marginality is quite functional both in reducing a major source of agent job stress, and in reducing agents' attempts to manipulate sites through control over the flow of funds and resources to client schools. Marginality is also positively associated with the agents' perception of reward power, the only type of agent influence which modestly predicts positive site evaluations of the agent.

Agent Perspectives and Strategies

As we have noted above and elsewhere (Louis, Kell and Chabotar, 1981), the ways in which individuals who have responsibilities as change agents view the change process will have major implications for the strategies that they select to carry out their role. Sieber points out:

> As one scans the tactics that are pursued in bringing about focused change in educational systems...one is struck by both the wide variety of approaches and by the high degree of confidence displayed by proponents of each different technique...the many approaches...can be subsumed under three basic strategies, each of which is rooted in a particular image....
>
> (Sieber, 1972, pp. 362-363)

Sieber goes on to define the strategies associated with each set of personal images, but he is ambiguous about whether a change agent's strategies arise from the agent's views on the school change process, or whether the agent develops a coherent set of images to correspond with his or her preferred strategy. Our own position is that the belief system, or personal imagery, that individuals bring to the task of organizational change will condition their willingness to select various strategies for supporting or stimulating change. Thus, in some sense, the personal imagery of the field agent is a surrogate way of looking at the overall "game plan" which field agents are likely to adopt.

Through focused but unstructured interviews with field agents and school personnel we have identified three different perspectives about what is of primary importance in accounting for the outcomes of any activity or events in schools. The first of these images is the structural perspective. This perspective emphasizes the social structure of the school as a formal organization and the ways in which this must be altered in order to allow change to occur. A second dominant perspective is the individual incentives perspective, which emphasizes individual needs, incentives, and disincentives for change. The final significant imagery is the political perspective, which emphasizes the need to understand--and manipulate--the power structure of the school in order to implement change programs.

Each of these images clearly suggests strategies for change. Thus, for example, we would expect the agent who believes in the individual incentives perspective to spend more time working through individual acceptance and participation in decision making than one who believes in the political perspective. Similarly, a structural approach might emphasize developing a plan for how a new curriculum package would affect the job definitions and informal social structure of the school (e.g., teacher time for socializing and exchanging information) while the political orientation might attempt to look for the interest groups that would be the biggest barriers to carrying out the implementation plan.

The major question to be addressed in this section is whether the field agents' images of the change process are related to their own job attitudes, their perceptions of program success, and their clients' assessments of their performance.

Measures of Perspectives on Change. The perspectives were measured by asking the agents to complete a set of six forced-choice questions. Each question paired a statement reflecting one of the perspectives with a statement reflecting another perspective. Each time the agents made a choice, they were given a score of 1 for the orientation that they chose. Thus, the possible range for each orientation was between 0 and 4. The statements for each perspective were:

- Political perspective
  - Competition between "interest groups" in schools is a major barrier to change.
  - Understanding the actual power structure of the school is the key to designing successful change efforts.
  - The first step in developing a change strategy for schools is to assess the current coalitions in order to mobilize positive support and anticipate possible backlash from powerful groups.
  - If an innovation can be made to appeal to the most powerful individuals or groups in the schools, then change will occur.
- Individual incentives perspective
  - Lack of individual skills and knowledge appropriate to the new innovation is a major barrier to change.
  - Understanding the individual needs and concerns of staff members who may be affected is the key to designing successful change efforts.
  - Resistance to change by individuals is the major reason for failures of most change programs in schools.
  - Effective change in schools requires that individuals internalize the need for change.
- Structural perspective
  - Poor management and coordination are the most important barriers to effective change in schools.
  - Effective change in schools requires critical evaluation of existing roles and activities.
  - The first step in developing a change strategy for schools is to assess the level of school-wide resources, such as group problem-solving skills.
  - If the way in which jobs and responsibilities are defined in a school can be made supportive of a new innovation, then change will occur.

The means and standard deviations for each perspective may be found in Table 5-4.

In addition to these direct measures of perspectives on change, we also used the measure of field agent innovativeness as a surrogate for the degree to which the agent is likely to choose highly visible, novel, and creative strategies for initiating change, versus low-keyed, facilitative strategies. This measure was introduced in Chapter 3, where we argued that innovativeness is an individual characteristic that is likely to affect job satisfaction and role conflict. Here we use the measure as an additional, indirect indicator of the agent's strategy. Support for viewing innovativeness in this way may be found in its correlation with other strategy measures. It is positively correlated with both a political perspective ($r = .22$) and an individual incentives perspective ($r = .30$).

Analysis and Findings. Perhaps the most outstanding finding regarding the different perspectives on change is a simple descriptive one: field agents overwhelmingly eschew a political strategy for creating change, one which emphasizes power groups both as facilitators and as potential blocks. By far the greatest consensus among field agents is a preference for an individualized approach to change, which stresses working through individual motivations, concerns, and reactions. Not only is the mean preference for this modus operandi highest, but the variance among agents is extremely low (see Table 5-4).

The preference for the individual incentives approach is not surprising. As Deal and Nutt (1980) have noted, it is the popular approach for most educators:

> Many administrators find individual personalities--although complex and volatile--easier to understand than the dynamics of complex systems such as schools and school districts. '(They) often overemphasize the cohesiveness and rationality of the system and their own ability to control...the activity and sentiments of others.

The emphasis upon the individual incentives strategy for creating change has been critiqued elsewhere (see Louis, Kell and Chabotar, 1981) where it has been noted that this strategy ignores the importance of the formal organizational structure of schools. It should be noted, however, that the field agents typically supplemented the preferred individual approach with a large dose of the structural approach, which involves understanding roles, division of labor, and rational organizational planning processes.

Table 5-4

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR
THREE FIELD AGENT PERSPECTIVES ON CHANGE

Field Agent Perspective	Mean*	S.D.
Political Perspective	.88	1.21
Individual Incentives Perspective	2.71	.78
Structural Perspective	2.34	.97

*Scale ranges from 0-4.

Does the lack of sympathy toward a political strategy represent an imbalance in the "bag of tricks" that field agents use to create an appropriate environment for change? As we shall see below, the answer is a mixed one, but, on the whole, we may conclude that agents might profit from a greater recognition of how power works in formal organizations--and how the change agent can plan to use the power system to facilitate participation and rational planning.

Simple correlations between the several dependent variables used in this chapter, and the measures of agent perspectives on change are shown in Table 5-5. A quick scan of this table reveals one clear finding: innovativeness is clearly related both to the agents' perceptions of program success and to the clients' assessments of field agents and the program. Again, we view this as confirmation of the assumption that this psychological characteristic is reflected in the actual change strategies that an agent chooses to employ. Overall, an innovative orientation on the part of the agent has a negative impact on principal and teacher satisfaction with the RDU process, and their assessments of the helpfulness of the agent. It also relates negatively to the agent's own job satisfaction, as was noted in Chapter 3. However, somewhat unexpectedly, field agents with innovative orientations are more likely to perceive that the RDU project was a success at the school level.

The direct assessments of perspectives on change have more scattered relationships with the outcome variables. A structural perspective on the part of agents is positively associated with job satisfaction; and an individual incentives perspective is weakly related to inferred role conflict; but none of the perspectives is related to sense of efficacy or reported role conflict.

The more pronounced the individual incentives orientation of the agent, the more satisfied teachers are with the process. This is probably a result of the fact that an individual incentives model is more teacher-centered than the other two (see also Chapter 7). A political perspective on the part of agents, on the other hand, has a negative relationship with teacher satisfaction with the process, but is positively associated with principal satisfaction with the agent and the process. Since the political orientation is associated with strategies to use the power structure to achieve change,

Table 5-5

SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS OF FIELD AGENT PERSPECTIVES ON CHANGE WITH JOB ATTITUDES, PROGRAM SUCCESS, AND CLIENT ASSESSMENTS OF AGENT PERFORMANCE

Perspectives on Change	Job Satisfaction	Sense of Efficacy	Inferred Role Conflict	Reported Role Conflict	Perceived Program Success	Teacher Satisfaction with Process	Teacher Satisfaction with Agent	Principal Satisfaction with Process	Principal Satisfaction with Agent
Innovativeness	-.25*				.30**	.17*	-.28**	-.31**	-.33**
Political Perspective						.28**		.24**	.26**
Individual Incentives Perspective			.23*			.20*			
Structural Perspective	.28**								-.19*

*Significant at the .10 level.

**Significant at the .05 level.

an agent holding such views would be very likely to spend more time with administrators than teachers, thus causing these results (see Louis and Sieber, 1979, for additional data to support this).

In addition to the simple correlational analysis, canonical correlations were computed to examine the total effect of the perspectives and innovativeness as a group upon client assessments. The first canonical correlation of .47 was significant at the .005 level (see Table 5-6). The canonical correlation coefficients indicate that innovativeness and a political orientation are the most powerful variables in predicting client satisfaction. Specifically, to repeat earlier findings, innovativeness relates negatively to all four measures of client satisfaction; the political perspective relates positively to principal satisfaction with the agent and the process, but negatively to teacher satisfaction with the agent.

The finding that innovativeness has such a consistently negative relationship with client perceptions of field agents is not necessarily consonant with all of the literature about desirable personality characteristics of change agents. It is, therefore, useful to speculate a bit further about the meaning of this relationship. First, it may be noted that the concept of innovativeness includes some characteristics that are thought to be positively associated with effective change agents--flexibility, and the ability to be self-reliant. On the other hand, it also incorporates other attributes that may be less compatible with effectiveness as a linking agent--namely, originality and being inquiring. Field agents in the RDU program were often expected to be both innovative and able to fade into the background--an expectation that is probably unreasonable.

In sum, if one examines the role of the field agent, the need for low-keyed, dependable, cooperative, and industrious behavior is clear. This is evident not only from the statistical findings presented here, but also from the interviews with both field agents (who emphasized the low-keyed, non-initiating part of their job as a key to success), and clients (who praised agents for their ability to chair meetings and to organize support, but not for their imagination or originality). While the need for non-innovative personality characteristics may be particularly critical in the case of external change agents, whose legitimacy to introduce novel or original ideas may be suspect, we tend to believe that even for the inside change agent self-reliance or originality is less important in creating a mandate for change than cooperativeness and stability.

Table 5-6

CANONICAL CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS BETWEEN CLIENT ASSESSMENTS AND AGENT PERSPECTIVES

Group I		Group II	
Client Assessments	Corr.	Agent Perspectives	Corr.
Teacher Sat. W/Agent	.78	Individual	-.47
Prin. Sat. W/Agent	.71	Political	.62
Teacher Sat. W/Process	.07	Structural	-.37
Prin. Sat. W/Process	.75	Innovativeness	-.72

Canonical correlation: .47, significant at the .005 level

Overall, the findings suggest that the perspectives an agent brings to the relationship with clients have an impact upon both the agent's assessment of his or her effectiveness, and the clients' assessments. However, the only clear pattern that emerges from the analysis is that agents who are highly innovative in their orientation are less likely to be pleased with their jobs and also less likely to gain the suport of teachers and principals. The scattered quality of the relationships between other independent and dependent measures indicate that different perspectives may work well in some settings, and with some role groups, and less well with others. Thus, we are led to the tentative conclusion that there is no one strategy that is particularly effective (or ineffective) in schools. Rather, the relationship between agent and client is probably much more complicated and dependent upon local features. Based on our case materials, however, we believe that the sparse findings emerging from the quantitative analysis of relationships between site and project are more a reflection of the difficulty of capturing these elusive relationships than of their actual significance. The comparative case summaries that follow explore in greater detail the ways in which role conflict, marginality, and perspectives on how to negotiate a role as change agent affect both job-related attitudes and performance.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have explored the ways in which the field agent and client relationship affects some of the agent's job attitudes and the clients' assessment of the agent. The results presented are somewhat scattered: there are only a few clear patterns that emerge. As a consequence, it is important to summarize those conclusions that seem most important.

First, patterns of high mutual influence between the agent and the local site administrator can apparently produce significant job stress for field agents, particularly where site administrators exercise high amounts of control over what agents do, and agents respond by attempting to use their control over desired resources as a mechanism of obtaining client conformity to program or organizational objectives. Agents who are able to exercise influence over clients in multiple and more subtle ways run into fewer problems.

Second, any client-agent relationship that involves high levels of influence raises the level of role conflict for the agent. The best way to reduce role conflict may be to pay more attention to negotiating and clarifying the role with sites. When agents see clients as significant role referents, they can approach the role clarification issue head-on and possibly resolve it more easily.

Third, local marginality of the agent is found to affect job-related attitudes and role conflict significantly, but it has only minimal effects upon client satisfaction. Thus, while marginality may not necessarily be good for the individual, there is no indication that it is dysfunctional for role performance.

Finally, agents who are innovative tend to be negatively regarded by clients, and also tend to leave unhappy impressions of the value of the problem-solving process in both teachers and principals. However, in general, the strategies that are most effective in securing teacher satisfaction are quite different from those that promote principal satisfaction. Principals prefer agent strategies that recognize the power structure of the school and take into consideration the need to manipulate various interest groups. Teachers, on the other hand, respond most positively to strategies that emphasize individual needs and incentives. Agents, apparently, must adopt a balanced approach in order to please all of the actors in a change program.

Table 5-7

CORRELATION MATRIX FOR VARIABLES USED IN CHAPTER 5

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
1. Sense of Efficacy	-																		
2. Job Satisfaction	-.01	-																	
3. Inferred Role Conflict	-.10	.17	-																
4. Reported Role Conflict	.07	-.09	.30**	-															
5. Teacher Satisfaction w/Agent+	-.04			-.13	-														
6. Teacher Satisfaction w/Process+	.03			.28**	.33	-													
7. Principal Satisfaction w/Agent+	.11			-.09	.31**	.08	-												
8. Principal Satisfaction w/Process+	.16			-.06*	.27*	.17	.75	-											
9. Marginality (site/host)	-.25	-.22	-.39**	-.57**	-.20**	-.07	-.10	-.19	-										
10. Perceived Program Success+	.43**	-.10	-.11	-.18					.18	-									
11. Individual Perspective	.00	.08	.23*	.09	-.09	.20**	-.12	.11	.08	-.17	--								
12. Political Perspective	-.04	-.14	-.20	-.15	.11	-.28**	.26**	.24**	-.04	.14	-.48**	-							
13. Structural Perspective	-.05	.28**	.08	-.00	.08	.14	-.19*	-.02	.17	.04	-.07	-.53**	-						
14. Innovativeness	.12	-.25*	-.05	.11	-.28**	-.17*	-.33**	-.31**	-.05	.30**	-.18	.22*	-.16	-					
15. Site Admin. Influence on Agent	-.30**	.13	.49**	.05	-.08	.28	-.07	.02	-.04	-.43**	.33**	-.31**	.14	-.27**	-				
16. Coercive Power	-.09	-.03	.47**	.31**	-.10	.03	-.21	.03	-.33**	.00	.12	.03	-.15	-.07	.24*	-			
17. Expert Power	.15	.11	-.01	.07	.20	.19	.07	.20	-.10	.02	.06	-.26*	.43**	.20	.06	.08	-		
18. Reward Power	-.18	-.61**	.03	.05	.20	.35**	-.09	.01	.34**	.25*	-.34**	.19	.19	.16	-.19	.10	-.02	-	
19. Legitimate Power	.17	-.18	.12	-.07	-.26*	-.00	-.10	-.17	.13	.38**	-.05	.13	-.13	.38**	-.14	.32**	-.16	.16	-
20. Referent Power	-.25*	-.03	.30**	.14	-.00	.09	-.08	-.05	-.03	-.13	.23	.09	-.30**	.16	.07	.54**	-.21	-.04	.15

*Significant at the .10 level.

**Significant at the .05 level.

+Not all correlation coefficients could be calculated for these variables due to differences in the data bases used for the analyses.

CHAPTER 6

NEGOTIATING AND LEARNING THE FIELD AGENT ROLE: TWO CASE SUMMARIES

Richard O. Carlson

The following case summaries illustrate some of the dilemmas for field agent-client relationships outlined in the previous chapter. The cases examine in detail the ways in which the client's expectations and attempts to influence agent behavior condition the strategies that the agent takes in trying to create change. They also illustrate how agent strategies for dealing with schools affect their ability to influence school clients, particularly administrative gatekeepers. While a major emphasis in the case summaries is on the problems that agents have in learning or establishing the new role, the learning that takes place for agents on the job is largely through the process of negotiating the role with multiple role partners, including local staff.

Sara Edwards

Sara Edwards joined her agency as a "linker" in the summer of 1976, just as the RDU program was getting under way. Her extensive experience in the field of education included serving as a reading teacher in the public schools, supervising full-time intern teachers, and teaching courses in the college of education at the local university. At the end of her first year on the project, she received a Ph.D. in education with a specialization in curriculum and supervision. Sara was selected over other applicants for the linker position because of her background in the area of teaching reading and because she had previously had contact with some of the schools where she would work, either while collecting data for her dissertation or supervising teachers. But despite her background in education, and her local contacts, Sara had considerable difficulty establishing her role in the districts where she worked.

Part of the problem lay in the nature of the job. The term "linker" is not listed in the Dictionary of Occupations, even though that dictionary contains thousands of entries. "Linking" is thus a non-standard job. The skills needed to serve as a linker are underarticulated, training is difficult if not impossible to obtain, and the job does not fit into any traditional occupational hierarchy.

In Sara's case, the problems inherent in the linker position (see Chapter 1) were aggravated by failures in the project's support system. The system did not entirely break down: Sara and three other linkers benefited from the 150 hours of training they received; the linkers telephoned each other two or three times a week; the educational service district to which Sara was assigned had a very good reputation with the districts where Sara worked. Nevertheless, there were difficulties. During the first year of the project, the director exercised tight control over the linkers, occasionally overriding their decisions. Yet he made few efforts to explain the nature of the project to local school district personnel. Thus, it was up to the linkers to clarify their roles and correct misunderstandings. Management time that could have been devoted to such efforts was spent elsewhere, as the NRC responded to changes in project emphasis requested by NIE.

The second director of the project made a greater effort to communicate with the school districts, and under his administration the linkers finally drafted this description of the linkers' role vis-a-vas the sites:

> The primary responsibility of the linker is to provide service to assigned school sites in the form of leadership, consultation and support in the planning and implementation of instructional improvements through the problem-solving process of the (Needs) Assessment Handbook.
>
> As part of this support, the linker provides information on available Research and Development Outcomes and arranges for the necessary materials and human resources to support the effective use of these R&D Outcomes in improving instruction.
>
> In order to carry out these duties in the most effective manner, the linker maintains certain administrative and related ties.

It is interesting to contrast this job description with the variety of expectations about Sara's role held by the school personnel with whom she worked. Some of their comments were that she should be "a half-time reading specialist on the staff." "She should tell us what she can offer." "She should work with us to evaluate reading and language arts programs." "She should act as an employee of the district." "She is a reading expert and she should tell us the best thing to do." "She should do the evaluation work and determine the best solution." "She should give us more time than she does." "She should do the leg work." Sara's summary of the expectations held for her was that she should be available on call for any period of time to do anything.

Themes within the expectations held for Sara centered around the labels "salesperson," "gofer," and "school district employee." Included in the role expectation of "salesperson" were the expectations that Sara had an identifiable item to "sell," that she had full facts about the superiority of that item over competing items which she might be selling but was not, and that she would be a compelling, aggressive advocate of the item she was selling. Those who held this "salesperson" role expectation expected Sara to say, "What you need is A. Here are items B, C, and D, which are competitive items. A is superior to B because...A is superior to C because....Here they are, all laid out in front of you. You can examine them, and you will see why I know that A is the superior item for your purposes."

Central to the role expectation that Sara should be a "gofer" was that she should track down and deliver anything desired at the school in terms of its educational program and that she should do so in all areas of the curriculum. Those who held the role expectation that Sara was a "school district employee" believed that she should take administrative responsibility for curriculum revision in reading, that she should be in the schools full time, or at least a few days of each week, carrying out the administrative responsibility, and that she should be an accountable decision maker in the area of reading.

The holders of these discordant role expectations were almost exclusively administrators who had limited contact with Sara, but who were, nevertheless, influential to some degree in shaping the role expectations that other school staff held about the linker.

Misunderstandings regarding Sara's activities soon caused her to be criticized. A school principal in Abbott school district complained, in writing, to the district's curriculum coordinator in May 1977. His complaint was that Sara was not spending two and one-half days in the district, as he had assumed she would since she was, at that time, working with only two districts. In fact, Sara had to devote 60 percent of her time to administration, evaluation, training, and other activities. However, such misunderstandings and the discrepant expectations held by various school personnel served to keep Sara off balance and necessitated repeated explanations by her of project objectives, rules, and regulations. It did not help Sara when the project director sided with a school official to overturn a

ruling which was expressly stated in the project proposal and was being, up to that point in time, enforced by her. This episode undermined her authority and caused her to lose credibility.

Foundations for Misunderstandings. It is well to imagine oneself in the position of the project director after the proposal had been written and funding was announced in July, 1976. The tasks he faced were sizable and all had to be accomplished simultaneously. A project office had to be established; secretarial help hired and a project evaluator hired. School sites, two districts in each of four states, with several schools in each district, had to be selected and readied for the entry of a linker in September. Linkers needed to be hired in a collaborative manner with school district personnel and others. Contracts with educational agencies other than school districts needed to be negotiated for the hiring, housing, and paying of the linkers. Linkers needed to be oriented to their work. A management system needed development. An evaluation system needed to be designed. A subcontract with a research and development agency needed to be let to connect the project with a knowledge base and knowledge retrieval system. All facets had to be in place and working within a period of 60 days or less. Needless to say, the number of tasks to be done simultaneously made it impossible that all would be completed on time and that those completed would have been done with the necessary hoped-for care.

The rushed start of the project contributed considerably to the school personnel's lack of understanding about the field agent role. Whether time was too short, or the director assumed that project objectives were known by the collaborating schools, is unimportant; whatever the reason, personnel in Abbott and Baker districts--Sara's first two sites--were generally uninformed about the nature of the project when Sara first began working with them. Moreover, it was over one year until a contractual agreement was made between these two districts and the project. During the time that no contract existed, the collaborative relationship was fragile and tenuous.

The Chaffee school district contrasts sharply with the other two districts in terms of local understanding of, and readiness to enter, the project. Chaffee did not join the project until the start of the project's second year of operation. Teachers in the Chaffee district had been fully informed about the project prior to involvement and had signified their willingness to participate. Similarly, a school personnel task force, as

urged by project rules, had already been formed and had actually met prior to the start of the collaboration. Moreover, all these efforts had been initiated and carried forward by one of four regional directors in the school district, who sensed that the project provided an opportunity to pursue his interest in improving reading abilities in one of the schools for which he had oversight. The regional director provided greater support for the project than did any central office person in Abbott and Baker school districts.

Still another factor influenced local personnel's views of Sara. All three districts had had experience--not always favorable--with federal projects. Whether benefited or burned, the school personnel had developed certain shared expectations about, or certain elements of a posture towards, federal projects. One of these notions was that one need not attend directly to federal projects. They did not constitute the "bread and butter" support for the schools. Moreover, accountability for federal projects was usually diffused over several agencies and was not a matter of such direct concern to community members as was the spending of local tax money.

Also included in what might be seen as a shared posture toward federal projects was the notion that a federal project, regardless of its objectives and regardless of the match between district objectives and the federal project objectives, could benefit the schools. If in no other way, school districts benefited from federal projects because an activity being supported with district funds could be carried forward, to at least some degree, by federal funds. Thus freed, at least some district money could be diverted to another activity seen by school personnel as in need of the "saved" funds.

Extending beyond this expectation was another which held that somehow the project could be molded to suit some specific purpose of the school district; that somehow, at some time, district personnel could sufficiently control the project in order to obtain something thought to be of benefit to the district. Bolstering this latter element of the districts' posture toward federal projects was the belief that federal projects were in the schools only because they were invited; hence, somehow, the obligation created by the invitation would be paid off and the imbalance righted.

The districts where Sara began work in the fall of 1976 thus had a number of contradictory expectations concerning her work. Sara had not yet begun formal training as a linker; in fact, the training sessions would

extend over a period of time almost two years in length. Moreover, the role to be learned was not single faceted. Among other things, Sara had to learn to be a linker, a project member, a guest in a host organization, and a data collector.

Role learning, naturally, had its beginning point in the linker's background and experience, and, as indicated, Sara's background included expertise in how children learn to read. She found much comfort from her expertise, as she initially viewed her role as "helping schools with reading," and being "a reading specialist and working for and with school districts at an instructional and in-service level." Not only was she feeling comfortable about her expertise in reading instruction, she was further comforted by the fact that the reading expertise gained her what seemed to be immediate credibility in the schools. The comfort was short lived, however, as she soon learned that her expertise in reading caused some of those with whom she worked to try to push her into a role of making decisions about reading programs, a role definition rather contrary to the role of linker. Additionally, she learned early that while she was a reading specialist, she was working with, not for, the school districts. Most importantly, she learned the importance of doing "people work" and the realities of decision-making in organizations.

Establishing a Relationship with Sites. The need to do "people work" was soon apparent to Sara because project headquarters arranged for only very limited and rather socially distant warm-up activities to introduce the linkers to site personnel. A "state assembly" was held which gathered together most of the principals, and no more than one teacher, from the collaborating schools, a central office official from each collaborating school district, the project director, and the state Right-to-Read director. By and large, interchange was very limited, and the communication could best be described as a monologue. Additionally, the project director mailed to the principals of the collaborating schools a letter introducing Sara.

Backed only by a letter of introduction, and hoping that the school officials would remember that she was introduced at the state assembly, Sara chose to begin her entry efforts with the central office person in each district who was responsible for curriculum. In Abbott school district, entry proceeded smoothly, and very soon Sara was at work with the teachers in the school building.

In Baker district, however, the curriculum director blocked Sara's access to the schools for about seven months; it was not until April, 1977, that Sara was at work in the school building there. During this waiting period, Sara dutifully and regularly went to the central office and talked to the curriculum director about the project. Knowing nothing else to do, Sara adopted the role of "gofer" for the curriculum director. She collected at the latter's request a large variety of material pertaining to reading, but also a great deal of material about middle schools.

The stalemate was broken by a junior high school principal who asked to begin work with Sara. The request came about because Sara had hand delivered the project's survey instrument (a part of project evaluation and documentation) to each principal, and while doing so had taken the opportunity to talk to each principal about the project. Sara thought that by insisting on delivering the instruments herself and then talking to principals about the project she might be able to "get them pushing on the other side of the door." She was, as she said, "pushing on the door of the curriculum director" trying to get into schools, and if the principals "pushed on the other side of the door," then she might be able to start work with the schools, which is what happened. About the breaking of the stalemate, Sara said it was "the first" time she felt "sneaky" in her work.

The curriculum director explained the waiting period by saying that Sara did not "know what is going on in the schools. She has a university perspective. I helped her learn something about schools." Sara's explanation was different. She attributed the waiting period to the curriculum director's high need for control and a well-developed sense of mistrust. Supporting Sara's explanation was the fact that the curriculum director alone completed the reading needs assessment for the schools, whereas, in the other two districts, the reading needs assessment was completed at the building level by classroom teachers. Moreover, only in the Baker district did Sara have to check in with the curriculum director both before and after she contacted a school district employee.

Sara learned from the entry experience that individuals held differing perspectives about issues, problems and opportunities, and that those perspectives must be understood and taken into account in her activities. From the experience with the curriculum director, as well as experiences elsewhere, Sara learned that "one person can block you, but one person can't

get you in." As a result of this learning, she always tried to work with groups of people rather than with individuals. In Chaffee district, for example, she worked with the school principal, a school reading teacher, and the regional coordinator as a group. Consequently, each one felt he was in charge of the project at the school level.

Also during the entry period, Sara learned that she had resources which could be spent to secure a social obligation and perhaps a commitment to the project, and she learned to spend the resources at hand. In addition to helping improve the reading program, which was valued variously by the participants, Sara had access to funds which could be used both to facilitate improvement in reading and to create a commitment on the part of the participants. Paying for substitute teachers, which released regular teachers to engage in project-related activities, often away from the home school district, was a prime means of building a social obligation and, perhaps, commitment to the project.

Additionally, Sara could and did do "favors" for school personnel. The "favors" were of a great variety and included securing and delivering material, carrying messages, facilitating access to a variety of educational meetings or workshops, and distributing articles about teaching reading. Sara tried to have something to give, such as a reprint of a journal article, to each collaborator on each encounter.

In the middle of the second year of the project, Sara surmised that the "relationship had been established" with her clients. As a result, she "stopped going out of [her] way to do favors," and she began issuing to her clients a semi-monthly, two-page newsletter, titled "Northwest Reading Consortium Reader," viewing that newsletter as somewhat of a substitute for the favors and the hand-delivered reprints. In general, the contents of the newsletters included announcements of meetings and workshops assumed to be of interest to her clients, annotations of recent publications on reading, and project news and events.

Additional "people work" learning occurred. Sara learned that in one district it was necessary to work with the so-called chain of command. In Abbott district, Sara worked exclusively with teachers for a period of time and found that requests for substitute teachers to replace regular teachers who would be away on project activities had to clear the principal's office. The principals did not know what was going on, so they turned down

the requests. Further, she heard rumors that principals were upset when she was in the building without their knowledge. Sara dealt with the problems by conferring with the principals occasionally and by providing each principal a monthly calendar showing where she would be when, at least as far as she was able to predict one month in advance.

Sara also learned that memos sent by her to school personnel could be of use, but only if they were directed to all the people who were influential in her work, not just those with whom she had the most sustained contact. Hence, she learned the informal organization of the school districts and tried to be influenced by that knowledge in carrying out her work.

An important learning for Sara was that if key people who were "dragging their feet" acquired a sense of ownership of the project, the reluctance and tentativeness could be overcome. Sara arranged for one such key person, who was very reluctant and tentative about the project, to be elected to the governing board of the project and also arranged for him to journey to a neighboring state to address an audience of educators on the subject of the project. Observing all of this, a principal in another building remarked, "He's been bought."

Sara also learned something about decision making in organizations. She learned that decision making is not as rational as it is pretended to be nor defended to be. She learned that solutions are often developed in advance of or independent of problem specification.

The project's needs assessment routine, when used to identify problems in reading programs which need attention, was not impervious to human influence in terms of the problems identified. As Sara remarked: "At [one school] the reading consultant did the needs assessment while schools were closed, and the results totally confirmed what the reading consultant wanted all along. At [another] they started with a solution in mind before the needs assessment was done, and they ended up with their preferred solution." Sara learned to accommodate to the less than rational decision making. She said, "Districts have agendas. Do it [satisfy the agenda]; then move on. That's the only way you can go."

Developing a Personal Strategy. Sara has a work strategy which has evolved over time.. At first her strategy was rather uncomplicated and flowed from her own interest in teaching reading. Her original strategy was grounded in the notion that if one were to use an appeal based on the educational

needs of children, the progress towards excellence in reading programs would swiftly follow. Sara long ago abandoned that uncomplicated posture. Her current, still evolving, strategy can be stated as nine rules.

The first three rules deal with how to get along in schools. They are:

1. Know the informal organization and use that knowledge.
2. Recognize the chain of command.
3. Be armed with something to give which shows an interest in reading.

The remaining six rules center more directly on field agent activity. They are:

4. Go to the schools only on invitation and try to arrange invitations.

   This rule is centered in Sara's belief that it is very easy to be a nuisance in schools and being a nuisance is not compatible with being a linker. The rule also underlines the fact that it is difficult for a non-employee simply to drop into a school and achieve anything by hanging around. First, there is no place to hang around. And second, everyone at the school is busy in his or her walled-off space.

5. Maintain neutrality. Don't be an advocate for any problem or solution.

   To be neutral is to respect the strong autonomy norm in schools. To be an advocate is to violate that norm and also to lose credibility.

6. Attend to group processes.

7. Yield to not-so-hidden agendas.

   They don't go away by themselves. To yield to them is to get them out of the way, then more rational decisions might be made.

8. Work with groups, but not individuals.

9. Create a sense of ownership by clients.

Jim Howard

It is instructive to contrast Jim Howard's experience as a field agent with that of Sara Edwards. Just as Sara did, Jim joined the RDU project at its beginning. He was selected for the field agent position because of his reading background--he had served as a reading specialist in the public schools--and because he had previous experience with reading needs assessments. Additionally, a principal actor in one of the school systems had heard of his work in reading.

When he accepted the position, Jim misunderstood its nature. He believed he was being hired as a reading specialist for the educational resource center which was the host organization in his state. Upon learning the real nature of the job, he thought "That's all right. I know something about the Right-to-Read process." Like Sara, Jim found the job rewarding. However, speaking of the emotionally draining aspects of the job, Jim said, "You get emotionally burned out. You can't be a linker forever. You get too well known. It is well to guard against too much exposure."

Although Jim and Sara both experienced problems with the support system that was supposed to make their jobs easier, at least one of the school districts with which Jim worked was fairly well prepared for collaboration with the RDU project. Before the final decision to collaborate was made, teachers in that district had access to the project proposal, and an assistant superintendent had met with them three or four times prior to the start of the project. Also, a task force had been established in each of the four schools prior to Jim's arrival, and some teachers and administrators had had prior experience with the needs assessment procedures. Further, it was made clear to all concerned that the assistant superintendent fully backed the project and the linker, and such backing was seen by all as an essential ingredient. Moreover, the assistant superintendent spent a full day making the rounds of the schools and introducing Jim, and he was fairly regular in attending meetings of the combined task forces. After making clear his approval of the project, working with teachers in explaining the project, and introducing the linker, the assistant superintendent remained distant from the project except for attending the meetings cited above, by which he continually demonstrated his support. Through the assistant superintendent's maintaining his distance from the detailed operations of the project, teachers came to feel that it was their project, not his.

Jim Howard was prepared to encounter various levels of understanding and misunderstanding about the project. After all, he himself had taken the job thinking he was to be a resource center reading specialist. No doubt his own misunderstanding of the project spurred him to prepare to deal with the misunderstandings that others might have. He prepared himself to explain the project fully--and in each school and district office he gave a presentation complete with printed material and an overhead projector. Subsequently, he developed an audio-slide presentation about the project. As a result of his preparation and his careful presentations about the nature of the project, misconceptions of the project did not reach the high level that they had in Sara's sites. In Sara's case, project misunderstandings were never directly or systematically faced. Although Sara knew all along what the project was about, she did not prepare a careful explanation of the project and dealt with misunderstandings only on an ad hoc basis.

Although Jim Howard had been a reading specialist, he decided that as a linker he did not want to build on that for a relationship. "Rather I wanted to establish one." He did not wish to be seen as a reading specialist because local personnel, he thought, should see the project as their project, not his. Since the project dealt with reading, he felt that building on the role of reading specialist would make it difficult to establish ownership of the project among the school people.

It is less accurate to say that Jim Howard learned his role that it is to say he established it. The role he established had two main points. One point had to do with project "ownership." He established the point that the project belonged to the task forces. It was not his, nor did it belong to the RDU project. While Sara engaged in some manipulation to establish the notion of ownership well into the life span of the project, Jim never faced that problem. The second point made in establishing his role was that he was a facilitator, a helper. One respondent neatly described Jim's role as follows: "(Jim) is the coach. We are the team, with our own captain."

Establishing his role was not a passive activity for Jim. He described his role verbally. He acted it out. And, soon after the start of the project, he asked task force members to write down their expectations of his role, so he could correct misunderstandings on the spot.

Most people seem to learn a role in interaction with others, and these others have a good deal of impact on the role. Undoubtedly it is the non-standard nature of the work of linkers, or the novelty of the position, that permitted Jim to establish a role, rather than to negotiate it with site staff. The task force members with whom he worked had had no prior experience with linkers, no precedents had been set, hence the freedom Jim had in establishing his role.

In his work as a linker, Jim Howard was guided by what he lightheartedly refers to as his "bible." The "bible" consists of two articles written by Jack R. Gibb, titled "Defensive Communication" (1961) and "Is Help Helpful?" (1964). Jim said "I keep them uppermost in my mind as I work with the schools."

The general notion of "Defensive Communication" and its utility to Jim can be seen in the following:

> Behaviors that listeners perceive as possessing any of the characteristics listed in the left-hand column arouse defensiveness, whereas those which they interpret as having any of the qualities listed in the right-hand column reduce defensive feelings. The degree to which these reactions occur depends upon personal level of defensiveness and upon the general climate in the group.

Defensive Climates	Supportive Climates
1. Evaluation	1. Description
2. Control	2. Problem Orientation
3. Strategy	3. Spontaneity
4. Neutrality	4. Empathy
5. Superiority	5. Equality
6. Certainty	6. Provisionalism

Likewise, "Is Help Helpful?" contains some hints that Jim found useful. The following table presents a theory of the helping relationship. Seven parallel sets of orientations are presented. One set of conditions maximizes help and a parallel set of conditions minimizes help.

Orientations That Help	Orientations That Hinder
1. Reciprocal trust (confidence, warmth, acceptance)	1. Distruct (fear, punitiveness, defensiveness)
2. Cooperative learning (inquiry, exploration, quest)	2. Teaching (training, advice giving, indoctrinating)
3. Mutual growth (becoming, actualizing, fulfilling)	3. Evaluating (fixing, correcting, providing remedies)
4. Reciprocal openness (spontaneity, candor, honesty)	4. Strategizing (planning, maneuvering, gamesmanship)
5. Shared problem solving (defining, producing alternatives, testing)	5. Modeling (demonstrating, information giving, guiding)
6. Autonomy (freedom, interdependence, equality)	6. Coaching (molding, steering, controlling)
7. Experimentation (play, innovation, provisional efforts)	7. Patterning (making standard or static)

Jim was made aware of these two articles and their content in training sessions provided by the regional educational laboratory. Systematic evidence is not available about the extent to which the notions of nondefensive communication and helpful help were evident in Jim's day-to-day work with the schools. However, comments made by those who worked with him suggest that his actions were in keeping with these notions. Some such comments follow: "took a while to trust him, but he proved to be as good as his word"; "good listener--restates what is going on to improve communication"; "very positive"; "makes people think for themselves"; "pays sincere compliments"; "up-front, makes no promises"; and "with him we retain our self-security."

A notable element of Jim's work in the schools was the extent to which he maintained contact with all relevant people, the task forces, the principals, and the central office personnel. He never entered a school district without informing the central office person of his visit and his mission. Further, whenever he was in a school district he always stopped in each and every collaborating school even though he might not have any business to conduct in some of the schools.

He felt strongly that the school principals had an important part to play in the collaborative effort. As set out in the project guidelines, principals were expected to be members of the building level task force. Jim did not let the matter rest with mere membership on the task force. He had "little talks" with them about their role in the project and on the task forces.

In one school, however, Jim's interest in the role of the principal ended in a complete breakdown of the collaborative effort. According to Jim, the school task force was operating without leadership from the principal. Even worse, "everyone looked to him," and "he just sat." During a large part of one task force meeting, the principal "visited with a trophy salesman" within hearing distance of the other task force members, and the task force simply waited until the salesman and principal were finished. The next day Jim stopped by the principal's office to ask him whether he was "in the project or wanted out." The question led to a "blow up," and highlighted what Jim called a personality conflict. However described, the incident resulted in a breakdown of the working relationship and the task force activities were abandoned. Upon the breakdown of the collaborative relationship, Jim requested assistance from the project headquarters staff. The project responded by sending a representative of the regional educational laboratory to investigate. However, after the fall of 1977, no further project work was carried out in the school.

Very notable about Jim Howard's work with the school-based task forces was the extent to which he placed the ownership of the project, and the work it entailed, upon the task force members. Whereas Sara would and did jump in, so to speak, and actually engage herself in the planning work when things ground to a halt, Jim never did, even though opportunities for so doing arose. In this way he firmly established the notion that it was their project, not his, and further, that they had to do the planning work.

In working with people in organizations, Jim Howard's style was centered to a considerable extent on the building of strong personal relationships. He was reported to be a master of knowing the people he worked with and knowing their special interests. He seems to have made each task force feel as if it were the only important task force. He informed people of workshops of interest and facilitated their travel, he aided in new job placement for a few of his clients, and he assisted in securing the recognition of two schools in the statewide Promising Practices Fair.

In working with the task forces, Jim never terminated a meeting without setting a date for the next meeting, and between meetings he often telephoned or stopped by to see "how things are going." Although Jim knew that decision making in organizations is not always rational, he attempted to guide the task forces, step by step, through the entire needs assessment process and while so doing tried to suppress flights to solutions before the problem was specified. He was quite successful, but not totally so, in his effort. Jim's thoughts on the needs assessment and solution search process were Catch-22 in character. "If the solution searches for the problem, then (the needs assessment) is a fraud. On the other hand, if no one has anything in mind, the process does not seem to work." Jim's current, though still evolving, strategy includes the following nine rules.

1. Establish your role through instruction and acts. Don't let others mold it.
2. Guard against communication which makes people defensive.
3. Develop a communication orientation that helps, not hinders.
4. Work with groups that include the school principal and instruct the principal as to his or her role.
5. Make sure the clients know that they own the project. Never act as if it is your project.
6. Place the work burden on the clients. Don't do their work or you will confuse the sense of ownership.
7. Establish strong personal relationships.
8. Keep all levels in the chain of command informed at all times.
9. Never leave without arranging another appointment.

* * *

Epilogue

This chapter has presented case summaries of two field agents and their emerging relationships with school clients. These two agents, while situated in the same project, present contrasts of many of the topics that were dealt with in Chapter 5. They came to the job with different expectations, used very different strategies for influencing their clients, and had very different perspectives on how change could best be effected by an external agent. In the end, they also appeared to be quite different in the degree to which they were able to deal with client expectations for their

behavior. Despite their differences, both perceived the role as stimulating and stressful: the process of learning-on-the-job in a role which required continuous negotiation of role expectations with multiple clients was seen by both Jim and Sara as a "burnout" job, though they each developed his or her own strategies for coping.

Jim may have been trying to exercise coercive power when he confronted the principal with the question, "Are you in, or do you want out?" (In fact, this led to the termination of the collaborative relationship with this site.) Sara used the availability of project funds as a reward, rather than threatening to withhold these funds as punishment.

Sara initially relied on her expert power: "She found much comfort from her expertise (in reading instruction)....the reading expertise gained her what seemed to be immediate credibility in the schools." However, she soon learned that her expertise in reading caused some of her clients to try to push her into a role of making decisions about reading programs, rather than helping them to make decisions on their own. Jim resisted typing himself as the "reading expert" from the very beginning: "Although (he) had been a reading specialist, he decided that as a linker he did not want to build on that for a relationship....Since the project dealt with reading, he felt that building on the role of reading specialist would make it difficult to establish ownership of the project among school people."

Both Jim and Sara used reward power to help cement their relationships with site personnel: "During the entry period, Sara learned that she had resources which could be spent to secure a social obligation and perhaps a commitment to the project....Additionally, Sara could and did do 'favors' for school personnel." Jim also did favors for his clients: "He informed people of workshops of interest and facilitated their travel, he aided in new job placement for a few of his clients, and he assisted them in securing recognition of two schools in the statewide Promising Practices Fair." In both cases, the agents' use of reward power appears to have been a deliberate strategy, which was also quite effective.

Neither agent seems to have consciously exerted legitimate power over the sites--i.e., the power inherent in the agent's role as a representative of the project. In fact, on at least one occasion, Sara's attempt to invoke project rules and regulations was overrided by the project director, thus undermining her authority and causing her to lose credibility. Jim

insisted that the task forces take responsibility for the project and reminded them over and over again that the project was theirs, not his nor even the RDU project's.

Jim relied heavily on referent power, the development of personal affinity with site personnel: "In working with people in organizations, (Jim's) style was centered to a considerable extent on the building of strong personal relationships. He was reported to be a master of knowing the people he worked with and knowing their special interests."

Jim seems to have been more strongly oriented towards the political perspective than Sara, though not to the exclusion of other strategies for change. Both Him and Sara made a point of working with the chain of command and included this in their list of rules for field agents. Sara made an effort to work with groups of people rather than individuals, saying "one person can block you, but one person cannot get you in."

The contrast between Jim and Sara is clear, however, in the degree to which they were effective in using political strategies, particularly in the degree to which they allowed powerful site administrators to shape their roles. Sara was very unsure of herself initially and tried to buy cooperation by conforming to everyone's expectations of her as a linker. Jim, however, firmly defined his role and quickly corrected any misunderstandings on the part of site personnel. This forthright tactic seems to have saved Jim from experiencing the degree of role conflict and associated job stress felt by Sara, though the same thing might have been accomplished through a process of negotiation with site personnel.

Despite Sara's adjustments to the "politics of educational change," she typically preferred strategies associated with the individual incentives perspective. She co-opted one reluctant administrator by arranging for him to be elected to the governing board of the project, a move that apparently gratified his ego and prompted another principal to remark, "He's been bought." More often, however, she simply tried to go around obstructive principals and central office personnel. Both Jim and Sara seemed to concentrate their attention on principals and other administrators, rather than attempting to build grass-roots support for the project among teachers. While Sara professed the importance of understanding the "informal organization" of school districts, neither Jim nor Sara showed strong leanings toward the structural perspective on change.

PART IV

AGENT ROLES AND ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION

In this section we return to the topic of what field agents actually do, in terms of delivering services, and how this affects both their own job-related attitudes, and their clients. The quantitative analysis and case materials in Chapters 7 and 8 will not attempt to provide a definitive assessment of the degree to which field agents contribute to the outcomes of school change programs, for this is treated in considerable detail in another volume of this study (Louis, Rosenblum and Molitor, 1981). Rather, the focus of both chapters is upon (1) how field agent roles and activities are affected by job design and management features of their context; and (2) how the roles and activities which they ascribe to themselves are related to field agents' own job satisfaction and to their assessments of site and program "success."

Chapter 7 presents an analysis of agent survey data that reveals two major findings. First, the associations between the types of roles and activities in which agents engage, and both agent job attitudes and measures of school and program outcomes are relatively weak. Second, agent roles and activity patterns appear to be primarily a function of the interpersonal relationships that they have with key influential others--client administrators, and supervisors at the local and more distant project level.

Chapter 8 presents a case study of one agent and her activities in two school settings. It is intended not only to provide some more detail about the quantitative findings, but also to draw attention to relationships that could not be fully examined in the survey data. In particular, the case materials illuminate the way in which the agent's individual personality and resources helped to shape both her general role definition and the activities in which she engaged over a three-year period. Chapter 8 also provides evidence on the degree to which the agent's spontaneous and other unplanned decisions about how to handle her role and client needs had larger impacts upon the progress of her schools through the change process.

CHAPTER 7

FIELD AGENT ROLES AND ACTIVITIES

Previous chapters in this report have focused on how organizational design and support systems for field agents, as well as the agents' strategies for negotiating relationships with sites, affect the agents' attitudes about their work and also their effectiveness. The present chapter focuses on the measures of role and activity performance first presented in Chapter 2. We examine the impacts of field agent roles and activities on the agents' perceptions of program success and site performance (a new variable), as well as on their job satisfaction and other job-related attitudes. We also examine potential influences on field agent roles and activities. Thus, field agent roles and activities are considered both as a cause of site outcomes and field agent job-related attitudes and as a consequence of other factors--namely job design, personal characteristics, the support and training structure, and the agent's relationship to client schools.

Most of the variables included in this analysis have been introduced earlier. The major focuses of the chapter--agent roles and activities--were introduced descriptively in Chapter 2. In this chapter, however, the long lists of different types of roles and activities are reduced to a smaller number. Three roles and four clusters of activities are used:

- field agent roles: program change expert, content specialist, and generalist/coordinator;
- field agent activities: boundary-spanning, working with teachers, budget management, and professional development.

The derivation of these roles and activities from our data is described in the following section:

Measures of Roles and Activities

To perform the analyses for this chapter, the measures of role and activity performance first presented in Chapter 2 were reduced to seven scales--three describing roles and four describing activities. The procedures for defining these scales included factor analysis, followed in some cases by simple adjustments to increase scale reliability. At this point it should be

noted that a number of the original questionnaire items, including some roles and activities which the average field agent performed to a great extent, did not load highly on any of the factors accounting for the differences among field agents, and for this reason they were not included in the scales.

The scales describing field agent roles were derived from questions which asked the agents to rate, on a five-point scale, the degree to which they performed ten possible roles: resource person, coordinator, process trainer, observer/historian, counselor or "handholder," expert in assisting the match between innovations and problems, conflict resolver, content specialist, program implementor, and evaluator. The means and standard deviations for these different roles are presented in Table 2-3, Chapter 2.

The following three scales were derived on the basis of the factor analysis:

- Program change expert. This scale, which has a standardized alpha or reliability score of .75, consists of the following items: expert in assessing the match between innovations and problems, program implementor, and evaluator.
- Content specialist. This scale is composed of one item: basic skills, career education, or inservice specialist.
- Generalist-coordinator. This scale also consists of one item: coordinator.

It may be noted that the program change expert role includes the two roles that were least performed by agents: program implementor and evaluator. The other item in the index, an expert in matching innovations to problems, was also a role performed less than most of the other options in the question, as was the content specialist role, one that agents typically indicated they performed rarely. The only frequently performed role that emerged from the factor analysis was coordinator. This role received the highest rank in terms of the degree to which agents indicated that it described their role behavior.

The scales describing different agent activities were derived from a question which asked the agents to rate the degree to which they spent time on various activities. The list of activities included: meetings with small planning groups at the sites; writing reports; arranging, designing or conducting workshops; travelling from site to site; promoting or explaining the RDU program; working with individual administrators; organizing, preparing and delivering materials; general meetings with site staff; developing

Table 7-1

INTERCORRELATIONS OF ROLES AND ACTIVITIES

		Roles			Activities			
		Program Change Expert	Content Specialist	Generalist Coordinator	Boundary Spanning	Budget Management	Activities with Teachers	Professional Development
Roles	Program Change Expert	1.00						
	Content Specialist	-.04	1.00					
	Generalist-Coordinator	.08	-.26**	1.00				
Activities	Boundary Spanning	.41**	.04	.33**	1.00			
	Budget Management	.00	.09	.25**	.13	1.00		
	Activities with Teachers	.14	.01	.06	.28**	.21*	1.00	
	Professional Development	.06	-.03	.25**	.10	.00	.20*	1.00

*Significance $\leq$ .10

**Significance $\leq$ .05

program change expert and to performance as a generalist-coordinator, but not to performance as a content specialist. In addition, performance as a content specialist is negatively related to performance as a generalist-coordinator. This indicates that those persons who perceived themselves as content specialists were less likely to behave as nontraditional "field" agents and more likely to behave as traditional curriculum specialists, available as a resource in their host organizations, but generally not engaged actively in efforts at the school level.

Outcome Measures: Job-Related Attitudes, Program Success, and Perceived Site Performance

Measures of field agent job satisfaction, sense of efficacy, and role conflict should be familiar to the reader, since they have been used in both Chapters 3 and 5. In addition, in Chapter 5 we introduced the measure of perceived program success, or the degree to which the agent felt that representative groups in a specific client school would rate their site's involvement with the program as a success. In this section we introduce a new measure of school outcomes--perceived site performance. This measure was obtained by asking the agents to rate a randomly selected specific site on the following dimensions:

- To what extent has the solution selected solved the problem identified?
- To what extent is the solution that has been implemented likely to continue to be used?
- To what extent has the problem-solving process been incorporated into the site, implying an ability and willingness to apply the process to future problems?

The measure also includes the difference between the agent's responses to the following two items:

- At the beginning of your involvement with this site, to what extent did the local site personnel have knowledge and skills in effective problem solving?
- To what extent do local site personnel now have knowledge and skills in effective problem solving?

The standardized alpha for the scale is .68.

The Effects of Roles and Activities on Outcomes for Field Agents and Sites

Significant correlations between roles and activities and outcomes for field agents and sites are very sparse, as shown in Table 7-2. Performance as a content specialist, although positively correlated with job satisfaction, is negatively correlated with measures of site performance and program success. One might be tempted to attribute this to the fact that the content specialists were less likely to engage in boundary-spanning activities--were it not for the fact that boundary-spanning activities are also negatively correlated with program success, as perceived by the agent. The field agents' sense of efficacy--that is, their sense of the importance of their own efforts--is negatively related to the amount of time spent in activities with teachers.

Turning to the correlations of roles and activities with role conflict, only two prove to be statistically significant: a negative relationship with performance as a generalist-coordinator, and a positive relationship with the amount of time spent on boundary-spanning activities. The latter finding is easy to interpret and consistent with theory: the more time one spends on activities which bring one in contact with a variety of potential role partners, the more vulnerable one becomes to conflicting demands from various individuals. Largely on the strength of this relationship, a canonical correlation between the two types of role conflict (inferred and reported) and the set of field agent activities was found to be significant at the .10 level.

The negative relationship between the generalist-coordinator role and role conflict may be explained by the relatively low visibility of the coordinator role. Many of the RDU agents described their role as "behind the scenes." They arranged meetings but did not chair them; they brought in consultants to help schools solve their problems but rarely professed their own opinions. Agents who took this strategy were often almost invisible to the members of their client schools. This certainly reduced the number of individuals who felt that they could legitimately expect the agent to perform specific tasks for them.

In general, however, the findings are weak and very scattered, and it is perhaps more appropriate to infer another conclusion: namely, that the reported agent roles and activities have little impact on job-related attitudes and the agents' perceptions of site success.

Table 7-2

SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS OF ROLES AND ACTIVITIES WITH OUTCOMES FOR FIELD AGENTS AND SITES

		Sense of Efficacy	Job Satisfaction	Inferred Role Conflict	Reported Role Conflict	Perceived Site Performance	Perceived Program Success
Roles	Program Change Expert						
	Content Specialist		.34**			-.22*	-.25*
	Generalist-Coordinator			-.22*			
Activities	Boundary-Spanning			.27**			-.27**
	Budget Management						
	Activities with Teachers	-.28**			-.20*		
	Professional Development				-.24*		

*Significance $\leq$ .10

**Significance $\leq$ .05

Why might this be so? Several possible explanations may be given. First, it might be argued that agents simply do not report accurately the roles and activities that they carry out, and they cannot, therefore, predict any outcomes. Thus, while an agent may claim to be acting as a content specialist, he or she may rarely perform that role. However, there are indications that, while agent reporting may not be fully accurate, neither is it totally unrealistic. For example, agents who spent less time on RDU reported performing all roles and activities less frequently than those who spent more time on RDU (Spencer and Louis, 1978). In addition, discussions with agents indicate that while agents may tend to underreport their role as a "conflict resolver," and possibly over-report their roles as coordinators as compared to our own and other observations, these biases are systematic across agents, and result from a tendency to describe their roles to conform more closely to popular and widely circulated definitions of the field agent role.

A second reason for the lack of relationship is that the general roles and activities measured here simply do not tap the features of the agent role that are most important. Other analyses, derived from observations of agents and schools, have suggested that it is both less subtle and more finely tuned features of the agent role that count the most, how much time the agent spends at the site and how frequently they attend project meetings (Louis, Rosenblum and Molitor, 1981) or very situation-specific activities that may change the course of a single meeting or influence a particular individual (Chapter 8, this volume). These features are related to job design and general field agent strategies and perspectives, not to specific activities. (See also Firestone and Corbett, 1981.)

We believe that this explanation is more plausible than the first, for it takes into account findings that have been presented elsewhere in this volume. To summarize, what the field agent does from week to week is less important than the general strategy that motivates his or her choice of activities, the constraints that are placed upon his or her choices by the overall design of the job, and the immediate decisions and interventions which are not necessarily part of a more consciously arrived at role definition.

The Influence of Selection, Job Design, and Ongoing Management on Field Agent Roles and Activities

This section deals with variables which presumably can be treated by managers of field agents: the personal characteristics of individuals selected for field agent positions, the training and support given to these individuals, and two key aspects of job design, project marginality and the percentage of time committed to the job.

Personal Characteristics. Among the personal characteristics which were examined in relationship to roles and activities were age, teaching experience, innovativeness, and skills. Skills were assessed through a battery of items in the second survey of field agents, and as described in Chapter 3, responses were reduced to three scales using factor analysis: change skills, communication skills, and use-of-power skills.

The correlations of roles and activities with age, teaching experience, and innovativeness are shown in Table 7-3. The results show that teaching experience and, to a lesser extent, age--are predictive of the amount of time spent on boundary-spanning activities. That is, younger field agents with fewer years of teaching experience are more likely to spend time on this kind of activity. They are also more likely to assume the role of a generalist-coordinator. Older agents are more likely to perform as content specialists.

Innovativeness is negatively related to activities with teachers and to professional development. The latter relationship is logical because part of what makes a field agent innovative is self-reliance and originality; thus, the fewer opportunities there are for professional development in the field agent role, the more the agent must rely on his or her own resources. Field agents who spend time working with individual teachers have a clear personal profile. The more time that is spent on activities with teachers, the less the field agents perceive themselves as innovative and the less likely they are to see themselves as being skilled in any of the areas tapped by our survey (see Table 7-4). Moreover, as indicated earlier, the amount of time spent on activities with teachers is negatively related to the field agents' sense of efficacy.

The most striking aspect of the analysis presented in Table 7-4 is that there are so many negative relationships between roles and activities and the extent to which field agents perceive themselves as being skilled in

Table 7-3

SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS OF ROLES AND ACTIVITIES WITH AGE, TEACHING EXPERIENCE, AND INNOVATIVENESS

		Age	Teaching Experience	Innovativeness
Roles	Program Change Expert			
	Content Specialist	.30**		
	Generalist-Coordinator	-.44**	-.33**	
Activities	Boundary Spanning	-.28**	-.52**	
	Budget Management			
	Activities with Teachers			-.20*
	Professional Development			-.24*

*Significance $\leq$ .10

**Significance $\leq$ .05

Table 7-4

SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS OF ROLES AND ACTIVITIES WITH SELF-REPORTED SKILLS

		Change Skills	Communication Skills	Effective Use of Power
Roles	Program Change Expert		-.23*	-.35**
	Content Specialist	.20*		
	Generalist-Coordinator			
Activities	Boundary Spanning		-.36**	-.43**
	Budget Management		-.24*	
	Activities with Teachers	-.20*	-.24*	-.24*
	Professional Development			

*Significance $\leq$ .10

**Significance $\leq$ .05

communication and the effective use of power. (Note that communication skills and the effective use of power are highly correlated, r = .86, sign. .05.) Since the strongest negative relationships are with the program change agent role and boundary-spanning activities, a conclusion one might draw from this analysis is that field agents who stress their communication skills and understanding of the power structure are more likely to assume a low profile and be more passive in their relationships with sites. The factors of age and experience may also enter into the explanation of this finding. Older and more experienced agents are, as we have seen, less likely to act as boundary spanners--and they are also more likely to emphasize their ability to communicate and use power effectively (see Table 7-8, at the end of the chapter). Older agents may be more likely to adopt roles which emphasize their ability to understand and work within existing social settings than to challenge the status quo.

However, canonical analyses of the relationships between the sets of roles and activities and the set of skills yielded no significant correlations.

Job Design. The percentage of time committed to the field agent position appears to have had little bearing on the extent to which various roles and activities were performed (Table 7-5). The only significant relationship between percentage time commitment and roles or activities is with the role of program change expert (r = .29, sig .10).

The extent to which field agents perform certain roles is clearly related to both types of marginality (Table 7-5). In particular, the lower the agents' local marginality score--most typically, the closer they feel to the host organization--the more likely they are to perform as a program change expert. On the one hand, this appears to be reasonable, since the role of program change expert is a relatively intrusive one, and an agent might be less likely to feel comfortable performing it without a secure organizational base. This line of reasoning may also be used to explain the negative relationship between boundary-spanning activities and local marginality. While local marginality is negatively related to the agent's willingness to engage in the higher initiative boundary-spanning activities and program change role, project marginality does not hinder this behavior. This finding again confirms the importance of examining marginality in terms of different sets of organizational settings in which the boundary spanner must operate. Project marginality is, in fact, positively related to the per-

Table 7-5

SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS OF ROLES AND ACTIVITIES WITH SELF-REPORTED SKILLS

		Percentage RDU	Project Marginality	Local Marginality
Roles	Program Change Expert	.29*	.29**	-.27*
	Content Specialist		.34**	
	Generalist-Coordinator			
Activities	Boundary-Spanning			-.30*
	Budget Management			
	Activities with Teachers			
	Professional Development			

*Significance $\leq$ .10

**Significance $\leq$ .05

formance of the program change expert role. If we synthesize these two findings and are willing to speculate a little, it appears that, where a high initiative external change role is needed, it is important to ensure that the agent is attached to the host organization, but not so locally vested that he or she does not identify with the demands and requirements of the more distant sponspring organization. The effective program change expert may, necessarily, serve two masters.

Training and Support. The training variables examined in relationship to roles and activities included aggregate measures of the extent to which training was received in a number of content areas, the usefulness of the training that was received, the appropriateness of the amount of training received in each area, and the timeliness of the training. Very few significant correlations were found, and these were quite scattered. The appropriateness of the amount of training received was negatively related to performance as a content specialist ($r = -.36$, sig .05) and to the amount of time spent on professional development ($r = -.24$, sig .10). The timeliness of the training was positively related to the amount of time spent on boundary-spanning activities ($r = .26$, sig .10). (See Spencer and Louis, 1980 for a more detailed discussion.)

The influence of various role partners on field agent roles and activities was quite strong, as shown in Table 7-6. This analysis included several members of the field agent's support system--project director, project evaluator, and immediate supervisor. Where the project director's influence was relatively strong, the field agent tended towards higher levels of performance in the roles of program change expert and content specialist. The project evaluator's influence is also related to performance as a program change expert, while the supervisor's influence is related to performance as a content specialist and a generalist-coordinator.

The amount of time spent on boundary-spanning activities is related to the levels of influence of all three role partners. One possible interpretation is that higher levels of boundary-spanning activities involve increased contact with role partners at all levels, thus increasing the opportunity for these role partners to exert an influence on the field agent.

Table 7-6

SIGNIFICANT CORRELATIONS OF ROLES AND ACTIVITIES WITH INFLUENCE OF VARIOUS ROLE PARTNERS

		Project Director Influence	Project Evaluator Influence	Supervisor Influence
Roles	Program Change Expert	.23*	.26**	
	Content Specialist	.21*		.23*
	Generalist-Coordinator			.28**
Activities	Boundary-Spanning	.59**	.28**	.43**
	Budget Management			
	Activities with Teachers	.25**		
	Professional Development			.39**

*Significance $\leq$ .10

**Significance $\leq$ .05

However, this explanation ignores the fact that most of what goes on under the title of "boundary spanning" involves being in the field and out of contact with supervisors in either the host or the project. In fact, if the indicators making up the boundary-spanning role are recalled, they involve far more emphasis on the field than on the office: travelling from site to site, meeting with small planning groups in the schools, promoting or explaining the program, and organizing, preparing or delivering materials. The only projector host-oriented components are writing reports and meeting with project staff. Thus, it seems more likely that more intensive boundary-spanning activities are caused by the expectations of local and project supervisors than that boundary-spanning activities increase contacts with, and thus the influence of, supervisors.

Table 7-7 shows that frequency of interaction with members of the field agent's support system is a good predictor of field agent roles and activities. Some differences in the pattern of relationships are worth noting. First, although the supervisor's influence is related to performance as a content specialist and a generalist-coordinator, the frequency of interaction with the supervisor is related to performance as a program change expert. Second, there is a relatively strong negative correlation between the amount of time spent on budget management and the frequency of interaction with the project evaluator; however, this is probably an artifact of the delegation of responsibilities within projects. As expected, boundary-spanning activities are positively correlated with support from all levels.

Before leaving the topic of how role partners influence the agent, we should look for the forest amidst the trees. The most significant finding from a management perspective is that influence from all role partners tends to be positively reinforcing. We do not find, for example, that influence from the project director is positively correlated with boundary-spanning activities, while influence from the host supervisor is negatively correlated with this role. This finding extends also to the influence of site administrators, which is positively correlated with both boundary-spanning activities and activities with teachers (r = .44 and .26, sig .05) (see Table 7-8 at the end of this chapter). Although we found earlier that increasing influence from multiple role partners tends to significantly augment reported and inferred role conflict, this does not necessarily mean

Table 7-7

CORRELATIONS OF ROLES AND ACTIVITIES
WITH SUPPORT FROM VARIOUS ROLE PARTNERS

		Project Director Support	Project Evaluator Evaluator	Supervisor Support
Roles	Program Change Expert	.31**	.33**	.26*
	Content Specialist			
	Generalist-Coordinator			
Activities	Boundary Spanning	.49**	.35**	.38**
	Budget Management		.32**	
	Activities with Teachers			
	Professional Development			.26*

*Significance ≤ .10
**Significance ≤ .05

that role partners are sending signals that are so opposite and mixed that the agent is expected to act in entirely different ways.

Conclusion

The major finding of the preceding analysis is that interpersonal relationships have a strong influence on what field agents do. All role partners--including members of the field agent's support system, as well as site administrators--are able to influence some aspect of the field agent's roles or activities.

Other factors influencing the field agent's roles and activities include the agent's age and experience. The percentage time commitment to the field agent position, although expected to have an influence, is relatively unimportant. Characteristics of the field agent's training also have little influence.

The direct relationships between what field agents do and the field agent's sense of efficacy and job satisfaction are relatively weak, yet the field agent's performance of different roles and activities have a significant effect on perceived role conflict.

Finally, although we know that the extensiveness of a field agent's involvement and influence in local change efforts is positively related to successful school change, the analyses in this chapter showed little relationship between what field agents do and the field agent's perceptions of site performance and program success. Again, the possibility that our measures of roles and activities are too general to produce differences in outcomes should be noted. It is also possible that the field agents' perceptions are not adequate measures of site outcomes.

TABLE 7-1

CORRELATION MATRIX FOR VARIABLES USED IN CHAPTER 7

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34
1. Sense of Efficacy																																		
2. Job Satisfaction	-.03																																	
3. Site Performance	.30**	-.04																																
4. Program Success	.44**	-.10	.31**																															
5. Inferred Role Conflict	-.10	.11	.17*	-.11																														
6. Reported Role Conflict	.07	-.09	-.15	-.09	.30**																													
7. Project Complexity	-.23*	.26*	.01	-.10	.11	-.13**																												
8. Local Complexity	-.21*	-.12	.17*	.10	-.32**	-.07*	.15																											
9. Age	.16	.07	-.04	.11	-.30**	-.11	-.09	.12																										
10. Teaching Experience	-.16	-.11	-.02	.10	-.27**	-.11*	.19	.12*	.34**																									
11. Change Skills	.09	-.04	-.27**	.05	.11	.05	.05	-.11*	-.05	.04																								
12. Communication Skills	-.09	.04	.17	.12	-.14	-.20*	-.19	.17**	.25**	.27**	.11																							
13. Use-of-Force Skills	-.09	.04	.01	.11	-.12	-.21*	-.21	.30**	.14*	.29**	.19	.44**																						
14. Innovativeness	.11	-.23**	.17	.29**	-.05	.11	-.47**	-.02	.09	.02	.12	.19*	.17																					
15. Percentage	-.19	-.01	.11	.07	-.09	-.41**	.49	.22*	.10	.16	-.05	.04	-.06	-.01																				
16. Amount of Training	-.29**	.11*	-.31**	-.17	-.07	-.46**	.17*	.28**	-.14	.02	-.11	.11	.12*	-.11	.04																			
17. Usefulness of Training	-.30**	.09	-.37**	-.37**	-.09	-.11	.29	.11	-.07	.10	-.19	-.01	.04	-.09	.14	.79**																		
18. Adequacy of Support	.17	-.29**	.11	.02	.12	-.01	-.19	.17	.02	-.11	-.07	-.01	-.07	.09	-.07	-.10	-.04																	
19. Timeliness of Training	-.09	.11	.10	-.01	.42**	.11	-.11	-.10	.10	-.19	-.14	.01	-.09	-.01	.11	-.10	-.12	.09																
20. Influence/ Director	.11	-.05	-.04	-.09	.12	.17*	.09	-.20	-.02	-.22**	.10	-.11	-.14*	.09	-.03	-.10	-.19	.09	.45**															
21. Support/ Director	-.21*	-.09	.09	-.12	.17**	.21*	.22	-.30**	.04	.09	.11	.01	-.01	.23*	.40**	-.41**	-.07	-.07	.35**	.41**														
22. Influence/ Evaluator	.01	.04	-.29**	.04	-.17	.11	.09	-.17	.09	.02	.01	-.09	-.11	.09	.09	.15	.02	-.19	.07	.47**	.19													
23. Support/ Evaluator	-.11	-.02	-.09	-.11	.11	.02	.10	-.20*	-.09	-.09	-.09	-.21*	-.17**	.01	.39**	-.07	.17**	.09	-.19	.11*	.34**	.21												
24. Influence/ Supervisor	.07	.04	.11*	-.02	.13	-.21	.12	.11	-.09	-.22*	-.13	.04	-.05	-.10	.19	-.09	-.19	-.12	.21	.22*	.09	-.09	-.04											
25. Support/ Supervisor	.09	.09	-.07	-.12	-.25**	-.10	.09	-.01	.04	-.01	-.12	-.11	-.19	.02	.39**	-.01	-.09	.12	.29*	.11**	.12	.29**	.21*	-.09										
26. Support/ Other Staff	.09	.12	.07	-.21	-.07	.04	.20*	.17*	.09	-.07	-.29**	.09	.14	.02	.29*	.10	-.14	.09	.17	.10	-.09	.17*	-.02	.25*	.31**									
27. Site Admin. Influence	-.20**	.11	-.01	-.43**	.45**	.09	.20*	-.09	-.11	-.22*	-.22**	-.11	-.10	-.27**	.14	-.02	-.02	.01	.30**	.32**	.31**	.02	.02	.30**	.12*	.37**								
28. Program Change Support	-.09	.09	.11	.02	.09	-.09	.29**	-.17*	-.17	-.12	.02	-.13*	-.27**	-.09	.29**	-.12	.09	.14	-.29	.41*	.21**	.26*	.27**	.09	.30**	-.01	.12							
29. Content Specialist	-.02	.34**	-.22*	-.15	.01	.04	.34**	-.09	.30**	.15	.22*	-.14	-.11	-.09	.02	.11	.10	-.34**	.07	.21*	.17	-.01	.09	.12*	.09	-.02	.09	-.04						
30. Consultant-Coordinator	-.10	-.05	.07	-.02	.14	-.11*	.10	.07	-.40**	-.17**	.11	.14	-.10	-.09	-.09	.01	.07	.09	-.07	-.09	-.04	-.11	-.09	.09	-.11	-.12	.10	.09	-.14					
31. Ancillary Speaking Activities	-.01	-.01	.02	-.37**	.02	.37**	.12	-.30*	-.42**	-.37**	-.10	-.30**	-.43**	.12	.11	.11	.01	.02	.21*	.29**	.49**	.39**	.35**	.47**	.39**	.11	.44**	.41**	.09	.27**				
32. Budget Management	.09	.12	.02	-.11	.09	-.19	.29	-.12	-.17	-.12	.17	-.21*	-.19	-.15	-.12	.02	.04	.11	.19	.11	-.09	-.03	-.17**	.09	-.09	.10	-.02	.19	-.09	.33**	.12			
33. Activities with Teachers	.20**	-.09	-.01	-.15	-.14	.11	-.09	.09	-.12	-.17	-.20*	-.21*	-.24*	-.20*	-.11	.10	.11	.11	.22	.21**	-.02	-.04	.10	.09	.12	.07	.20**	.13	.11	.09	.19**	.12*		
34. Professional Development	-.06	-.01	.01	-.06	-.21	.02	.14	.15	-.13	.06	-.10	.10	.10	-.24*	.04	.06	.06	-.24*	.06	.12	-.02	.05	-.30	.30**	.30*	.01	.13	.04	-.01	.29**	.15	.06	.30**	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34

* Significant ≤ .10
** Significant ≤ .05

141

CHAPTER 8

THE NORTHEAST FIELD AGENT IN ACTION: A CASE*

Beverly Loy Taylor

The Northeast field agent seems to typify focused energy, enthusiasm bound up with clearheaded thinking. One gets a sense of her straightforwardness, partly from the way she looks directly at people, and partly from the problem-solving orientation that she brings to her work.

Working as a community organizer in the late 1960's, the Northeast field agent became involved in adult education and training, an interest which expanded from on-the-job exploration to a master's degree in adult education. During that time, she also grew proficient in organization development skills, which she has applied to independent consulting.

Joining her agency in the summer of 1975, she served in two capacities, both of which proved to be excellent training for her subsequent role as an RDU field agent. First, she worked as a field agent for the National Diffusion Network State Facilitator Project. Second, she coordinated, as well as participated in, a project aimed at helping groups of local school administrators define their educational planning and management needs, select a suitable inservice program, and create a plan for using newly acquired skills in their own districts.

Unlike most other field agents in the RDU program, the Northeast agent had never taught in the public schools, a fact which she was quick to point out to the school people with whom she was working, and one which she came to regard as a plus:

> All of my work has been with adults and small groups. I stressed that I was a teacher of adults, not of children. Because I wasn't coming in as an expert teacher of kids, I didn't see myself as helping teachers in that way, and they felt comfortable knowing that I wasn't coming in to judge their teaching.

---

*This chapter was adapted from Beverly Loy Taylor, The Inside Outsiders, Andover, MA: The NETWORK, 1980, pp. 86-126. The full report, which contains case studies of two additional agents, may be obtained from The NETWORK.

Furthermore,

> I wasn't defensive about not having a public school background. My skills were in a different area, and besides, my first year at the agency provided me with the opportunity to go out and work with a lot of different schools. By the time I joined this project, I knew a lot about schools and how they worked.

Pointing to the focus of the project on working with site-level planning groups, the agent noted that one of the major attributes she brought to the position was her extensive experience with group processes. She mentioned in particular such activities as group problem-solving, team building, decision making, and conflict management. Another strength noted by an observer is her range of interpersonal skills: communicating, active listening, supporting and reinforcing, and counseling. A third strong point involves her knowledge of organization issues:

> I know how to analyze organizations, who the key people are and how to work with them. I'm good at understanding people's roles and seeing situations from different points of view within an organization. I can help people negotiate by interpreting different perspectives to them.

The one area in which she felt she needed some help was reading theory, since she didn't have the slightest acquaintance with it:

> Malcolm Knowles says that a process consultant doesn't have to know anything about the content, but I disagree. During that first year, when people were arguing about different notions of reading, I had to know enough about it to be able to intervene, even if it was just to know when to say I didn't understand or to make sure everybody in the group knew what was going on.

Although she doesn't claim to be a reading expert now, the Northeast field agent has learned a lot about the area through the project's training and her own efforts, which provided her with the proper grounding.

The overall impression of the Northeast field agent is of an experienced, self-reliant person who took responsibility for her work at her sites and for getting her own needs met. She is a self-learner and a seeker of information when she feels she needs it.

The agency in which the Northeast field agent works is a nonprofit educational service organization that provides training and technical assistance to public and non-public schools, intermediate service agencies, colleges and universities, and funded educational projects. While historically a service organization, the agency has recently become involved in coordinating a multi-agency research effort to study school improvement programs in ten states. It has the State Facilitator project, and also provides technical assistance to model programs for the handicapped and to Title I demonstration projects. The agency teems with activity on its three floors, and even the basement level has been converted to work space. The ambience is cheery and good-natured with much joking and bustling, and people pitching in during crunches of activity to help each other.

The Agent's Perception of Her Role

The Northeast field agent regarded the major goals guiding her work as:

- diffusing R&D outcomes to local schools,
- facilitating the change process, and
- creating an awareness of a systematic problem-solving process among school staff.

Welcoming the intensive, long-term relationships with a few schools, the field agent perceived her role in two ways. First, she considered herself to be "manager of the change process," functioning in five major role categories:[1]

- process enabler--organizing and guiding a multi-constituent group in communicating ideas, determining needs, making decisions, managing conflicts, and solving problems;
- resource arranger--planning and setting up training events and statewide conferences, making certain that materials were available, providing financial help, and arranging for appropriate consultants;
- information linker--providing needed information on processes, materials, and other resources, as well as connecting group members to other information givers;
- coordinator--smoothing the way for planning and implementation activities, arranging for substitute teachers, opening communication between central administration and school, and timing group events to fit with district and school concerns; and
- observer/recorder--preparing group statements, writing minutes of meetings for school records, keeping accurate accounts of site events.

Second, she saw herself as a "consultant to managers," meaning principals, focusing on organizational consulting, guiding the process, and helping principals to be more effective. She viewed herself as being engaged in organizational interventions, and because the project had a building focus, felt that she got maximum leverage from working most directly with principals. She considers this a "classic OD approach, a top-down model starting with the principal, but including participative aspects of working with teachers in decision making."

Within the site planning groups, the Northeast field agent played a strong focusing and initiating role. She chaired the groups at the sites, led the meetings actively, pushed them to do some things to get more information, and pressed them to make decisions. She stated that she "almost always stood back and merely facilitated group decision making," though about one site she remarked:

> "I thought they were never going to decide, so I said "Okay, this is what I think you should do." They said, "Oh no, we don't want to do that." At least it helped them decide what they <u>didn't</u> want.

Although she never participated in the actual decision, she did her best to push the group along to make it. For example, at another site which had narrowed its choices to two programs but could not reach a decision, she developed a comparison sheet of the pros and cons of both programs, which the group then used as a basis for discussion.

She felt herself to be in control of the decision-making groups, inasmuch as she led the meetings, and described it as "appropriate, and helpful for them, to have somebody outside the district play that role." In fact, the superintendent in one district told her: "I think you are trusted here and perceived as objective by all parties....They believe that you work in the best interests of everybody and that you are an objective outsider." Interestingly, this "outsider" was perceived as an "insider" by a principal at another site late into the third year of the project. They were discussing his idea to bring in an outside consultant to lead a staff meeting on concerns over reassignment, early retirement, accompanying rumors, and so on. When the field agent offered to lead the meeting, the principal responded: "You're not really an outsider anymore. You're seen as part of the group, and even though you might do a good job and I might be wrong, it doesn't <u>feel</u> like having a neutral outsider."

At the outset of the project, the Northeast agent designed her role, based on the guidelines contained in the proposal and, later, on the milestones as they were formulated, and operated quite independently. She recalls that her mission during the first year was clear, and she knew exactly what had to be done. This first-year clarity, however, began to dissolve once the planning groups had passed the program selection point and become involved in implementation issues:

> We passed through the decision-making process, and I had to figure out my new role during implementation. That's a problem for process consultants involved in resource utilization--when people start implementing, they need a lot of specific help. I couldn't possibly become an expert in all those programs, so I had to redefine what I was doing. It was a real crisis for awhile.

Her role shifted from that of a process consultant to a troubleshooter as implementation got under way:

> I started visiting classrooms, just as a way to keep myself visible in the school, but then I found that teachers liked it. They felt supported. I discovered that it was also a good way to gather information on how things were going, what troubles existed.

The field agent was able to figure out what needed to be done, whom to call together, what consultants might be helpful, how to involve the principal without compromising teachers' positions. But, she adds:

> It would have been easier on me if I didn't have to fill up 100 percent of my time. I kept thinking, "I should be doing more than I'm doing," but I couldn't figure out what.

Believing that her role definition was critical, both to her and to the schools, she decided to involve the site people in the task by negotiating with them what functions she would perform that year and the next. As a result of these negotiations, she continued her troubleshooting function and "signed on" for such work as providing assistance with evaluation, including development of student and teacher surveys; aiding a principal in structuring his new plan for establishing task forces on organizational issues like building use and community relations; meeting monthly with the site planning groups; and encouraging diffusion of the new programs within and beyond

the district. Negotiating her role with all of her sites proved to be a successful strategy: it not only resolved her questions, but it also fit well with her process orientation and consultant stance. How much influence the agency exerted on her interpretation of her role in the second and third year is unclear. She sought help from several agency people (the agency director, her supervisor, other agents), and it may be that out of these consultations arose the notion of her role negotiations with sites.

The Field Agent's Use of Resources

The Northeast field agent seemed to rely on the resources provided by the project staff and by her agency somewhat more than any other resources that may have been available. For instance, of the wide array of resources made available through the central project, she mentioned the following as having particular value for her:

- The network of field agents. She felt herself to be a part of a network of field agents in the project, though she confesses not doing much to express this feeling, other than calling very occasionally to talk over ideas. She also spoke of the "bridge" that seemed to exist between NDN State Facilitators and RDU field agents, noting that her network encompassed other field agents in her agency.
- Project meetings. The Northeast field agent considered the training sessions, particularly those in the early portion of the project, to be extremely useful. Moreover, she considered the sharing sessions of the meetings very valuable: "Getting together was always wonderful. People were really good about listening to each other, engaging in each other's problems, giving advice. That was the best part of those meetings for me."
- Central project personnel. The Northeast field agent used the central project personnel frequently for bouncing ideas and getting new ones. Of her primary contact, she said, "He acted as a consultant to me. I often sought him out to talk through a problem. He had something of a therapist mode, which was helpful, if a bit limited at times." She tended also to seek out the project director, whom she described as "a real good consultant, especially skilled at providing alternative strategies and at helping me to think through all the issues."
- Other resources. The Northeast field agent found the project's proposal to be an invaluable guide to the tasks and the approach expected of field agents. She referred to the proposal as a "blueprint," particularly for the first year. Other resources, such as a collection of articles, indexed for field agents, she also found useful.

The Northeast field agent also cited other types of resources provided by her home agency:

- The agency supervisor. The Northeast field agent said of her supervisor: "I never really used him as a consultant, because he's not a field person. But we would work through some things. He was always supportive and always made himself available to me. It was good for me to have that ongoing person to talk to." The supervisor referred to himself as a "ready ear" for her, noting that the field agent had strong ideas about what she wanted to do. Their regular contact lessened during the third year of the project, when it seemed to consist mostly of occasional updates and work plan checks.

- Other agency people. The field agent felt that she had a large stable of talented people available to her, people quite skilled at doing the kind of work she was engaged in at her sites. She stated that she used them very frequently by structuring discussions with them and by informally bouncing ideas off them, and added: "It's really been helpful to be in an agency where there are other diffusion activities going on. People know people, so it was always easy to get good recommendations for trainers and to get connected with other project people."

While the field agent was comforted by the ready availability of resources both within her home agency and at the project level, she gives the overall impression of not needing much help. One senses that it is important for her to be self-reliant, to call upon others only when necessary. This notion comes out clearly, in fact, in a discussion regarding her desire to establish an ongoing relationship with an agency supervisor, in which she stated:

> I don't like to seek out help. It's always a problem for me. I usually wait until I'm desperate before asking for help, unless there is some mechanism that encourages discussion on a regular basis. Then I'm inclined to ask for help as I need it. I decided to try to head off that kind of situation by getting a regular connection with someone at the agency.

The Field Agent in Action

For all three years of the project, the Northeast field agent devoted 100 percent of her time to the field agent position. She spent about 20 days per year at each of her four sites during the first two years, less during the third. The first year involved bi-weekly meetings with the site planning groups; meetings with principals, assistant principals, curriculum coordinators, and assistant superintendents; training sessions; and

informal chats with teachers and other district personnel. She estimated that documentation of her activities that year required approximately 15-20 percent of her time.

The second and third years of the project called for a shift in focus and application of her skills as the school people moved into implementation and then routinization of their new programs. While she continued meeting regularly with the planning groups (about once a month), she also took on a new function: troubleshooting. The third year was a continuation of the second, with an additional component of "settling the program into a more or less permanent niche" and exploring ways of diffusing it within the district. The amount of time required for documentation was judged to have decreased to about 10-15 percent for these years.

Five major phases of the field agent's work (entry into the sites, problem identification, program selection, training and implementation, and disengagement) provide the framework for looking more closely at the Northeast field agent's activities at two of her four sites: Bridgetown, an elementary school in a small port city, and Jefferson, an elementary school in a suburban community.

The Sites. Located in a once-thriving port city that has experienced a strong shift from a predominantly white working- and middle-class population to a black and Puerto Rican welfare one, the Bridgetown school has been characterized as one of the few remaining hopes in the midst of decline. The city has lost half its population (now about 25,000) in the past 10 years, mostly as a result of a great fire that swept the city, destroying much of the middle-class residential area and the small manufacturing plants. Half of the population now survive on welfare or Social Security. The schools have aggressively sought and obtained federal and state funding; as the largest elementary school, Bridgetown receives a lion's share of Title I money. It draws students from the remaining white families as well as the black (about 12 percent) and Puerto Rican (25 percent) communities, split about equally between welfare and working class, with another 10 percent from the middle-middle class. Serving about 1300 students in K-8, Bridgetown houses seventh and eighth graders in two wings, each administered by an assistant principal. Teachers are mostly young and white, often working on a provisional basis, given the ever-present threat of staff cuts due to the shrinking tax base. They create a warm climate in the school, and seem

to care a lot about the kids. The new principal was brought into the school in September 1976, when the previous one retired. Reading comprehension proves to be the main problem area, made more complex by the ethnic diversity of the students.

Jefferson is situated in a suburban community of approximately 19,000 people, 99 percent of whom are white, and mostly working class, who commute to one of the two large cities located 30 miles away. The citizens have been described as anti-education and anti-intellectual, and are well noted for their tight hold on public spending, a fact well underscored by their defeat of striking teachers: they refused to meet any of the teacher demands and the court proceeded to jail a few teachers as well. The community has a substantial group of Italian- and Franco-Americans. Jefferson is the largest of the elementary schools; its staff of 25 serve over 600 students in an older building that was renovated several years ago to create "open space" classrooms--large, rectangular open areas staffed by teacher teams of three working with about 75 students. The open space was mandated by the central office and doesn't sit too well with the staff and some of the community. The principal has been characterized as paternalistic yet democratic, caring and extremely supportive. He eats lunch with the students, so that he can chat with them, and he enjoys a close working relationship with the teachers in his building, one that persisted throughout the bitter and unsuccesful strike. Student achievement scores in reading were the lowest in the district, but not severely low compared with national averages. The main need seems to be of creating continuity in the language arts program.

Entry. The field agent's first contact with the Bridgetown site occurred in June 1976 when she met with the assistant superintendent and the two assistant principals to give an overview of the project and to answer any initial questions. A follow-up meeting in early September included the new principal and consisted of a review of the project design and a discussion of the site planning group--its function, membership, tasks, and meeting schedule. A list of criteria were developed for membership of the group, and dates were set for a presentation to the whole faculty as well as for individual interviews with randomly selected teachers. The field agent noted happily:

> The Bridgetown people are enthusiastic, intelligent, and sensitive to the issues. They raised issues that I would have had to if they were not so skilled, like criteria for group membership and the need for developing support for the program in different parts of the school community. I was impressed with the principal who summed up ideas and at the end of the meeting asked, "What are our next steps?," then began outlining them. I'm looking forward to working with these people.

About 50 people attended the faculty presentation in mid-September, and the field agent said, "The tone of the meeting was very much one of administrative support for the program." She was pleased with the friendly nature of the session, and noted with some admiration that the school people had thought to invite a parent, who was present, and who had agreed to serve on the site planning group.

The first meeting of the group was held in late October and involved an overview of the project and the group's role in it, as well as the beginnings of identifying the reading problems at the school. The field agent handed out an inventory for assessing individuals' views of the strengths and weaknesses of the district's curriculum improvement effort. The meeting was relatively short, and the agent commented:

> This was an exceptionally nice group, but a little odd in its composition. There were no parents and an awful lot of administrators. A few didn't seem to have much connection with the Bridgetown school. But, I was very impressed with the way they listened to one another and with their commitment to the work ahead.

Membership was altered, to bring in more teachers and to drop the "extraneous" people. In this move, the Title I director appointed a Title I teacher to take her place, which had later consequences for the program. Two parents were added to the group. The principal, new to the district and to the school, decided to delegate responsibility for the project to one of the assistant principals, so that he could tend to his other duties. Although he still attended the group's meetings, his role was of a quieter nature, and the assistant principal took over the work of arranging meetings with the field agent and carrying out the school-end logistical tasks. The field agent came to view the principal as "not obstructive, but just not seeing the project as his program. In his mind, he thought he was being supportive."

Entry into Jefferson was only a bit less even than at Bridgetown. A June 1976 meeting with the principal and two reading specialists was followed by a second overview meeting in September with the principal and the new language arts and reading coordinator for the district, who would serve as the central office representative to the site planning group. At this meeting the nature of group membership and its function were agreed upon, as well as the type of approach the agent would take at her presentation to the school faculty. The agent called this meeting more relaxed than the first, noting that the principal seemed less harried and more open to the concepts of the Consortium.

The field agent gave a presentation at Jefferson similar to the one she had given in Bridgetown. The whole staff came to this meeting, which was held on the first day of school. The field agent noted that the principal "introduced me by the wrong name" and she described the question-and-answer period in terms of the few questions that were "slow in coming. The group was not very responsive." Later, from the individual interviews she conducted with teachers, she learned that the principal is generally thought of as "disorganized, overworked and prone to promising things he doesn't deliver."

The first group meeting was a no-show, because the principal forgot about it and failed to invite people. The field agent took this time to have a serious talk with the principal about things she could do to help him and how their working relationship might be improved. She pointed out that she saw him and his school as her client and was available as a consultant to him on broader organizational issues as well. They established some ground rules, and the agent later recorded:

> Even though I was very upset about this incident, it may turn out to be an important turning point in our relationship....I am going to have to work with him on organization and follow through.

The group's first meeting took place in early November, and the field agent helped them "to catch up" by asking the principal to distribute copies of the curriculum improvement inventory ahead of time. She then put their responses to the influential factors section of it on newsprint so they could begin discussing them. The meeting went very well, and the agent was pleased and surprised to note that there was considerable agreement in their individually written responses to what they thought was the main problem in reading.

Problem Identification. The Northeast field agent propelled the groups through this phase by conducting a state-wide conference for all four sites in mid-November 1976. Coming at a point in the process when each group had met once or twice, the all-day meeting boosted their initial enthusiasm, connected them to the "larger effort" of their involvement in a state- and national-level project, and grounded them in some techniques for defining curricular problems. Reporting how the state-wide conference had gone, the field agent was very enthusiastic:

> This day was an outstanding success! It served as a team building session for both the school groups and the total group, as a training session in problem definition...and as a work session where school teams made progress on their own work.

Bridgetown had already worked on defining their main problem by using a worksheet with existing state and desired state categories before going to the state-wide conference. Having developed a rough problem statement at the conference, what remained for them was to refine it, which they did at their December meeting. They then decided to get reactions to their problem statement by distributing it to the whole Bridgetown faculty. To energize a "draggy" group "meeting'd out" and fatigued from holiday activities, the field agent scheduled a full-day retreat, away from their work-a-day concerns, for developing a final problem statement that incorporated faculty responses to their draft, selecting criteria for a suitable program, and involving parents, whose participation by this time had become negligible.

This all-day meeting, held in late January 1977, resulted in a final problem statement. A good start was made on selecting program criteria through the use of a curriculum analyzer activity calling for them to list their preferred attributes of a good reading program and to share these individual assessments with others in the group. The agent noted that this activity stirred excellent discussion of many of the issues. One-page program descriptions and sample materials were distributed to group members, who were asked to pair off and examine one program in depth according to the curriculum analyzer so they could report to the whole group by the next meeting.

For Jefferson, the state-wide conference provided the group with the groundwork that enabled their relatively speedy resolution of the problem identification phase. They had developed a survey and distributed it at the parents open house. At their November meeting, they examined the results, most of which were positive and supportive. The field agent suggested they use the results of the teacher survey to try to develop a problem statement, all the while keeping student outcomes in mind. This proved to be a difficult and frustrating task for them, but the group managed to produce a list of problems that existed. Not feeling good about the way the meeting had gone, the agent sought the principal's support and advice. He suggested that she mail copies of the generated list of problems to group members so they could think about them before the next meeting. This idea proved to be a good one. Using the problem statement worksheet from the state-wide conference, the agent guided the group through the problem statement process at their next meeting in December. They were prepared for it, engaged in the task readily, and accomplished the work. The field agent had anticipated their success and opened a bottle of wine which she had brought to celebrate the event.

Program Selection. The field agent worked steadily with her sites to encourage them to look objectively and systematically at various programs before making a choice. At Bridgetown, when the group had difficulty responding directly to her call for selection criteria, she conducted a discussion of several reports on programs reviewed by pairs and listed what appeared to her to be implicit requirements. She then presented this list as the beginnings of a set of selection criteria; the group ratified it and added other possibilities.

The group pushed for seeing programs in action right away, having discarded several on the basis of their analyses of program materials. Concerned that they "didn't know what they need to know," the field agent aided them in developing an observation checklist to be used on site, and suggested that they complete it before the next group meeting. She arranged site visits to other schools to observe the two "finalist" programs, and accompanied selected members on one of the trips. When visits were completed, she conducted a lengthy meeting in which the pros and cons of each program were listed by the group and recorded on newsprint, a poll was taken, and the result was unanimous for one of them. In May 1977 a final vote was taken,

with three other teachers who had made site visits sitting in on the group meeting. Once again, the vote was unanimous for ratifying their first choice.

In early January 1977 the Jefferson planning group identified criteria for a suitable program and began to examine program descriptions with the use of the curriculum analyzer, to which the field agent had added some categories. Said the agent:

> The curriculum analyzer activity has never failed to produce a stimulating discussion of what people think are important elements in a curriculum. People were really involved, anxious to share their answers and to hear others, eager to discuss implications. I played a minimal facilitation role, which probably helped to get things going and to probe areas that could have gotten glossed over.

The field agent coordinated a plan for pairs to examine program descriptions and report on their observations to the whole group by comparing the programs with the group's criteria.

After six programs had been reviewed, and three eliminated, the agent suggested the addition of another for consideration. She delivered actual program materials to the group for study before the next group meeting, and reproduced copies of their problem statement so they could look at the programs with that as a frame of reference. The principal suggested a meeting "so the group could plan the school visits. I don't want them to just look around. They should know what they're looking for and maybe we should develop an observation instrument." The agent suggested that he conduct this portion of the meeting, while she wrote ideas on newsprint, an arrangement that worked well and resulted in a good, categorized list.

The field agent made arrangements for the group to visit three programs in action, and also had prepared a program visit report form for their use. The group elected to take non-group members of the faculty with them on the visits, a move described by the agent as a "good, first step toward communication with the rest of the faculty and a means of building support as they go along." She accompanied the group on one of the visits as well. After the visits, one program was dropped from consideration, the second was analyzed in a discussion of pros and cons led by field agent, and the third was thought to require more visits by others. The field agent was asked to make a presentation to the entire faculty on the two

contending programs because she was "objective and had no ax to grind. Also, as an outsider, she could catch flak." The agent says:

> I presented each program in a pretty straightforward manner. There were some questions after each and then more after I had finished both. I posted newsprint sheets so that they all could see both programs' features side by side. Mostly this was an information-gathering meeting for the faculty. I got no clear indication from them for one program or the other.

When several people started discussing a trial run of one program, with the idea that they could drop it if it did not work out right away, the field agent took a strong stand:

> You should give your choice a real shot. Though you can drop it at a suitable time, you shouldn't go into it with the idea that you can get out pretty quickly. And unless I hear a lot of enthusiasm for the program, I would recommend not choosing it because it is a difficult program and different from what the rest of the district is using.

The planning group polled teachers later on the two programs. At their meeting in May, with the poll results heavily in favor of the "difficult" program, the group began talking about training and implementation of it. The field agent asked if they were choosing this program, and everyone said yes. The principal added, "It looks like a mandate to me."

Training and Implementation. The Northeast field agent played a key role at both sites in negotiating adequate district commitment to the program implementation with the central office. At Bridgetown, she was designated by the school people as their representative to meet with the assistant superintendent to bargain for district funds to support training costs of teachers' pay and materials. At Jefferson, she and the principal met with the superintendent; the agent deserves the credit for obtaining a commitment of $1200 to support the training effort (where there had been no allotment previously). She was firm in her approach and well informed on district financial problems, but most of all, direct in saying what she expected in funding as an expression of district commitment to the program. She reported:

> I am thrilled at the results of this meeting! The principal is too, and I think he's giving me a certain amount of credit for it.

In addition to getting district financial commitments, the field agent worked with the groups at both sites to sketch out elements of the

implementation plan for use during the coming year. She arranged the training session, which occurred in late August 1977 and was attended by 10 Bridgetown and 19 Jefferson school people, as well as two representatives from NIE and the project's "linker support specialist." She attended the full-week session as observer/recorder, writing copious notes of what was done, and focusing particularly on areas that would call for preparation before implementation and on issues relating to the program's intersection with the rest of the school curriculum and staff.

She described her own role:

> I found it wearing to be in a linking position this week. I was answering to a number of people: all of the teachers with their complaints and insecurities, the administrators from the schools, the NIE folks, and the trainer. It was difficult to be in a position of having to troubleshoot for so many little problems and receive none of the benefits. That is, all of the glory went to the trainer; all of the complaints and problems came to me.

At Bridgetown, implementation proceeded fairly smoothly, with a few ripples from the Title I director, who was feeling left out. It was left to the field agent to remind her of her decision to appoint a Title I teacher to represent her on the planning committee, and to calm her by instituting regular update meetings with her. In addition, the agent met monthly with the principal to keep him apprised of the new adoption. Two days were scheduled for field agent interviews with teachers regarding their concerns and changes over the year, so that they could be compared with interview data obtained at the outset of the project. The field agent met with a slimmed down planning group about once a month to monitor the implementation and correct any emerging problems.

At Jefferson, implementation was interrupted by a breakdown in teachers' contract negotiations in early September and a strike that followed soon after. There was great bitterness between teachers and the community, during which time the Jefferson principal showed his colors in a strong demonstration of his support and empathy with his staff. Much hugging took place on his doorstep at strike's end as teachers returned from their defeat at the hands of the community. Curiously, the teachers rallied and plunged into implementation of the new, and needless to say, demanding program.

Implementation of the new program proceeded, and the principal reported getting good comments from parents who were already seeing a difference in their children's reading behavior at home. The agent met monthly with the planning group to monitor the program, and they developed a plan for evaluation and for informing parents more specifically about the program. She wrote an article describing it, which appeared in the local newspaper, and drafted a letter for the principal's signature that, along with copies of the article, was sent out to parents.

Follow-up training was held at Bridgetown in late January 1978 in an all-day workshop at the public library. The field agent believed the workshop answered some of the questions teachers had and eased their frustrations. In late March the agent met with five teachers to give them positive feedback and discuss ways of helping.

Meantime, the field agent met regularly with the planning group and decided on an evaluation plan that included examination of student papers, student interviews, and parent and teacher surveys. The agent created the student survey herself, adapted a parent survey used elsewhere, and worked with the principal in developing the teacher survey, all of which were to be conducted in May 1978.

The field agent arranged a two-day advanced training workshop in late June for nine Bridgetown teachers and three administrators. She characterized it as "pleasant, upbeat, for everyone," commenting on the skill of the trainer and the fact that it was a good time to review the first year of implementation and solve those problems before starting the second.

At Jefferson a curriculum planning day in January 1978 was given over to an all-day session on the new program so that people could make suggestions for the next year. Follow-up training was arranged for later in January at a parent's home. In addition to the content assistance provided, the agent observed that it offered a much-needed social occasion, including a pleasant dinner. In February the agent arranged for a Bridgetown teacher to visit Jefferson to share her experiences in the program and offer help. The agent's meetings with the planning group resulted in the decision to conduct surveys of students (developed by the agent), teachers (developed by the agent and principal), and parents (adapted by the agent from one used elsewhere). In addition, achievement tests were scheduled to be administered at the end of April, and a final report to the school committee was prepared for the June meeting.

The field agent planned and conducted a state-wide conference in June 1978 for sharing what the four school sites in the state had accomplished during their first year of implementation. She planned an interesting comparative activity, which involved their filling out an inventory of how curriculum change takes place in their district, if and how people are involved, how satisfied they are with the process, and so on. After discussing the results in the group, she then produced the same inventory, which they had completed at the first state-wide conference in November 1976 (and hadn't remembered filling out before) and compared the results:

> The discrepancy was enormous. It was wonderful! Whereas before they'd filled out low involvement, low satisfaction, etc., this time around everything was marked high, and people said terrific things about how involved they felt.

Disengagement. The Northeast field agent began the process of disengagement in the fall of 1978 when she started to pull back visibly from each of the sites. At Bridgetown, she met with the planning group in September to talk about goals for the year. The group decided to disband, and the agent began meeting monthly with the district reading coordinator to check on progress, discuss parent involvement, and plan dissemination activities. She also met regularly with the new assistant superintendent to talk about further diffusion, by school building, of the program. The program had already started to spread when teachers gave district presentations the previous year, which resulted in teachers from other schools getting trained in implementing the program. Parent involvement remained thin at Bridgetown, and the field agent's efforts to get the school to mount a full-fledged evaluation of the program met with resistance.

The program itself was running well ("things are in pretty good shape, they're taking care of things," she reported) with minimal assistance needed. The agent encouraged two members of the staff to give a presentation at an urban conference sponsored by her agency and said they did a pretty good job of it, but have not responded to her other efforts to disseminate information about their experiences with the program. In June she prepared a final report for the assistant superintendent and administrators, in which she gave a history of the project and summed up what had resulted so far. This report constituted a farewell, and a signal for the end of her

involvement there. She noted that she felt confident of the program's stability in the school and added that the only thing missing was good evaluation data and a more cosmopolitan approach to dissemination activities.

At Jefferson the field agent continued to meet regularly with the planning group and together they achieved more than Bridgetown did in the way of evaluation and dissemination, both of which the agent considered to be a real part of the disengagement phase. They worked on implementation problems and recruited parents to volunteer help in the program. The field agent was most impressed by the Jefferson group's strong interest in dissemination, which was marked by their presentation at a reading conference, and, most especially, by their readiness to train some of their teachers to be trainers for the new program.

The field agent, having worked so closely with the principal throughout the project, selected him as the likely candidate for continuing where she left off. Part of her work that year, then, involved helping him to organize for taking over the details of keeping the program in good running order. As with Bridgetown, the agent prepared a final report for the administrators that summarized the project and its achievements and served as a goodbye to them. She left this site with very good feelings about the program's place in the school and predicted that it would live a long life.

Effects of the Field Agent's Role

The field agent felt that her involvement with the sites had resulted in mostly positive effects on the schools, including: improved reading achievement scores, an increase in teachers' knowledgeability about reading, a commitment to the adopted programs, improved self-images for the participants, an improved image for the schools in the eyes of district administrators and parents, an inclination to use similar problem-solving processes to address other issues, and (in three of the four sites) greater cohesiveness, with teachers and principals working together as units.

Regarding the effects of her role on her own personal and professional development, the field agent listed these comments:

- I think I've grown as a consultant and have learned more about long-term consulting in organizations. My self-confidence as a consultant has increased.
- I learned a great deal about schools and about reading and language arts.

- I had the opportunity to operate my own project relatively autonomously and to succeed in it. I think I proved my worth to the agency and have since been given numerous opportunities to be on panels, to do workshops, to become a project director, to manage proposal-writing efforts both inside and outside of the agency.
- I really like the work and the intent to work over a long period of time with school people. It was very satisfying to me.
- I learned more about the National Institute of Education and federal programs, and had the opportunity to "represent" field agents at an NIE planning meeting.
- I have had the opportunity to share my learnings through workshops in other states, through American Educational Research Association presentations, and through presentations at the Dissemination Forum.

When asked what was most stressful about the field agent role for her, the field agent replied that there were two types of stress: (1) at times she felt isolated, not a part of either the agency or the sites, and (2) she was tense during the transitions between stages of her work, when her role had to change as a result of moving into a new phase.

She noted that "this was one of the best jobs in the agency, because I had autonomy in my work, independence in determining my role." At the same time, though, she points out that "this kind of field position carries no power. It's really a steppingstone to a higher-level job."

* * *

Epilogue

The case of the Northeast field agent provides a vivid description of the variety of roles that field agents might be called upon to perform, including most of the roles listed in our original survey questionnaire. Most importantly, she served as a process helper, resource person, and coordinator. These roles were most evident during the initial stages of each site's participation in the project. However, unlike most field agents in the RDU program, the Northeast field agent also made a successful transition to a new role definition when the task of leading sites through the process of problem identification and program selection was completed. Thus, her role in the second and third years of the project included a heavy emphasis on facilitating program implementation and helping to design and conduct program evaluations.

The case also provides ample evidence of events which allowed the agent to affect the course of change in both Bridgetown and Jefferson, and how her basic roles were tailored to specific needs at specific times in the two schools. For example, differentiated responses to unique school settings are exemplified by the agent's proposal of a full-day "retreat" to motivate a disinterested group at Bridgetown, and the agent's strong stand regarding a short trial implementation period in Jefferson. These represent not general roles, but rather the more instinctual actions of an experienced facilitator to ensure that the change process does not get off target or come to a standstill. In sum, the data from the case suggest that the agent may have as great an impact by being on-the-spot with a good idea at the point when decisions are being made, as by having a well-worked through set of general strategies which guide the broader outlines of her role and activities.

The roles which the field agent adopted were conditioned, in part, by her own background and training. Unlike most agents in the RDU program, the Northeast field agent had no teaching experience and no particular expertise in basic skills instruction. She was, instead, a specialist in organization development. Thus, her role was heavily process-oriented, even in the second and third years. She was never viewed as a content specialist.

During the first year, the field agent's role definition was based, in large part, on her understanding of the project's expectations as set down in formal documents: "At the outset of the project, the Northeast agent designed her role, based on the guidelines contained in the proposal and, later, on the milestones as they were formulated, and operated quite independently." For a brief period, following the adoption of a program in each site, her role was more ambiguous and she felt some related anxiety, especially since she had a full-time position to fill. She compensated for the lack of a formal role definition by negotiating a new set of functions with personnel from the sites. Thus, site personnel were instrumental in shaping her role during the second and third years of the project.

The field agent valued support from the project director, her own supervisor, and other agency staff quite highly, yet none of these individuals exerted a major influence on her roles and activities. Instead, her discussions with these individuals served mostly to clarify her own ideas. Although another person might suggest some way of resolving a particular problem, the field agent was largely responsible for defining her own role

(within, of course, the general project guidelines). The field agent found the training provided by the project extremely useful, particularly as it helped to fill in the gaps in her knowledge of reading instruction. However, she particularly valued the sessions in which field agents shared ideas and discussed problems among themselves.

The field agent's independence in designing her role was based, in part, on the marginal nature of her position, but also on her own tendency to be self-reliant. While she mentioned marginality as a source of job stress, she was also pleased to have been given "the opportunity to operate my own project relatively autonomously and to succeed at it." Her marginality vis-a-vis the local sites was also helpful, though it was a difficult position to maintain while also developing a close, collaborative relationship. To one site administrator she was the "objective outsider," while to another she was "not really an outsider anymore." In the latter site, being too much of an "insider" made her ineffective in certain roles where the client's perception of objectivity was important.

In summary, the field agent's interpersonal relationships with members of the project support structure and with site personnel had considerable bearing on her performance as a field agent; while her overall strategies were similar at both sites, her specific activities were tailored and often spontaneous. In this case, it was the agent's willingness to condition her behavior to the evolving circumstances at each site that most profoundly affected her performance.

CHAPTER NOTES

1. These categories were synthesized by the case study researcher upon hearing the field agent discuss her roles. They are based on categories described by Crandall (1977) as well as categories used in Abt Associates' survey instruments.

PART V

Some Reflections on the Field Agent Role

CHAPTER 9

REFLECTIONS ON FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT OF FIELD AGENT ROLES

The analyses and cases presented in previous chapters have covered much ground. Many relationships have been explored, both through statistical analysis and through a more holistic examination of the experiences of a few agents. The report began with a claim that our objective was to contribute to some degree to an improved understanding with regard to the effective management of field agents in education, and also to advance current theories about the boundary-spanning role. In order to reach either of these objectives, it is necessary to step back from the complexities of our data and reflect on our findings in a more simplified form.

In this chapter, we first summarize our major findings and from these derive a tentative schema for predicting the job attitudes, behavior, and effectiveness of educational field agents. We then point out some of the implications of this schema for the design and management of field agent roles. In keeping with the exploratory nature of this study, our conclusions sometimes go beyond the statistical findings. In some instances, we have dared to be speculative; but, in general, our conclusions are based on the accumulated evidence of not only the statistical analyses, but also extensive qualitative data from case studies and interviews. Still, our conclusions should not be taken as prescriptions for the design and management of field agent roles, but rather as points to be considered both in managing such roles and conducting further research.

Summary of Findings and Interpretations

Before beginning the summary, we should review the variable domains covered in this volume, starting with the three categories of outcomes: job-related attitudes, roles and activities, and field agent effectiveness.

Job-related attitudes of the educational field agents have been a major focus throughout this volume. These include the agents' satisfaction with their jobs, their feelings of efficacy (i.e., the extent to which they feel that site outcomes were dependent on their efforts), and their feelings of job stress or role conflict.

The second category of outcomes is the extent to which the field agents performed certain roles and activities often attributed to external change agents and others in boundary-spanning positions. Although we started with a longer list of roles and activities, we discovered through factor analysis that several field agent functions accounted for most of the differences among field agents in our sample. The roles examined in subsequent analyses include program change expert, content specialist, and generalist-coordinator. The activity categories are boundary-spanning activities, budget management, activities with teachers, and professional development.

The final category of outcomes includes measures of field agent effectiveness. These include the field agents' perceptions of program success at the site level (i.e., the extent to which school personnel regard the program as a success), the agents' perceptions of the quality of local decisions and problem-solving activities (site performance), and the responses of teachers and principals concerning satisfaction with both their own field agents and the problem-solving process through which these agents led them.

Current management and role theory suggest that these outcomes might be influenced by a variety of independent variable groups, many of which were examined in this report. These include the following:

- Personal characteristics of field agents, including age, sex, teaching experience, skills, and the extent to which they regard themselves as innovative;
- the design of the field agent position, especially the percentage of time committed to the job, the extent of formalization of the position--for example, through written job descriptions--and the positioning of the field agent with respect to the project, the host organization, and the client schools (marginality);
- characteristics of the training given to field agents, including the total amount of training received, the perceived usefulness of the training, the appropriateness of the amount of training received in various categories, and the timeliness of the training;
- the degree of support given to the field agents by supervisors and colleagues, and the degree to which these individuals influenced the field agents' role performance;
- the field agents' perspectives on change--i.e., whether they believe that political systems, individual incentives, or the social structure of the schools best explain and condition the outcomes of school change efforts; and

- the characteristics of the field agents' relationships with sites, including the field agents' influence over site activities and decisions, the foundations for their influence over the sites, and the influence of site administrators on field agent activities and time allocations.

A tentative schematic representation of the relationships among these variables, based on the findings in Chapters 3 through 8, is presented in Figure 9-1. This schema presents not only the direction of relationships as we have inferred them from the analysis, but also the relative strength of these relationships. Some of the important features of this schema are summarized below for each major outcome category.

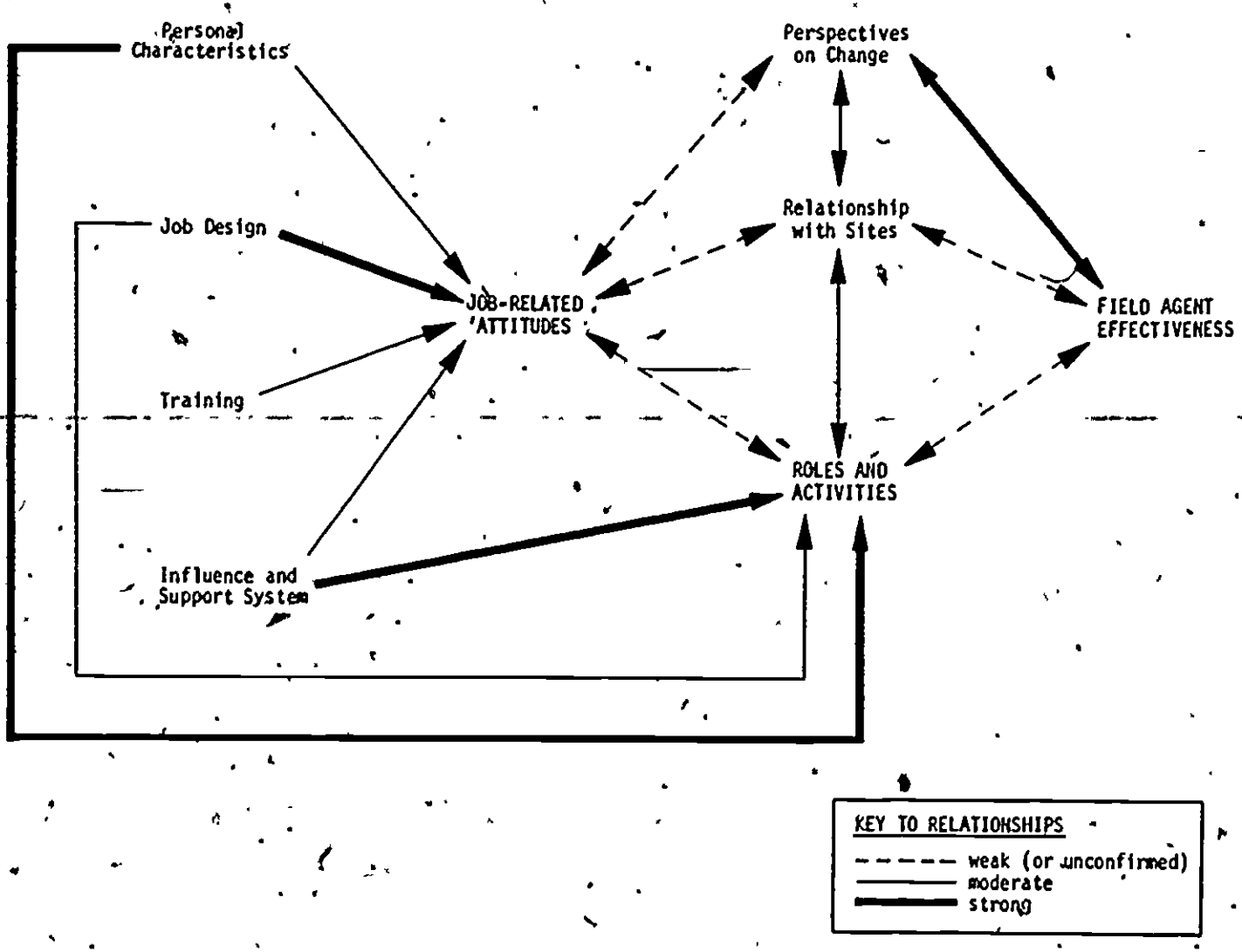
Job-Related Attitudes. The most important predictor of job-related attitudes is job design--and, within that category, the key factors are marginality and time commitment to the field agent position. Higher levels of commitment to the position and higher levels of marginality tend to reduce job stress for field agents. The support system developed by the project and host organization is also related to job attitudes, particularly levels of job stress, but it was found that an active support system--for example, higher levels of support and influence from the project director--tends to increase indicators of stress rather than relieving them. In other words, an active support system for a field agent is also one that involves multiple significant role partners making more demands upon the agent. Older and more experienced agents appear better able to cope, since they report lower levels of job stress. In addition, training increases job satisfaction and reduces job stress, though it is negatively related to the agents' sense of efficacy.

The analysis indicates that the simplest way of reducing job stress and improving job satisfaction is to employ more experienced individuals and ensure that they do not identify too strongly with any one organization in the network. In addition, it may be important to make sure that the field agent support system is well coordinated--to reduce conflicting demands on the agents--as well as responsive to the agents' own perceived needs.

Field Agent Roles and Activities. What field agents actually do in carrying out their jobs is also a function of a variety of factors. Two influences on role enactment are most critical: the support and influence system set up by the sponsoring organizations, and the influence and interaction of the field agents with key school-level administrators who act as gatekeepers in defining what the agents will do in their districts. In sum,

Figure 9-1

TENTATIVE SCHEMA FOR PREDICTING
JOB ATTITUDES, BEHAVIOR, AND EFFECTIVENESS OF FIELD AGENTS



what agents do is primarily a function of the patterns of interpersonal influence in which they are embedded. Most notably, higher levels of influence from all major role partners--the project director, project evaluator, host supervisor, and site administrator--tend to lead to more extensive performance of "boundary-spanning activities," i.e., those activities through which the agent communicates both information and influence across organizational boundaries. High levels of influence from the project staff tend to lead to a greater emphasis upon the "program change expert" role, where the agent is actively involved in assessing the match between site problems and innovations, implementing those innovations, and evaluating the outcomes. Conversely, high levels of influence from the host supervisor tend to lead to an emphasis on the less intrusive "content specialist" and "generalist-coordinator" roles.

Another very important finding is that agents with high local marginality are less likely to adopt the program change expert role and also less likely to engage in boundary-spanning activities. If we interpret high local marginality as low affiliation with the local host organization, this may indicate the need for a firm local base for boundary-spanning activities.

Older and more experienced field agents are less likely than other agents to engage in boundary-spanning activities, which may also explain their tendency to experience less job stress. The more field agents engage in boundary-spanning activities, the more role conflict they perceive.

Just as important as the above findings, however, is the theoretically significant "null" finding that field agent roles and activities--at least as we have measured them--have little bearing on other outcomes for field agents, such as job satisfaction or sense of efficacy, or their client effectiveness in sites.

Field Agent Effectiveness. In general, as we have just noted, the specific roles that field agents assume and the activities they perform have very limited impacts on measures of field agent effectiveness--including client satisfaction with the agent and the process, the agent's perceptions of program success, and the agent's assessment of the quality of local site decisions and activities. Much more important than the specific roles performed by the agents are the general strategies that the agents adopt, which are reflective of their perspectives on change. For instance, a political orientation is particularly effective in increasing principal satisfaction, but has an opposite effect on teachers. With teachers, an

overall strategy emphasizing individual needs and concerns tends to create a more favorable impression. The exercise of reward power and the legitimate power of field agents to prescribe site behaviors has a positive effect on success at the site level. Innovative field agent behavior has a positive influence on program success, though it tends to lead to dissatisfaction among both teachers and principals.

Despite their critical importance, however, field agents tend not to be explicitly aware of their overall strategies for change. Unless forced to reflect upon their assumptions about how the change process proceeds in schools, most agents, in our experience, tend to act on intuition rather than because they have some explicit game plan for dealing with a site. The relative importance of perspectives for the agents' effectiveness with clients suggests that agents would profit from a support system that requires them to clarify the assumptions and the strategies that underlie their intuitively arrived at behavior patterns. Our suggestion is not that agents should give up their knowledge about how best to respond to clients in particular settings. Rather, it may be important to urge the agents to stand back from their own behaviors and to determine how those behaviors either do or do not add up to a strategy that will be effective with the group they are trying to influence.

Implications for the Design and Management of Agent Roles

Selecting Agents. The discussion presented in the above chapters indicates that current data do not support a "science of selection" for the field agent role. The only personal characteristics of agents that emerge as significant are agent experience, and innovativeness. It is clear that managers of field agents should take care not to put individuals who are highly innovative--i.e., creative, inquiring, independent, etc.--into this type of role. These individuals find a role that is "behind the scenes" and low profile to be a burden, and they tend also to annoy their clients. Older and more experienced persons are, on the one hand, easier to manage because of their low job stress, but on the other hand, they are also less likely to perform central boundary-spanning activities. These individuals may be successful in relating to schools with high levels of internal support and key internal change agents among the district administrative staff, but they will have limitations in other settings. On the whole, it appears that

many different types of individuals can move into a field agent position and survive--even prosper--and do some good for their clients.

Reducing Job Stress. The sources of job stress for educational field agents are, apparently, numerous. Many features of job design and client relationships which might be thought of as stress reducers are, in fact, positively correlated with stress. For example, for a manager of field agents to eliminate role conflict is, from our analysis, virtually impossible: the more the agent behaves as a boundary spanner, the higher his or her role conflict will be. More importantly, however, job stress is not necessarily dysfunctional to job performance. While this may not mean that managers should cease to worry about stress, it does imply that we may have placed too much emphasis on the negative aspects of role conflict for agents. For some people, the conflicts inherent in the field agent job may be invigorating.

Marginality by Design. Marginality--the extent to which agents perceive themselves as not belonging to any one organization in the project network--may be regarded as a positive feature of the job. Insofar as marginality is within the control of the manager of the agent, considerable attention should be paid to ways of fostering a balance between the apparent need to have a secure local base in order to carry out higher initiative roles and activities, and the equally important need to maintain identification with the larger, nonlocal organization and goals. Marginality is, generally, "good" for the individual agent--it reduces job stress in significant ways. The primary way in which the organization can influence marginality is by locating the agent in a hospitable host, and by ensuring that the agent has a local supervisor who takes an interest in the agent role.

The Paradox of Support. The greater the levels of support from larger numbers of role partners, the greater the tendency for agents to engage in important boundary-spanning activities. Nevertheless, high levels of support can also increase role conflict and may even result in annoyance with the support system as a whole. The delicate job of field agent management is to know just how much support is needed. It is important that the level of support be responsive to the agent's needs to feel included in the larger organization and to have resources to turn to for advice. However, this must occur without greatly increasing the burdens of communication and reporting such that the agent feels overwhelmed with paper work. Nor should this support unnecessarily increase the conflicting demands of role partners.

There are no easy solutions, except to note that too little communication and support can be extremely debilitating to the agent, particularly at the host organization level, but too much can have equally negative effects in terms of role overload.

Learning by Doing. The data examined in this volume confirm the exploratory analysis in Louis and Sieber (1979), which emphasized the tendency for poorly defined roles, such as that of a field agent, to be learned through a trial-and-error process. The data presented here, and additional qualitative materials, indicate that formal training has little impact upon agents' role performance while "tricks of the trade," which can be shared with peers at the appropriate point in a problem-solving setting, are one of the few mechanisms for transmitting the craft.

Learning-by-doing implies that clients have a great influence over what the agent finally acquires as a set of craft skills. In this demonstration program, neither agents nor their supervisors had the opportunity to consider whether individual agents were obtaining an appropriate mix of clients to facilitate their own role development. A manager faced with a more rational job design situation, however, should view the allocation of clients to agents as a decision process rather than a random one. Thus, new agents, or experienced staff members who are making a transition into the field agent role, might be assigned to clients who can ease them into a range of activities and roles. This might well help to ease the job stress and role "burnout" described by the two agents in Chapter 4.

Agent Influence and Power. The issue of influence in a field agent role is always a delicate one. Most field agents refuse to acknowledge their role as change agents, and often claim they do nothing other than what they are asked to do by their clients. Indeed, we find that agents who perceive themselves as having legitimate sources of influence, or the power to command clients, are generally less effective. The agent must exercise influence in subtle ways.

Influence is still important, however. Influence affects both the quality of the problem-solving process that sites go through, and also the degree to which the sites actually implement a significant organizational change program (Louis, 1980; Louis, Rosenblum and Molitor, 1981). On the basis of our other analyses, we tend to discredit the value of a field agent who is only responsive to client demand.

Perhaps some of the most effective agents that we observed were quite intrusive at various points in the client's problem-solving process--calling meetings, organizing or structuring agendas, suggesting the need to make a decision. What they generally did not do, however, was to define appropriate decisions--that is, by exercising their own creativity. This they left to the client organizations.

Perspectives on Change. Agents are the products of their own backgrounds and training. As noted in Chapter 2, the agents in this study tended to be professional educators, and the perspectives which they brought to their new roles were heavily dosed with the individualist orientation and humanistic psychology which pervade the curriculum in schools of education. While this orientation may well have made it easier for the agents to relate to their colleagues, it also prevented them from seeing the school system as a system of influence and power. Many of the agents failed to deal effectively with organizational gatekeepers. Few took the direct route of confronting differences in expectations head-on, and working them out or terminating the relationship.

The data suggest that agents should be taught the value of the political perspective on change--how organizations work as systems of power and influence, and how this can have positive and negative effects on a change program. Those agents who could adopt such a perspective were particularly successful in gaining the support of principals, the ultimate key to school-level change.

Agents and Individualization. Current change theory suggests that effective change strategies are contingent. What works well with one type of organization or school may be ineffective with another. Agents, in interviews, constantly stressed the degree to which they tailored their activities to sites. Overall, however, our data do not suggest high levels of individualization: variance between agents is greater than variation in an individual agent's behavior across sites.

We believe that both the agents and the data presented in these chapters are correct. Agents probably do tailor their activities, and make constant adjustments in their preferred strategies in order to account for local variations in capabilities, inclinations and schedules. However, there are two more important and overriding sets of variables which constrain individualization. We have already mentioned the power

of agent perspectives--perspectives that do not affect the behaviors we have measured here, but which probably do condition the contingent choices of behavior at the client site. In addition, it should be noted that project design features affect the agents' ability to carry out even their own preferred strategies. Project design and overall management have, in fact, significant impacts on how clients view the field agent and the degree to which they respond to field agent intervention.

The impact of project design and management upon the overall functioning of the project and upon success at the school level is the topic of another report (Rosenblum and Louis, 1981). However, it is important to note that the analysis in this report reached similar conclusions from a very different set of data sources, namely that client school reactions to a field agent are as much a function of the organizational setting that surrounds the individual agent as of his or her behavior. This does not, of course, imply that policy and management should ignore the question of what tactics are most appropriate for educational field agents, but only that the organizational and political realities of the field agent role should be given equal attention.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, J. Stacy. Interorganizational Processes and Organization Boundary Activities. Research in Organizational Behavior, Vol. 2. JAI Press, Inc., 1980, pp. 321-255.

Adams, J. Stacy. Structure and Dynamics of Behavior in Organization Boundary Roles. In M.D. Dunnett (Ed.), Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology. Chicago, IL: Rand McNally, 1976, pp. 1175-1199.

Bennis, W., Benne, K. and Chin, R. (Eds.). The Planning of Change. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969.

Butler, M. and Paisley, W. Factors Determining Roles and Functions of Educational Linking Agents with Implications for Training and Support Systems. San Francisco, CA: Far West Laboratories for Educational Research and Development, 1978.

Chabotar, K.J., Louis, K.S. and Rosenblum, S. RDU Study and Its Policy Context: Perspectives of Policy Makers. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc., 1980.

Corbett, D. The Field Agent in School Improvement: Client Contributions to the Role. Philadelphia, PA: Research for Better Schools, December 1980.

Cotton, C., Browne, P. and Golembiewski, R. Marginality and the OD Practitioner. Journal of Applied Behavioral Sciences, 13, 1977.

Crandall, D. Training and Supporting Linking Agents. In Nash, N. and Culbertson, J. (Eds.), Linking Processes in Educational Improvement. Columbus, OH: University Council for Educational Administration, 1977.

Deal, T. and Nutt, S. Promoting, Guiding and Surviving Change in School Districts. (Draft) Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc., 1979.

Decad, J., Madey, D., Royster, E. and Baker, F. Building Capacity for Improvement of Educational Practice: An Evaluation of NIE's State Dissemination Grants Program. Vol. III: A Special Study of Linker Roles and Activities. Durham, NC: NTS Research Corporation, 1980.

Emrick, J. Evaluation of the National Diffusion Network. Volume I: Findings and Recommendations. Menlo Park, CA: Stanford Research Institute, 1977.

Emrick, J. and Peterson, S. Educational Knowledge Dissemination and Utilization: Synthesis of Five Recent Studies. San Francisco, CA: Far West Laboratory, 1978.

Firestone, W. and Corbett, H. Schools Versus Linking Agents as Contributors to the Change Process. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 3: 1981, pp. 5-18.

French, J. and Raven, B. The Bases of Social Power. In D. Cartwright and A. Zander (Eds.), Group Dynamics. Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson, 1966, pp. 607-623.

Gibb, J.R. Defensive Communication. The Journal of Communication, 11: 141-148, September 1961.

Gibb, J.R. Is Help Helpful? Forum, 238-242, February 1964.

Gross, N., Mason, W. and Mceachern, A.W. Explorations in Role Analysis: Studies of the School Superintendent Role. New York, NY: Wiley, 1958.

Hall, G., Loucks, S., Rutherford, W. and Newlove, B. Levels of Use of the Innovation: A Framework for Analyzing Innovation Adoption. Journal of Teacher Education, 26, 1975, pp. 52-56.

Hamilton, D.S. and Muthard, J. Research Utilization Specialists in Vocational Rehabilitation: Five Years Experience. Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin, 2, 1975, pp. 377-386.

Havelock, R. The Change Agent's Guide to Innovation. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Educational Technological Publications, 1973.

Havelock, R. Planning for Innovation Through Dissemination and Utilization of Knowledge. Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research, 1969.

Hood, P.D. and Cates, C.S. Alternative Approaches to Analyzing Dissemination and Linkage Roles and Functions. San Francisco, CA: Far West Laboratories, 1978.

Bouse, E. Three Perspectives on Innovation: The Technological, the Political and the Cultural. In R. Lehming, (Ed.), Knowledge Use For School Improvement. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1981.

House, R.J. and Rizzo, J.R. Role Conflict and Ambiguity as Critical Variables in a Model of Organizational Behavior. Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, Vol. 7. Academic Press, Inc., 1972, pp. 467-505.

Kahn, R., Quinn, R., Snoek, J.D. and Rosenthal, R. Organizational Stress: Studies in Role Conflict and Ambiguity. John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1964.

Katz, R. and Kahn, R. The Social Psychology of Organizations. New York, NY: Wiley, 1964.

Keller, R.T. and Holland, W.E. Boundary-Spanning Roles in a Research and Development Organization: An Empirical Investigation. Academy of Management Journal. June, 1975, pp. 388-393.

Louis, K.S. Products and Process: Some Preliminary Findings from the R&D Utilization Program and Their Implications for Federal Dissemination Policies. Paper presented at the 1980 meeting of the AERA in Boston, MA: May 30, 1980.

Louis, K.S. The Role of External Agents in Knowledge Utilization: Dimensions for Analysis and Action. In R. Lehming (Ed.), Knowledge Utilization for School Improvement. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1981.

Louis, K.S., Kell, D. and Chabotar, K.J. Perspectives on School Improvement: A Casebook for Curriculum Change. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc., 1980.

Louis, K.S., Molitor, J., Spencer, G. and Yin, R. Linking R&D with Schools: An Interim Report. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc., 1979.

Louis, K.S. and Rosenblum, S. Designing and Managing Interorganizational Networks. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc., 1981.

Louis, K.S., Rosenblum, S. and Molitor, J. Linking R&D with Local Schools: A Final Report from the Study of the R&D Utilization Program (tentative title). Cambridge, MA: 1981.

Louis, K.S., and Sieber, S.D. Bureaucracy and the Dispersed Organization. New Jersey: Ablex, 1979.

Lyons, T.F. Role Clarity, Need for Clarity, Satisfaction, Tension and Withdrawal. Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, Vol. 6. Academic Press, Inc., 1971, pp. 99-110.

Maddy, D.L. A Study of the Relationships Among Educational Linker Roles and Selected Linker Functions. Doctoral Dissertation, Duke University, 1979.

Mednick, S. Learning. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964.

Miles, M., Fullan, M. and Taylor, G. OD in Schools: The State of the Art. Toronto, Canada: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1978 (five volumes).

Miles, R.H. Role Requirements as Sources of Organizational Stress. Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol. 61, No. 2, 1976, pp. 172-179.

Miles, R.H. Role-Set Configuration as a Predictor of Role Conflict and Ambiguity in Complex Organizations. In Sociometry, Vol. 40, No. 1, 1977, pp. 21-34.

Miles, R.H. and Perreault, W.D., Jr. Organizational Role Conflict: Its Antecedents and Consequences. In Organizational Behavior and Human Performance, Vol. 17. Academic Press, Inc., 1976, pp. 19-44.

Miller, E. and Rice, A. Systems of Organization: The Control of Task and Sentient Boundaries. London: Tavistock, 1970.

Moore, D. et al. Assistance Strategies of Six Groups that Facilitate Educational Change at the School Community Level. Chicago, IL: Center for New Schools, 1977.

Organ, D.W. Some Variables Affecting Boundary Role Behavior. Sociometry, Vol. 34, No. 4, 1971, pp. 524-537.

Paul, D. Change Processes at the Elementary, Secondary and Post Secondary Levels of Education. In N. Nash and J. Culbertson (Eds.), Linking Processes in Educational Improvement. Columbus, OH: UCEA, 1977, pp. 7-73.

Piele, P. Review and Analysis of the Role, Activities, and Training of Educational Linking Agents. Eugene, OR: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon, 1975.

Price, J.L. Handbook of Organizational Measurement. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath, 1972.

Prudden, H.O. Interorganizational Conflict, Linkage and Exchange: A Study of Industrial Salesmen. Academy of Management Journal, September 1969, pp. 339-350.

Prudden, H.O. and Reese, R.M. Interorganization Role-Set Relations and the Performance and Satisfaction of Industrial Salesmen. Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 17, No. 4, December 1972, pp. 601-609.

Prudden, H.O. and Stark, B.J. Marginality Associated with Interorganizational Linking Process, Productivity, and Satisfaction. Academy of Management Journal, March 1971, pp. 145-148.

Rizzo, J.R., House, R.J., and Lirtzman, S.I. Role Conflict and Ambiguity in Complex Organizations. Administrative Science Quarterly, 1970, pp. 150-163.

Rosenblum, S. and Louis, K.S. Stability and Change: Planned Change in Rural Schools. New York, NY: Plenum, forthcoming.

Schein, E.H. Organizational Psychology (2nd ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970.

Sieber, S.D. Images of the Practitioner and Strategies of Educational Change. Sociology of Education, Vol. 45. Fall 1972, pp. 362-385.

Sieber, S.D. Toward a Theory of Role Accumulation. American Sociological Review, 39, 1974, pp. 567-578.

Sieber, S.D., Louis, K.S., and Metzger, L. The Use of Educational Knowledge, Vols. 1 & 2. Bureau or Applied Social Research, Columbia University, 1972.

Spencer, G.J. and Louis, K.S. The RDU Linking Agent Study: An Interim Report. Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc., 1978.

Spencer, G.J. and Louis, K.S. Training and Support of Educational Linking Agents. Cambridge, MA: Abt-Associates Inc., 1980.

Stearns, M. Evaluation of the Field Test of Project Information Packages. Menlo Park, CA: SRI, 1976.

Tosi, Henry. Organizational Stress as a Moderator of the Relationship Between Influence and Role Response. Academy of Management Journal. March 1971, pp. 7-20.

Warren, D. Power, Visibility and Conformity in Formal Organizations. American Sociological Review, 33, 1968, pp. 951-969.

Zaltman, G. and Duncan, R. Strategies for Planned Change. New York, NY: Wiley, 1976.

APPENDIX A

LINKER SURVEY #1

A Survey of Linking Agents and Facilitators
June, 1978
in conjunction with the Study of the R&D Utilization Program

General Instructions

1. Please complete this survey concerning your activities and relationships as an RDU linking agent/facilitator. For those of you who do not devote 100% of your time to an RDU project, this means answering these questions only with respect to that part of your work experience which is related to RDU.

2. It is difficult to design questions which capture the total essence of each possible situation. If you have difficulty in answering any questions, please give us your best estimate or appraisal. We also invite your comments and qualifications as you go along, either in the margins or on a separate sheet of paper.

3. Although an identifying code is used on this survey, please be assured that your answers will be strictly confidential. No individuals other than the research staff at Abt Associates will have access to the completed surveys. All reports that we compile will combine your answers with the answers of others so as to respect your privacy and the confidentiality of the data you have given us. Your answers will be placed on a magnetic tape along with those of other respondents *without* your name.

4. The survey will take most respondents about 30 minutes to complete. When you are done, please enclose the completed survey in the self-addressed and stamped envelope provided and mail it back to us by June 30, 1978.

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Karen Seashore Louis, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator

Michael B. Kane, Ed.D.
Project Director

I. YOUR PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES ABOUT THE RDU LINKING AGENT/FACILITATOR JOB

1. Linking agents do a variety of activities and play a variety of roles. One purpose of this survey is to identify some of these differences. Please briefly describe *your* job as an RDU linker/facilitator. What do you do? _____

2. Is there a written job description for you as an RDU linker/facilitator?

   ____ Yes ____ No (If no, skip to question 8)

3. Did this description exist when you were hired?

   ____ Yes ____ No

4. Who was responsible for writing your initial job description? (Please check as many as apply.)

   ____ a. the RDU project director or evaluator
   ____ b. the head of the organization in which your office is located
   ____ c. the immediate supervisor in your office (providing your immediate supervisor is not the head of the organization)
   ____ d. the sites that you are expected to work with
   ____ e. yourself
   ____ f. other (please specify) _____

5. Has the description been modified since you were hired?

   ____ Yes ____ No (If no, skip to question 7)

   How? _____

6. Who was responsible for modifying your job description?

   ____ a. the RDU project director or evaluator
   ____ b. the head of the organization in which your office is located
   ____ c. the immediate supervisor in your office (providing your immediate supervisor is not the head of the organization)
   ____ d. the sites that you are working with
   ____ e. yourself
   ____ f. other (please specify) _____

... currently do? Please circle the appropriate number:

Very well	fairly well	adequately	poorly	very poorly
5	4	3	2	1

5. When ... tator, to what extent did you find the job (please ...

				boring
				frustrating
ambiguous				well defined
challenging				easy
				uncertain
				highly supervised
				people oriented
				behind-the-scenes

... be your ... (Please check the appropriate line for each dimen-

				boring
				frustrating
				well defined
				easy
				uncertain
				highly supervised
				people oriented
				behind-the-scenes

10. There are many different perceptions of what linking agents/facilitators should do.

1. In your opinion, to what extent do (a) RDU *central project staff*, (b) staff at the *local sites* with whom you are working, and (c) *you* yourself expect that you should be performing the following roles as a linking agent?
2. To what extent do you *actually* perform these roles?

Please insert the appropriate response code in each box.

5 = to a very great extent
4 = to a great extent
3 = to some extent
2 = to a little extent
1 = not at all

Potential Linking Agent Roles	1. Extent of Expectations			2. Extent you Actually Perform Role
	(a) RDU Central Project Staff	(b) Local Site Staff	(c) Yourself	
– an observer/historian				
– an evaluator				
– an expert in assessing the match between innovations and problems				
– a resource person				
– a process trainer				
– a program implementor				
– a counselor or hand-holder				
– a basic skills, career ed. or inservice specialist				
– a conflict resolver				
– a coordinator				
– other _____				

11. Please rate each of the listed tasks on the importance (in your opinion) of the task to your job as an RDU linker/facilitator and the amount of time you spend doing the task relative to other job related activities.

Importance: 3 = very important
2 = somewhat important
1 = of little or no importance

Time spent: 3 = a great deal of time
2 = a moderate amount of time
1 = little or no time

	Importance	Amount of time spent
a. Promoting or explaining the RDU program	☐	☐
b. Managing budgets	☐	☐
c. Writing reports/filling out forms	☐	☐
d. Arranging, designing or conducting workshops	☐	☐
e. Developing yourself professionally	☐	☐
f. Reading materials about R&D products	☐	☐
g. Organizing, preparing and delivering materials	☐	☐
h. Designing, administering and analyzing evaluation materials	☐	☐
i. Observing teachers	☐	☐
j. Meetings with small planning groups at the sites	☐	☐
k. General meetings with site staff	☐	☐
l. Meetings with the RDU central project staff	☐	☐
m. Working with parents or volunteers	☐	☐
n. Traveling from site to site	☐	☐
o. Working with individual teachers	☐	☐
p. Working with individual administrators	☐	☐

12. In your view, which comes first in an effective change process? (check one)

____ a change in how people feel about something (values)
____ a change in what people know about something (information)
____ a change in how people act or behave (behavior)

13. Please describe your career goals for five years from now. What would you like to be doing (what kind of job would you like to have in five years)?

_____

_____

Instructions. Please rate your job as a RDU linker/facilitator by circling the appropriate response for each of the following questions:

	To a very great extent	To a great extent	To some extent	To a little extent	Not at all
14. To what extent do people around you have different opinions about *what* you should be doing?	5	4	3	2	1
15. To what extent do people around you have different opinions about *how* you should be doing your job?	5	4	3	2	1
16. To what extent are you *clear* about what people expect you to do on your job?	5	4	3	2	1
17. To what extent are you expected to do more than you are *able* or have time to do?	5	4	3	2	1
18. To what extent do people make demands of you that are outside your job description?	5	4	3	2	1
19. To what extent is progress at the site level dependent upon your own efforts?	5	4	3	2	1
20. To what extent are rewards like pay increases, bonuses and promotions based on how well you do your work?	5	4	3	2	1
21. To what extent does doing your job well give you a feeling of personal satisfaction?	5	4	3	2	1
22. To what extent do you have to go through "red tape" to get things done?	5	4	3	2	1
23. To what extent is each of the following statements about your job as a linker/facilitator true?					
a. I can learn new things, new skills.	5	4	3	2	1
b. It has good chances for getting ahead.	5	4	3	2	1
c. It uses my skills and abilities — lets me do the things I can do best.	5	4	3	2	1
24. On the whole, to what extent are you satisfied with your present job?	5	4	3	2	1

25. In general, how do you feel about the knowledge base of available R&D outcomes or products that has been consolidated by your RDU project? Please rate the knowledge base on the following dimensions by circling the appropriate number.

	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very poor
a. *appropriateness* of the products for the problems identified at your sites	5	4	3	2	1
b. *format of the product descriptions* that are available for review by the sites	5	4	3	2	1
c. *completeness* of information that is included in the product descriptions (Is there enough information to make sound decisions?)	5	4	3	2	1
d. *variety of different approaches* to solve a given problem at a site	5	4	3	2	1
e. *range of costs or required investment* to purchase and implement the R&D products	5	4	3	2	1
f. *ease* with which the R&D products can be acquired	5	4	3	2	1
g. availability of technical assistance, for *adapting* the product to the site	5	4	3	2	1
h. availability of technical assistance for *implementing* or installing a selected product	5	4	3	2	1
i. OVERALL QUALITY of the knowledge base	5	4	3	2	1

26. Do you have any other comments about the R&D knowledge base and its effect on your ability to perform your role as a linking agent? (Please insert an additional sheet if the space below is not adequate.)

II. RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS

27. In your role as an RDU linker/facilitator, how frequent is your *actual* face-to-face, telephone and written interaction with the individuals listed below, and how frequently would you *prefer* to interact with them?

(Please insert the appropriate response code in each box.)

Frequency of Interaction

4 = daily
3 = weekly
2 = less than weekly but at least once a month
1 = less than once a month
0 = never
X = not applicable

28. How *useful* has interaction with these types of individuals been in helping you perform your linker/facilitator role?

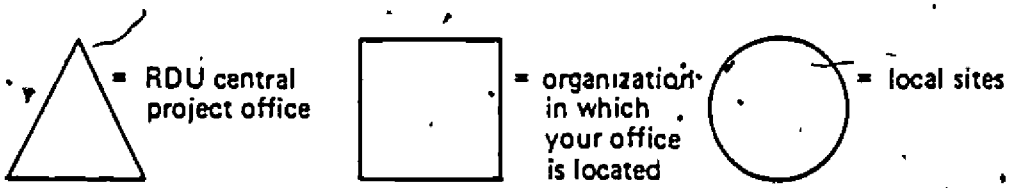
(Please insert the appropriate response code in each box.)

Usefulness of Interaction in Performing Linking Role

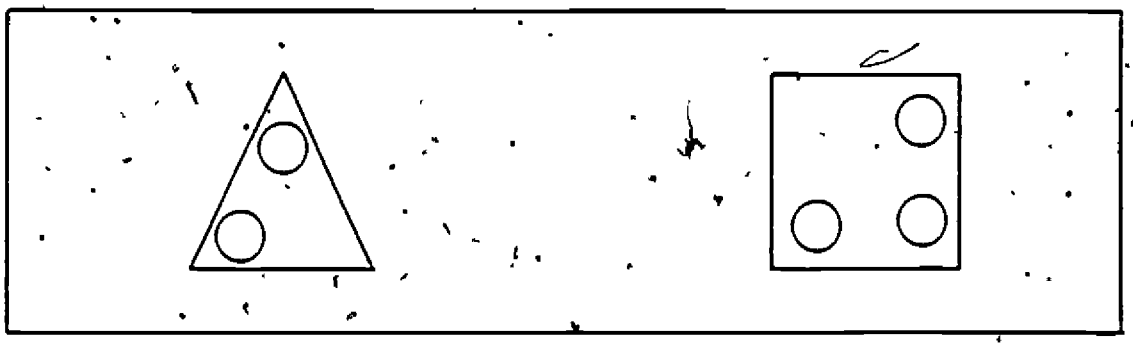
3 = very useful
2 = somewhat useful
1 = not very useful
X = not applicable — no interaction

Types of Individuals	FACE-TO-FACE		TELEPHONE		WRITTEN		Usefulness of Interaction in Performing Linking Role
	actual	preferred	actual	preferred	actual	preferred	
RDU Central Project Staff:							
a. Project Director							
b. Project Evaluator							
c. Other_____ (position)							
Organization in which your office is located:							
d. Supervisor							
e. Others in roles similar to your own							
f. Other_____ (position)							
Linkers/Facilitators:							
g. In same project							
h. On other RDU projects							
Others:							
i. Content experts							
j. Process experts							
k. Other_____ (position)							

29. The following set of three picture-questions are designed to determine where you see yourself in relationship to the major groups that you work with as a linker/facilitator. In the pictures below, the *triangle* represents your RDU central project office, the *square* represents the organization or unit in which your office is located, and the *circle* represents the typical site with which you work. The small circles represent other people. *For each of the three pictures, draw a small circle* (Y) *to represent yourself anywhere in the picture.* For example, for any given picture your circle (Y) might be within either organization, between the two organizations, or somewhere in the space surrounding the two organizations.

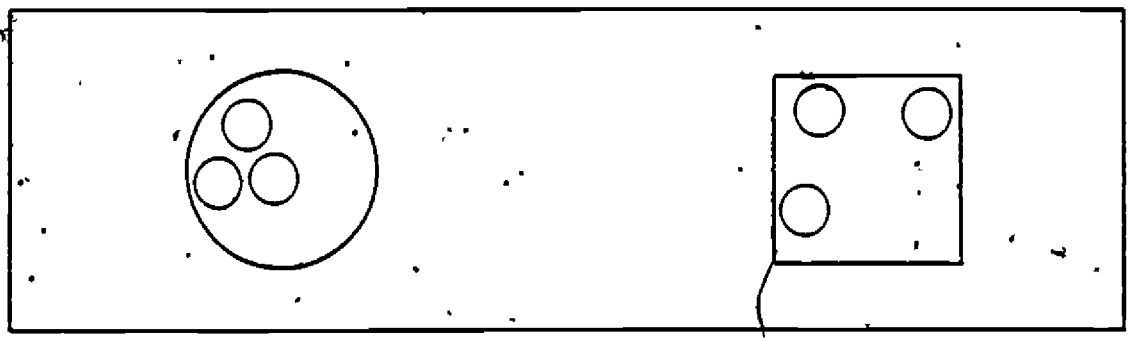


a.



b.

c.



206

30. Please answer the following questions on the chart below:

1. How much influence do each of the following individuals or groups have on the nature of your *activities* as an RDU Linker/Facilitator?
2. How much influence do each of the following individuals or groups have on the amount of *time* you allocate to various RDU related activities?
3. How much *feedback* do you receive from the following individuals or groups about how you are performing your job?

Please insert the appropriate response code in each box.

4 = a great deal
3 = a moderate amount
2 = a little
1 = none

Type of Individual or Group	1. Influence on Activities Engaged In	2. Influence on Time Allocated	3. Amount of Feedback Received
a. the director of your R&D Utilization Project			
b. the evaluation director of your R&D Utilization Project			
c. your immediate supervisor in the organization in which your office is located			
d. other staff members in the organization in which you are located			
e. other linkers			
f. the administrators in the sites that you work with			
g. other (please specify) _____			

4. Looking back at the list above, now please circle the letter identifying the individual or group who has the *greatest* influence on the way in which you carry out your job.

31. Are there any procedures for receiving formal job assessments or evaluations from your RDU project director?

a. ____ Yes ____ No

b. If Yes: How frequently do these occur? _____
# of times per year

32. Are there any procedures for receiving formal job assessments or evaluations from your supervisor in the organization in which your office is located?

a. ____ Yes ____ No

b. If Yes: How frequently do these occur? _____
# of times per year

c. If No. Do other people at a similar level in this organization receive formal job assessments or evaluations?

____ Yes ____ No

33. Does anyone else perform formal job assessments or evaluations of your work?

a. ____ Yes ____ No

b. If Yes: Please specify the individual's title and organizational affiliation

_____

34. If federal funding to support your linker/facilitator role were to be discontinued in the near future, how likely is it that the organization in which your office is located would attempt to retain you?

____ they would definitely keep me on staff

____ they would probably keep me on staff

____ it is unclear whether they would keep me on staff

____ they would try to keep me on staff, but it is unlikely that they would be able to fund a position for me

____ they would be unlikely to keep me on staff

35. If federal funding to support your linker/facilitator role were to be discontinued in the near future, how likely is it that the organization in which your office is located would continue to engage in linking activities similar to those you now perform?

____ they would definitely continue linking activities

____ they would probably continue linking activities

____ it is unclear whether they would continue or discontinue linking activities

____ they would probably discontinue linking activities

____ they would definitely discontinue linking activities

III. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

36. What percentage of your working time do you devote to RDU project activities? _____ %

37. What percentage of your salary comes from RDU project support? _____ %

38. How many months have you been employed as an RDU linker/facilitator? _____ months

39. With how many sites do you presently work? _____ sites

40. What is your year of birth? _____

41. What was the size of the community in which you spent the largest portion of your life up to the time you finished high school? (check one)

_____ a rural area
_____ a small town in the country
_____ a suburban town near a city
_____ a small city (less than 100,000 people)
_____ a large city (more than 100,000 people)

42. In what state did you spend most of your early years through high school? _____

43. Please indicate your formal educational experience beyond high school.

Institution and Location	Field of Study	Degree or Certificate Program Enrolled in	Degree or Certificate Attained
a.			
b.			
c.			
d.			

44. Describe any other formal training (workshops, pre-service, in-service, etc.) you had prior to your involvement with RDU which is relevant to your linking activities:

_____

_____

_____

45. Prior to your RDU experience, did you have work experience in any of these areas (give number of years; indicate "0" if none):

	Number of Years
a. teaching	_____
b. school administration/staff	_____
c. district level administration/staff	_____
d. state or regional educational units or associations	_____

46. In the jobs you held before undertaking your current RDU responsibilities were you ever directly involved with R&D outcomes/products, other linking activities, or other federally funded programs?

a. R&D outcomes/products No ___ Yes ___ ➢Please describe _____

b. Other "linking" activities No ___ Yes ___ ➢Please describe _____

c. Other federally funded programs No ___ Yes ___ ➢Please describe _____

47. Is the organization in which your office is located the same one in which you were employed immediately prior to undertaking your RDU linker/facilitator position?

No _____ Yes _____

48. Briefly describe the job (position and activities) you held immediately before undertaking your RDU responsibilities. If you still hold this job in addition to your RDU responsibilities, please check here ___ and skip to question 49.

49. Do you presently have responsibilities in the organization in which your office is located in addition to those associated with your role as an RDU linker/facilitator?

No _____ Yes _____ Please describe _____

50. Please list the professional organizations to which you belong.

a. _____ c. _____

b. _____ d. _____

51. Is there anything else about your background or experience that has had a significant influence on your approach to linking/facilitating activities? Please describe here (and on additional pages, if necessary).

APPENDIX B

LINKER SURVEY #2

A Survey of Linking Agents and Facilitators
January, 1979
in conjunction with the Study of the R&D Utilization Program

This is the second of three surveys of Linking Agents and Facilitators in conjunction with the Study of the R and D Utilization Program (RDU). The first survey concerned your activities, background and relationships as an RDU linking agent/facilitator. This survey is composed of three parts. further perceptions of your role, activities and skills, linker/facilitator strategies and assumptions about change, and the support and training that has been provided to you in your linker/facilitator job. For those of you who do not devote 100% of your time to an RDU project, please answer the questions only with respect to that part of your work which is related to RDU.

It is difficult to design questions which capture the total essence of each possible situation. If you have difficulty in answering any questions, please give us your best estimate or appraisal. We also invite your comments and qualifications as you go along, either in the margins or on a separate sheet of paper.

Although an identifying code is used on this survey, please be assured that your answers will be strictly confidential. No individuals other than the research staff at Abt Associates will have access to the completed surveys. All reports that we compile will combine your answers with the answers of others so as to respect your privacy and the confidentiality of the data you have given us. Your answers will be placed on a magnetic tape along with those of other respondents <u>without</u> your name.

The survey will take most respondents about 45 minutes to complete. When you are done, please enclose the completed survey in the self-addressed and stamped envelope provided and mail it back to us by January 15, 1979.

Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Karen Seashore Louis, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator

Michael B. Kane, Ed.D.
Project Director

I YOUR PERCEPTIONS OF YOUR ROLE, ACTIVITIES AND SKILLS AS A LINKER/FACILITATOR

1. How would you currently describe your job? (Please check the appropriate line for each dimension.)

a. exciting	___	___	___	___	___	___	___ boring
b. satisfying	___	___	___	___	___	___	___ frustrating
c. ambiguous	___	___	___	___	___	___	___ well defined
d. challenging	___	___	___	___	___	___	___ easy
e. predictable	___	___	___	___	___	___	___ uncertain
f. on-your-own	___	___	___	___	___	___	___ highly supervised
g. task oriented	___	___	___	___	___	___	___ people oriented
h. visible	___	___	___	___	___	___	___ behind-the-scenes

2. Listed below are several pairs of adjectives. In each case both of the adjectives might be descriptive of a good linker/facilitator. For each pair, circle the one adjective of each pair that is most descriptive of yourself. The selection may be difficult, since you may possess both qualities. Please make a selection, however, even though the choice is close.

Circle one for each pair:

inquiring	original	original	self-reliant
cooperative	dependable	industrious	dependable
self-reliant	original	flexible	industrious
stable	stable	stable	inquiring
cooperative	inquiring	cooperative	self-reliant
flexible	dependable	original	cooperative
inquiring	flexible	self-reliant	flexible
stable	industrious	industrious	dependable

3. Conditions at different sites may vary and consequently linkers/facilitators may perform aspects of the linking agent role in different ways with different sites. Please rate the extent to which you perform the listed potential roles in each of three sites with which you work. Where possible, we have named two of the sites for which we are asking your responses. These sites have been chosen randomly from among those with which you work. If you work with more than two sites, please add the name of a third site, selecting if possible one with which you behave differently from how you behave with one or both of the other sites. If you work with just one or two sites, leave the remaining columns blank.

Response Code: 5=to a very great extent
4=to a great extent
3=to some extent
2=to a little extent
1=not at all

Potential Linking Agent Role	Extent you perform these roles with.		
	Name of Site	Name of Site	Name of Site
	(Please insert the appropriate response code in each box)		
- an observer/historian	☐	☐	☐
- an evaluator	☐	☐	☐
- an expert in assessing the match between innovations and problems	☐	☐	☐
- a resource person	☐	☐	☐
- a resource finder/information giver	☐	☐	☐
- a process helper	☐	☐	☐
- a program implementor	☐	☐	☐
- a counselor or hand-holder	☐	☐	☐
- a basic skills, career ed. or inservice specialist	☐	☐	☐
- a conflict resolver	☐	☐	☐
- a coordinator	☐	☐	☐
- a trainer	☐	☐	☐
- a budget manager, administrator	☐	☐	☐

4. Most linkers/facilitators have some direct or indirect influence over the RDU related activities and decisions that are made in the schools and districts with which they work. The extent of such influence may be affected by the way clients view the linker role. We would like you to indicate the extent to which you feel you actually have influence over the activities and decisions in your sites, and the extent to which you feel that your influence is affected by the following possible views of your role. Please respond for each of the sites used in the previous question.

Response Code: 5=to a very great extent
4=to a great extent
3=to some extent
2=to a little extent
1=not at all

Extent and Reasons for Influence	Name of Site	Name of Site	Name of Site
	(Please insert the appropriate response code in each box)		
Extent to which I have influence over decisions and activities at this site.	☐	☐	☐
I have influence at this site because:			
I am viewed as a friend whom they would like to please.	☐	☐	☐
I am viewed as someone who can help them raise the image and performance of the district.	☐	☐	☐
I am viewed as an expert whose opinions are worth listening to.	☐	☐	☐
I am viewed as someone who has a right to influence their decisions because of my position in the RDU program.	☐	☐	☐
I am viewed as someone who has the experience and background to be able to provide them with help in solving their problems.	☐	☐	☐
I am viewed as someone who can influence whether or not RDU funds are allocated to the site.	☐	☐	☐
I am viewed as someone that they will have to work with for a long time, so I do things for them and they do things for me.	☐	☐	☐

I am viewed as someone who can influence whether or not the site continues in the RDU activities.

5. There are a variety of potential skills required for an effective Linker/Facilitator role. In your opinion, what are your own strengths and weaknesses in the following skill areas:

Skill Areas		Very Weak			Adequate (Circle One)			Very Strong
Your Own Behavior	High tolerance for ambiguity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Openness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Ability to live a low profile; little need to be visible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Ability to organize myself and others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Ability to write at appropriate level (memos, letters, meeting notes, formal documents)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Interpersonal Behavior	Listening and understanding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Counseling	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Oral communication	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Interviewing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Influencing through supportive reinforcement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Influencing through confrontative and advocative methods	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Small Group Skills	Goal setting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Group team building	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Group problem solving	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Conflict resolution	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Process helping	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Change Skills	Gaining acceptance at all levels of the system	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Effective use of formal and informal power structure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Skills in problem identification	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Skills in solution selection	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Facilitating implementation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Evaluation/follow up	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Content Skills	Skills in content areas (reading, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

II LINKER/FACILITATOR STRATEGIES AND ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT CHANGE

6. There are many views of what characterizes a successful linker/facilitator. Based on your experience in the RDU program, to what extent are the following statements characteristic of successful linkers/facilitators? You may agree that all are important, but please check the four most important and the four least important from this list of statements. Then put a second check next to the single most important statement and the single least important statement.

Statements of Linker/Facilitator Characteristics	Most important (please check 4, and double check most important	Least Important (please check 4, and double check least important)
1. Having the ability to communicate ideas in a clear, concise and persuasive manner.	____	____
2. Being spontaneous--saying and doing things that seem natural on the spur of the moment.	____	____
3. Doing things "by the book"--for example, following each stage in the problem-solving process.	____	____
4. Having many unusual and creative approaches to problems.	____	____
5. Being sensitive to other people's moods and feelings.	____	____
6. Being careful--taking pains to make sure everything is just right.	____	____
7. Being a leader--providing direction to the sites.	____	____
8. Having the ability to accept criticism without reacting defensively or withdrawing.	____	____
9. Having the ability to deal with group conflict.	____	____
10. Having the ability to play different roles with different people.	____	____
11. Having a high level of aspiration for the sites.	____	____
12. Analyzing a situation carefully before acting; working out a course of action in detail before embarking on it.	____	____
13. Being a good discussion leader--drawing group members into discussion.	____	____
14. Having the ability to evaluate possible solutions critically.	____	____
15. Having the ability to get help when needed.	____	____
16. Having the ability to work in different ways with different sites.	____	____

7. Instructions:

The following are a series of paired assumptions about the process of change. In most cases, you are likely to agree with both assumptions. However, please check the one which you agree with the most or which best reflects your view or opinion.

a. Check only one:

___ Competition between "interest groups" in schools is a major barrier to change.

or

___ Lack of individual skills and knowledge appropriate to the new innovation is a major barrier to change.

b. Check only one:

___ Understanding the actual power structure of the school is the key to designing successful change efforts.

or

___ Understanding the individual needs and concerns of staff members who may be affected is the key to designing successful change efforts.

c. Check only one:

___ Resistance to change by individuals is the major reason for failures of most change programs in schools.

or

___ Poor management and coordination is the most important barrier to effective change in schools.

d. Check only one:

___ Effective change in schools requires that individuals internalize the need for change.

or

___ Effective change in schools requires critical evaluation of existing roles and activities.

e. Check only one:

___ The first step in developing a change strategy for schools is to assess the current coalitions in order to mobilize positive support and anticipate possible backlash from powerful groups.

or

___ The first step in developing a change strategy for schools is to assess the level of school-wide resources, such as group problem solving skills.

f. Check only one:

___ If an innovation can be made to appeal to the most powerful individuals or groups in the schools, then change will occur.

or

___ If the way in which jobs and responsibilities are defined in a school can be made supportive of a new innovation, then change will occur.

g. Check only one:

___ Effective change usually occurs from the "top down."

or

___ Effective change usually occurs when teachers are heavily involved in decision making.

8. Linking agents/facilitators may vary in the strategies which they use in working with their client groups. In the remainder of this section we describe several hypothetical situations which Linkers/facilitators may encounter. For each situation, please check the response which is most like what you would do.

a) Your RDU project views change as a multi-stage process. In carrying out your duties, you are expected to guide the local sites through each of the stages, but people in a particular site are not convinced of the value of each stage and would like to move ahead as rapidly as possible. Which of the following is most like what you would do?

(Check Only One)

_____ 1) I would attempt to make sure that the site has understood the need to successfully complete each stage before proceeding on, even if this proves frustrating for short periods of time.

_____ 2) I would attempt to ensure that all stages are eventually covered, but would encourage the site to proceed in the way that will create the most enthusiasm and interest. If, for example, they want to look at a range of products before they begin to define their problem, that's alright with

_____ 3) I would let the site use a sequence of stages or a process that emerged from the group.

b) One of your sites is implementing a product that has a large number of parts. Although the product developer emphasizes fidelity to the core module of the curriculum package, teachers feel that it is too cumbersome and want to make substantial modifications in it. You agree with the developer that the module is both important and very effective. In general, you support local adaptations of R&D products, but you doubt that the school staff will produce a module of comparable quality. How do you think that you would act?

(Check Only One)

_____ 1) I would try to influence the teachers to accept the developer's module more or less as it is, and make, at most, minor modifications.

_____ 2) I would let the teachers make the modifications that they desire without any attempt to influence them away from the activity.

c) You are beginning to work with a new site and are anxious to establish the RDU program. You have met with the superintendent and the principal, and have learned that there is no existing structure, such as a planning committee, that could serve as a group responsible for the internal school management of the RDU program, but that all of the teachers are very eager to get started. Your first activities in the school would be:

(Check Only One)

____ 1) I would meet on several occasions with the entire staff, and meet informally with teachers in the lounge and after school in order to get a better feel for the problems, concerns and climate of the school.

____ 2) I would work with the principal in selecting a group of teachers and/or administrators who comprise the "natural leaders" of the building to serve as a task force to coordinate the work of the RDU program in the site.

____ 3) I would meet more extensively with the principal and/or the superintendent to ensure that I fully understand their expectations and desires about programs and school needs.

d) You are beginning to work with a new site, and are trying to establish the ways in which you will be in contact with the site. Which of the following best describes your preference?

(Check Only One)

____ 1) I would prefer to have a regular schedule for visiting the site, with scheduled meetings that I would attend. While I would visit the site on a non-scheduled date, normally most contact between visits would occur by phone, and with a pre-established person.

____ 2) I would prefer to adopt a more irregular schedule, where I would come frequently during periods of high activity at the site, and infrequently when things are moving more slowly. I would indicate my intention to attend most meetings, and would ask them to keep me informed sufficiently in advance so that I can work it into my schedule.

____ 3) I would prefer to visit the site infrequently, with most interaction occurring by telephone or by mail.

e) Members of your "local action team" (the site committee with which you are working) are unable to decide between two similar products. Although the committee has functioned well and relations are sound, you believe that the current indecisiveness is detrimental to the school's progress. Which of these alternatives is most like what you would do?

(Check Only One)

____ 1) I would help the group to develop a more extensive set of criteria for making a choice.

____ 2) I would develop a presentation summarizing the pros and cons of each alternative and encourage them to use the information to make a decision, and get the group moving again.

____ 3) I would encourage the group to work on developing a solution to their difficulty, and be supportive of their efforts.

III SUPPORT AND TRAINING FOR LINKERS/FACILITATORS

9. When you need assistance or advice in various activities making up your role as process helper, how frequently do you turn to the following individuals or organizations? How useful has that assistance been to you?

(Please insert the appropriate response code in each box.)

Frequency Assistance is Sought	3 = frequently 2 = occasionally 1 = rarely 0 = never	Usefulness of Assistance	3 = very useful 2 = somewhat useful 1 = not very useful 0 = not applicable (no assistance sought)

Activities	SOURCE OF ASSISTANCE									
	RDU/Central Project Staff		Staff in Organization in which your office is located		Other Linkers/ Facilitators		Outside Consultant and/or Regional Labs		Other: _____ _____ _____ (please specify*)	
	Frequency	Usefulness	Frequency	Usefulness	Frequency	Usefulness	Frequency	Usefulness	Frequency	Usefulness
1. Assessing needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Assessing match between innovation and problem	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Organizing clients into work groups	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Training groups in the problem solving process	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Resolving conflict	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Assisting implementation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Assisting evaluation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Other: _____ (please specify)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

*For example: local site staff, written materials and their source, etc.

10. When you need assistance or advice in various activities making up your role as a resource finder/information giver, how frequently do you turn to the following individuals or organizations? How useful has that assistance been to you?

(Please insert the appropriate response code in each box.)

Frequency of Assistance is Sought	3 = frequently 2 = occasionally 1 = rarely 0 = never	Usefulness of Assistance	3 = very useful 2 = somewhat useful 1 = not very useful 0 = not applicable (no assistance was sought)

Activities	SOURCE OF ASSISTANCE									
	RDU Central Project Staff		Staff in Organization in which your office is located		Other Linkers/ Facilitators		Outside Consultant and/or Regional Labs		Other: _____ _____ _____ (please specify*)	
	Frequency	Usefulness	Frequency	Usefulness	Frequency	Usefulness	Frequency	Usefulness	Frequency	Usefulness
1. Conduct literature/ information search	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Organize and analyze information	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Identify and obtain RDU products	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Find demonstration sites	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Arrange consultations, training	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Other: _____ _____ (please specify)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

*For example: local site staff, written materials and their sources, etc.

11. Please answer the following questions about the training and orientation that was provided by your RDU project, (i.e., through the Central Project Office or Central Project Staff.)

For each type or content of training, to what extent:

1) Did you actually receive training or orientation?
2) Was the training useful and relevant to you in your work?
3) Was the training provided at the appropriate time?
4) Was the amount of training that was provided appropriate to your needs?

Please use the appropriate response codes in each box.

Type or Content of Training	5 = to a very great extent 4 = to a great extent 3 = to some extent 2 = to a little extent 1 = not at all		3 = too late 2 = appropriate time 1 = too early	3 = would prefer more 2 = right amount 1 = prefer less
	1) Training was Received	2) Training was Useful	3) Appropriateness of Timing	4) Appropriateness of Amount
1. Information or skills related to the problem solving process (needs assessment, solution selection, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Information or skills related to interpersonal or group dynamics (team building, conflict resolution, motivation)	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Information or skills related to the use and availability of the knowledge base	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Information or skills related to the administration of the RDU project (record keeping forms, logs, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Information targeted to the clarification of your role as a Linker/Facilitator	☐	☐	☐	☐

12. Across the chart below are presented four content areas of training or orientation. For each content area in which you actually received training, please check the setting in which training took place, the techniques and materials that were used, and the providers of the training. For each item that you check, please indicate as well how useful you perceived each to be.

If you did not receive any training in or or more of the "content areas," please so indicate and skip to the next column.

Usefulness Code: 4 = to a great extent
3 = to some extent
2 = to a small extent
1 = not at all

	CONTENT AREA OF TRAINING OR ORIENTATION--INFORMATION ON SKILLS RELATED TO:							
	The Problem Solving Process (needs assessment, solution selection) (If none, check here ___)		Interpersonal or Group Dynamics (If none, check here ___)		Use or Availability of the Knowledge Base (If none, check here ___)		Administration of the RDU Program (If none, check here ___)	
Setting of training:	(Check all that apply)	Usefulness	(Check all that apply)	Usefulness	(Check all that apply)	Usefulness	(Check all that apply)	Usefulness
Conference or Workshop	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Small Groups Within Larger Conference	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
One-on-One with Trainer (in person or by phone)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Informal "Get Togethers"	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other (explain)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Techniques or Materials								
Group Discussions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lectures/Demonstrations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Films	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Role Playing, Simulations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Written Guidelines, Handbook, "tool kit", etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Memoranda	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Provider:								
Project Staff Member	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Consultant	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other Linker/Facilitator	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13. Listed across the chart are various information or skills which may be required by Linkers/Facilitators. Listed down the chart are various types of training settings, techniques and materials, and providers. Based upon your experiences and insights, please design an "ideal" training program. First rate the degree to which training should be devoted to each information/skill. Then rate the degree to which you feel training for each skill would be best provided in terms of setting, technique, and provider. RESPONSE CODE: 4 = to a great degree
3 = to some degree
2 = to a small degree
1 = not at all

	CONTENT AREA OF TRAINING OR ORIENTATION--INFORMATION ON SKILLS RELATED TO:			
	The Problem Solving Process (needs assessment, solution selection)	Interpersonal or Group Dynamics	Use or Availability of the Knowledge Base	Administration of the RDU Program
1. Degree to which training should include the content area	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Setting of training:				
Conference or Workshop	☐	☐	☐	☐
Small Groups Within Larger Conference	☐	☐	☐	☐
One-on-One with Trainer (in person or by phone)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Informal "Get Togethers"	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other _____ (explain)	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Techniques or Materials				
Group Discussions	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lectures/Demonstrations	☐	☐	☐	☐
Films	☐	☐	☐	☐
Role Playing, Simulations	☐	☐	☐	☐
Written Guidelines, Handbook, "tool kit," etc.	☐	☐	☐	☐
Memoranda	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Provider:				
Project Staff Member	☐	☐	☐	☐
Consultant	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other Linker/Facilitator	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other _____ (please explain)	☐	☐	☐	☐

14. Please describe any formal training (workshops, in-service, conferences, etc.) that have been provided by the organization in which your office is located which is relevant to your linking activities. (If none, please so state.)

. Please include the content of such training, the amount of time involved in the efforts, and the degree to which it has been useful to you.

15. Please describe any other formal training that you have received since you became a Linking Agent on this project (for example, university-based seminars conducted by professional organizations, etc.) (If none, please so state.)

Please include the content of such training, the amount of time involved in the efforts, and the degree to which it has been useful to you.

APPENDIX C

LINKER SURVEY #3

ABT ASSOCIATES INC.
55 WHEELER STREET, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02138
TELEPHONE • AREA 617-492-7100
TWX: 710-3201382

A Survey of Linking Agents and Facilitators
in the R&D Utilization Program
(April, 1979)

This is the third and last survey of Linking Agents and Facilitators in conjunction with the Study of the Research and Development Utilization Program (RDU). This survey is composed of two parts. Part 1 is a single page of five questions about your perceptions of your RDU project headquarters (i.e., NEA, Northwest Reading Consortium, Network Consortium, Michigan CEDISS, Pennsylvania S.I.P., Georgia R.D.U.P. or Florida L.S.). Part 2 is a four-page series of questions about one specific site with which you have worked. For most of you, we have enclosed two or three of the Part 2 forms in order that you may respond specifically about more than one site.

Although an identifying code is used on this survey, please be assured that your answers will be strictly confidential. No individuals other than the research staff at Abt Associates will have access to the completed surveys. All reports that we compile will combine your answers with the answers of others so as to respect your privacy and the confidentiality of the data you have given us.

This survey will take most respondents about 20 minutes to complete. You should find this survey much less time consuming than either of the previous two surveys. When you are done, please enclose the completed survey (Part 1 and all completed Part 2s) in the self-addressed and stamped envelope provided and mail it back to us by May 15, 1979.

In order that we may share with you reports that we prepare based on information gathered from these surveys, please keep us informed of any change of address you might have during the next year and a half. We appreciate very much your support in this documentation effort and wish you success in your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

Karen Seashore Louis
Project Director

Gregory Spencer
Linking Agent Study

KSL/GS:tsm

Part 1. Perceptions of your RDU Project Headquarters

The following questions pertain to your relationships with your RDU project headquarters. Please give your opinion for each of the following questions by circling the most appropriate response.

	To a very great extent	To a great extent	To some extent	To a little extent	Not at all	Not applicable	Don't know
1. In general, to what extent have you been satisfied with the services/support provided by the headquarters staff (RDU project director, project evaluator, etc.)?	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
2. To what extent was the headquarters staff knowledgeable about your needs as an RDU linker/facilitator?	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
3. To what extent did the headquarters staff provide assistance to you in a *timely* manner?	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
4. To what extent did you have contact with the other organizations within your RDU project (i.e., technical assistance agencies), if any, in conjunction with:							
– knowledge base activities	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
– training activities	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
5. To what extent have you been satisfied with the contacts with these organizations?							
– knowledge base activities	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
– training activities	5	4	3	2	1	0	?

Part 2. Information About One Specific RDU Site

1. Site name or identification code _____

2. What is the distance of this site in miles from your office? _____ miles

3. What percent of your *total* working time (not just your time as an RDU linker) has been spent with this site. Please include time spent "off site" as well as that in direct contact with the school or district? _____ %

4. Of the total time spent on this site, what percent was spent on each of the following stages? (e.g., the answers to parts a through d should sum to 100%)

a. problem identification _____ %
b. solution selection _____ %
c. planning for implementation _____ %
d. implementation _____ %

5. What is your perception of the *main* reason that this site became a participant in the RDU effort? (Check only one)

_____ they were *told* to (e.g., by the district)

_____ they wanted to solve an existing problem

_____ prior relationship with project staff (informal "networking")

_____ they wanted access to additional dollars

_____ they are very innovative, and "volunteer for everything"

_____ other (specify) _____

6. In your role as a linking agent/facilitator, you have probably had occasion to work with other content or curriculum specialists in this school, in the district office and in the organization where your office is located. Please indicate, in the appropriate boxes below, the response that best describes your relationship with these specialists. (If you worked with more than one specialist in any of these categories, please respond based on the individual who had the most significant impact on your own work.)

1 = There were no specialists employed in this organization.
2 = There were specialists, but I had little contact with them.
3 = I frequently felt a sense of conflict or competition with the specialist. our work was not complementary.
4 = My role was to support the work of a specialist. he/she took a more active role than I in coordinating the RDU project.
5 = The specialist's role was to support my work, he/she took a less active role than I in coordinating the RDU project.
6 = The specialist and I worked closely as a team, we were equally active in this school in coordinating the RDU project.

Please enter the appropriate number in each box below.

[ ] a. Specialist based in this school
[ ] b. Specialist based in the district office
[ ] c. Specialist based in the organization where my office is located

Please give your opinion for each of the following questions by circling the most appropriate response.

	To a very great extent	To a great extent	To some extent	To a little extent	Not at all	Not applicable	Don't know
7. To what extent has the general climate of the site been *open* to change and innovation?	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
8. To what extent was the site *effective* in using a rational approach to accomplishing each of the following project-related activities?							
a. problem identification	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
b. solution selection	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
c. planning for implementation	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
d. implementation	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
9. To what extent were *you* important to the accomplishments achieved during each of the following activities?							
a. problem identification	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
b. solution selection	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
c. planning for implementation	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
d. implementation	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
10. To what extent were the following individuals or groups *supportive* of the RDU effort during each phase of the program?							
District Level Administration: a. at the entry of the program	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
b. during problem identification	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
c. during solution selection	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
d. during implementation	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
Principal(s): a. at the entry of the program	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
b. during problem identification	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
c. during solution selection	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
d. during implementation	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
Staff on the planning team: a. at the entry of the program	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
b. during problem identification	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
c. during solution selection	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
d. during implementation	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
Staff not on the planning team: a. at the entry of the program	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
b. during problem identification	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
c. during solution selection	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
d. during implementation	5	4	3	2	1	0	?

	To a very great extent	To a great extent	To some extent	To a little extent	Not at all	Not applicable	Don't know
11. In your opinion, to what extent would each of the following individuals or groups rate the RDU program in this site a success?							
a. district-level administrators	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
b. site principal(s)	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
c. teachers on the planning team	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
d. teachers not on the planning team	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
12. To what extent was the problem identified *complex*, requiring a number of things to change?	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
13. To what extent was the problem identified a central issue at this site, i.e., more important than any other problem?	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
14. To what extent does the solution selected "fit" the problem identified (the criteria generated)?	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
15. To what extent has the solution selected *solved* the problem identified?	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
16. To what extent is the solution that has been implemented likely to continue to be used?	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
17. At the beginning of your involvement with this site, to what extent did the local site personnel have knowledge and skills in effective problem solving?	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
18. To what extent do local site personnel *now* have knowledge and skills in effective problem solving?	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
19. To what extent has the problem solving process been incorporated into the site, implying an ability and willingness to apply the process to future problems?	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
20. To what extent did unresolved tension and conflict come to exist between you and *administrators* in the site?	5	4	3	2	1	0	?
21. To what extent did unresolved tension and conflict come to exist between you and *teachers* in the site?	5	4	3	2	1	0	?

22. In your opinion, what have been the overall impacts or effects, both positive and negative, of the RDU program at this site?

Positive impacts or effects:

Negative impacts or effects:

APPENDIX D

SELECTED ITEMS FROM PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER SURVEYS

13. A major feature of NRC is that it attempts to engage school staff in problem solving activities. In *your opinion*, did the following activities take the appropriate amount of time? (Please circle one response for each activity listed.)

	TOO SHORT	TOO LONG	ABOUT THE RIGHT AMOUNT	DID NOT OCCUR	DON'T KNOW/ DON'T RECALL
a. Identifying the most important problem(s) or need(s)	1	2	3	N/A	?
b. Establishing criteria for selecting a solution	1	2	3	N/A	?
c. Searching for an R&D based program or materials	1	2	3	N/A	?
d. Selection of an R&D based program or materials	1	2	3	N/A	?
e. Planning for implementation of the R&D based program	1	2	3	N/A	?

23. If you have had any contact with the linking agent, please rate him/her on the following items. Remember that no individual can perform all aspects of his/her role equally well, and please try to discriminate between his/her performance in the different areas. (Circle one response for each activity or attribute listed.)

LINKING AGENT ATTRIBUTES OR ACTIVITIES	POOR				EXCELLENT	DID NOT OCCUR	DON'T RECALL
a. Ability to explain clearly the purposes and services of the NRC	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
b. Helpfulness in specifying, analyzing and diagnosing our particular problems or needs	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	
c. Helpfulness in developing criteria for selecting the solution best suited to our needs	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	?
d. Helpfulness in locating alternative solutions to our problem	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	?
e. Helpfulness in finding the best match between our problem and a solution	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	?
f. Ability to help us understand how the R&D program or materials could be used	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	?
g. Helpfulness in adapting the R&D program or materials to our school or school district	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	?
h. Helpfulness in implementing the new program or materials	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	?
i. Assistance in locating additional technical resource persons	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	?
j. Availability to us when we need to talk to him/her	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	?
k. Ability to resolve conflicts fairly	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	?
l. Skills as an organizer or coordinator	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	?
m. Assistance in evaluating our program	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	?

From Principal Survey

16. Overall, how would you describe your attitude toward the kind of problem solving activities that the team in your school or district engaged in?

VERY UNFAVORABLE				VERY FAVORABLE
1	2	3	4	5

17 As part of your school's involvement in the RDU program you may have had contact with a number of sources of assistance in support of your efforts. Overall, how satisfied were *you* with the assistance, services or support provided by the following individuals or groups in the program? (Circle one on each line.)

	NOT SATISFIED				VERY SATISFIED	DID NOT OCCUR	DON'T KNOW
a. The local school team.	1	2	3	4	5	NA	?
b. The linking agent	1	2	3	4	5	NA	?
c. The RDU project staff (excluding the linker)	1	2	3	4	5	NA	?
d. Developers of R&D based programs or materials.	1	2	3	4	5	NA	?
e. Other organizations or consultants from outside your school or district.	1	2	3	4	5	NA	?

18. How much contact have *you personally* had with the linking agent? (If you had contact with more than one linking agent, please answer this question and questions 19 and 20 for the individual with whom you had the *most* contact.) (Check one.)

A lot ..... ___
Some ..... ___
Little ..... ___
None ..... ___ → If None, skip to Q. 20

19. If you had any contact with the linking agent please rate him/her on the following items. Remember that no individual can perform all aspects of his/her role equally well, and please try to discriminate between his/her performance in different areas. (Circle one on each line.)

	POOR				EXCELLENT	CAN'T JUDGE/ DID NOT OCCUR	CAN'T RECALL
a. Ability to explain clearly the purposes and services of the RDU program.	1	2	3	4	5	NA	?
b. Helpfulness in specifying, analyzing, and diagnosing our particular problems or needs.	1	2	3	4	5	NA	?
c. Helpfulness in developing criteria for selecting the solution best suited to our needs.	1	2	3	4	5	NA	?
d. Helpfulness in locating alternative solutions to our problems.	1	2	3	4	5	NA	?
e. Helpfulness in finding the best match between our problem and a solution.	1	2	3	4	5	NA	?
f. Ability to help us understand how the R&D based program or materials should be used.	1	2	3	4	5	NA	?
g. Helpfulness in adapting the R&D product to our school or school district.	1	2	3	4	5	NA	?
h. Helpfulness in implementing the new program or materials.	1	2	3	4	5	NA	?
i. Assistance in locating additional technical resource persons.	1	2	3	4	5	NA	?
j. Availability to us when we need to talk to him/her.	1	2	3	4	5	NA	?
k. Ability to resolve conflicts fairly.	1	2	3	4	5	NA	?
l. Skills as an organizer or coordinator.	1	2	3	4	5	NA	?
m. Assistance in evaluating our program.	1	2	3	4	5	NA	?