A Comparison of an Ideal and a Real Quality of Work Life Program

Noreen Goldschmidt
Western Michigan University

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A COMPARISON OF AN IDEAL AND A REAL QUALITY OF WORK LIFE PROGRAM

by

Noreen Goldschmidt

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Masters of Arts
Department of Psychology

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
December 1987
A COMPARISON OF AN IDEAL AND A REAL QUALITY OF WORK LIFE PROGRAM

Noreen Goldschmidt, M.A.
Western Michigan University, 1987

The purposes of this study were to examine the differences between: (a) a real and idealized Quality of Work Life program; (b) individual groups and the idealized Quality of Work Life program, and (c) groups surveyed.

Two departments were surveyed to obtain perceptions of a Quality of Work Life program existing within a utility company located in the state of Michigan.

Percentages were calculated on the Agree and Strongly Agree response alternatives for all items included on the survey. For the three comparisons made the difference in percent was tested at the .05 level of significance. The results indicated that the majority of respondents view the Quality of Work Life program in a positive manner. The results also suggest that departmental climate and years with the company does have an impact on perceptions.
DEDICATION

Dedicated to my family, Lothar, Ilana and Andrew Goldschmidt, for their love and support.

Noreen Goldschmidt
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members Dr. Jack Asher, Dr. Dale Brethower and Dr. John Nangle for all their wisdom and advice. I would also like to thank all the people who participated in my study. Without all of you, this study would never have been completed.

Additional thanks go to all my friends who have supported me and gotten me through with smiles and laughs.

Noreen Goldschmidt
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Much has been written on the relationship between Quality of Work Life (QWL) programs, the work environment, employee satisfaction and productivity (Calhoun, 1980; Glaser, 1980; Hanlon, 1985; Nadler & Lawler 1983; Roscow, 1981; Scobel, 1982; Skrovan, 1980; Wacker & Nadler 1980; Walton, 1978). As early as 1927, the Hawthorne Studies examined the work environment as a means of increasing productivity (Gellerman, 1963). Recently studies have shown that worker satisfaction is lower than ever before (Calhoun, 1980; Phillips, 1983; Scobel, 1980). This is attributed to many factors. The increase of college educated individuals, dual-career couples, and women entering the job market has raised employees' expectations of the work place. The highly educated workers bring a variety of skills and knowledge to the job. Dual-career couples are likely to decline promotions and transfers so that their spouses can remain in a given location. As more women enter the work force, the demands for adequate child care have increased. Employees have come to expect the companies for which they work to respond to these and other issues. This call for responsiveness creates a chasm between the goals
of the employer and the employees. Traditionally, employers relied on the organizational hierarchy, work ethic of the individual and forms of punishment as means to motivate employees. Most of these do not consider the changing needs of the current employee. Today's workers desire participation in workplace decision-making, innovation, benefits, and job security (Metz, 1982; Roscow, 1981).

These demands place a great deal of stress on the operations of an organization. The inability of organizations to meet these worker "needs" can contribute to increased problems, such as: stress, tardiness, absenteeism, substance abuse, and management-union-employee power struggles (Gadon, 1984; Hanlon, 1985; Quible, 1982). The outcomes of these problems are low levels of employee satisfaction and productivity.

Companies are looking for ways to improve poor employee morale and productivity. Moreover, they are looking for solutions that can be implemented within the existing structure of the organization. The desire is to develop a system that makes use of the organization's human resources and that can also be implemented quickly, easily, and with minimal cost. Many companies are implementing Quality of Work Life programs to meet these needs. In 1986, the American Productivity Center and the American Compensation Association surveyed 1,598 firms
and organizational units and found that eight percent of these firms had a QWL program (Horn, 1987). The focus of this type of system is to improve the quality of working life for current workers at all levels of the organization. The aim of many of these programs is to combat the above mentioned problems.

QWL has many definitions. It can be viewed as a philosophy that facilitates a process resulting in a specific goal or goals. As a philosophy, QWL is concerned with the relationship between the quality of life at work and job performance. There is much speculation and some evidence of a strong correlation between satisfying work environments and high levels of performance (Fuller, 1980; Hanlon, 1985; Hill, 1980; Quible, 1982; Runcie, 1980; Wacker & Nadler 1980; Walton, 1978). As a philosophy, QWL advocates the use of worker and work place innovation as a means of increasing employee satisfaction and productivity. The definition of QWL is necessarily broad, when viewed as a philosophy, allowing for adaptability and generalization from one system to another. Quality of Work Life projects are not absolute solutions to any set of problems, rather, they represent an approach to looking at problems (Walton, 1978).

It is in the application of the process that QWL becomes more specific and complex. Once the philosophy
has been accepted by an organization, the process is developed. As a process, QWL involves participation of all individuals in an organization to create a more satisfying and cooperative work environment. The goal of this process is to have all individuals working together in a collaborative manner to solve common problems. The problems can vary in range, but the QWL process seeks to facilitate an environment for workers that is ideally one of mutual respect, cooperation, and fairness. Quality of Work Life is a process that enables its members at all levels of an organization to actively participate in shaping the organization's environment, methods, and outcomes. This value-based process is aimed at meeting the twin goals of enhanced effectiveness of the organization and improved quality of life at work for employees (Skrovan, 1980).

QWL is not just a concept or an idea. It is a foundation for organizations to deal with the issues that employees feel are important to its survival. QWL involves the participation of individuals who are a part of the organization; thus, QWL programs can be developed to meet the specific needs of the organization. Although the QWL philosophy can be adapted to all organizations, the process should contain certain elements, if the program is to prove successful. Glaser (1980) identified nine essential elements for long-term success of a
Quality of Work Life program. They include:

1. Achieving sustained commitment from management to an open, non-defensive style of operation which includes sincerely inviting employees to speak up regarding problems and opportunities.

2. Establishing a work environment that encourages continuous learning, training, and active interest regarding both the job and the product or service to which the job contributes.

3. Making the job itself more challenging by structuring it so that an individual (or small work team) can "self-manage" and feel responsible for a significant, identifiable output, if desired.

4. Affording opportunities for continued growth; that is, opportunities to advance in organizational or career terms.

5. Training of supervisors to equip them to function effectively in .... less directive, more collaborative style.

6. Breaking down the traditional status barriers between management and production or support personnel—achieving an atmosphere of open communication and trust between management and the work force.

7. Providing not only feedback with regard to result achieved, and recognition for the good results, but also providing financial incentives (or some other form of generalized reinforcement).

8. Seeking to select personnel who can be motivated, under appropriate conditions, to "give a damn" about striving for excellence in task performance.

9. Evaluating and analyzing results, including failures, leading to revised efforts toward continual improvements. (pp. 3-4)

It is important that an organization implementing a Quality of Work Life program changes the way things are done. More importantly, for Quality of Work Life to be successful, an organization must adapt a constructive
view of the employees rather than considering them a cost to be controlled (Oates, 1973). Quible (1982) states the following:

The success of a quality of work life program depends upon its organizational structure. QWL programs should tap to the fullest the creative talents of the employees. QWL should be based on trust, mutuality of confidence, and employee involvement in problem solving. (p. 8)

It is clear that in order to even attempt to implement a Quality of Work Life program, all levels of an organization must support the effort.

Often disregarded by the literature is the participation of trade unions in QWL efforts. Many Quality of Work Life programs have been greatly impacted by union involvement (Glaser, 1976; Hanlon, 1985; Hill, 1980; Miller, 1978; Parker, 1985; Scobel, 1980). In 1982, unions representing 20 percent of the United States' organized workers had signed national agreements committing themselves to Quality of Work Life programs of one type or another (Parker, 1985). Quality of Work Life programs and trade unions are developed to give employees a voice in the workplace. In this similarity lies the opportunity for tremendous conflict. Quality of Work Life programs may be viewed by many as a means of dissolving the union. Nevertheless, many unions have helped to make quality of work life programs popular in this country.
Perhaps the most publicized management-union Quality of Work Life effort is the one implemented in a General Motors' assembly plant in Tarrytown, New York. This particular assembly plant was noted for its poor labor relations and high grievance rates. Management and union joined forces to turn the plant around in order to save it from closing down. As a result of this cooperation, grievances decreased and product quality increased. Thus, there is some evidence to suggest that trade unions and management can work together to produce favorable results. In 1983, Katz, Kochen and Gobeille (cited in Hanlon, 1985) found that a cooperative union-management climate was correlated with lower grievances, incidents of formal discipline, absenteeism, and smoother contract negotiations. As stated previously, it is crucial that all parts of an organization must support Quality of Work Life programs in order for them to be successful; this includes trade union members. Therefore, when a unionized organization chooses to implement a Quality of Work Life program, it is essential that the union be part of its development and implementation.

The majority of organizations incorporating Quality of Work Life programs form a QWL organizational chart. This organizational chart is designed to clarify how the Quality of Work Life program will function within the existing system. Typically, Quality of Work Life...
programs are operated under the sponsorship of a steering committee composed of equal members of union and management representatives, usually 6 to 12 members (Hanlon, 1985; Parker, 1985). This committee's responsibility is to define the direction of the Quality of Work Life program, in terms mutually agreeable to management and union. Many Quality of Work Life programs incorporate the use of an external behavioral-science consultant whose client is the joint union-management steering committee (Hanlon, 1985). Once the steering committee has determined the goals of the Quality of Work Life program, a QWL committee is created. Organizations differ in their approach to forming these committees. The size of an organization often determines how the committees are formed. Some QWL committees are departmentalized, while others are organization-wide. Almost all are similar in that they include representatives from the union, management, and work force. Most QWL committees meet once a week for an hour, during a regular work week, and each member is paid for the time spent in these meetings. If the meeting occurs outside of regular work hours, the members are usually paid overtime. QWL committees are formed to enhance the effectiveness of an organization by improving the quality of life, at work, for employees. Walton (cited in Lippitt, 1978) offers the following conceptual categories
or criteria that facilitate quality work:

1. Adequacy in compensation
2. Safe and healthy working conditions
3. Immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities.
4. Opportunity for continued growth and security
5. Social integration in the work organization
6. Constitutionalism in the work organization
7. Work and total life space
8. Social relevance of life work

From this list, Lippitt (1978) developed a model and proposed that an overlap may exist between individual and organizational needs. His model has four criteria: (1) the work itself, (2) the individual, (3) the work output, and (4) organizational functions. The objective of a Quality of Work Life program is to recognize this individual and organizational needs overlap and to produce, not only a happy and contented work force, but a smart, active one (Wacker & Nadler, 1980).

The purpose of this study was to compare an ideal and a real Quality of Work Life program. The procedures used consisted of reviewing past and current research and collecting data from two departments in a major utility company. Both departments surveyed were within the same division of the company. Each department had its own QWL committee, but shared the same steering committee. QWL
committee meetings were attended to observe how the two committees functioned. Each QWL committee had the same purpose, but accomplishments often differed. A survey was given to employees of the departments of both QWL committees to obtain their perceptions of the effectiveness of their organization's Quality of Work Life program. This survey was structured to detect discrepancies in responses that would indicate the success or failure of the various components of the Quality of Work Life program. Significance tests were performed to examine group perceptions of the existing Quality of Work Life program, the dependent variable. The independent variables are: (a) department, (b) tenure, and (c) committee and non-committee membership. Based on the information obtained, an analysis was conducted to develop recommendations for the improvement of the QWL program at this utility company and possibly other QWL programs.

This should add to the existing literature by providing information relevant to a Quality of Work Life program in a unionized utility company. The study will focus on the perceptions of the employees. The attempt is to see if the literature accurately identified characteristics of an "ideal" Quality of Work Life program. Moreover, this study will draw conclusions, based on the results of the questionnaire, as to whether
those "ideal" characteristics are necessary for an existing QWL program to be considered successful.
CHAPTER II

METHOD

Setting

The setting for this study was two business offices in a utility company located in the State of Michigan. Each office consisted of a mix of management, union and hourly personnel. Both offices were part of one division within the utility company, but were functionally separated by the nature of the services they provided to their customers. One office had the responsibility for providing services to commercial businesses; for the purpose of this study, that office is referred to as Department A. The other department was responsible for providing services to all non-business customers and is referred to as Department B. Department A is divided into three sections and one clerical section. Department B consists of four sections and one clerical section.

Both offices involved in this study had their own Quality of Work Life committee; however, both shared the same steering committee. Membership on a QWL committee was strictly voluntary. Both QWL committees had at least one management representative, one union representative, one hourly person from each section, and an elected
chairperson. Department A had six members on its QWL committee and Department B had ten.

The Quality of Work Life program at this utility company has been in existence for approximately six years. However, it has only been considered to be active and working for the past four years. In 1985 all employees of the organization participated in a QWL orientation procedure. Two internal QWL consultants, one union and one management, facilitated the orientation process. This orientation consisted of a two to four-hour presentation that primarily focused on the changes that were going to be made with regard to the existing QWL program. This orientation stressed team building and group problem solving as a means of making QWL work. Once the orientation process was completed, training of all committee members began. This training session was facilitated by the two previously mentioned internal consultants and by external consultants. The committee members went through exercises that involved team building, problem identification and brain storming for solutions. Every year when a new QWL committee was formed in each department, the members were required to attend the one-day training session. As a follow-up to this training, a union facilitator randomly attended QWL committee meetings to guide and direct QWL functions and to suggest strategies for effectiveness. All QWL efforts
are proposed to department members and must be approved of unanimously prior to implementation.

Subjects

From both departments, a total of 78 subjects were able to participate in the study. Two basic job classifications defined the subject population. There were seven supervisors and 42 hourly personnel; three hourly personnel identified themselves as also functioning as union representatives. Of the 65 subjects who were involved in the study, Department A was represented by 16 workers; one of whom identified himself or herself as a supervisor and one who indicated that he or she was also a union representative. Department B had 49 workers; none of which indicated that they were a supervisor and two who identified themselves as also being union representatives. The total subject population consisted of both females and males ranging from approximately 30 to 55 years of age. Every employee of this company must become a union member and pay union dues; however, they have the option of not being active in the union and its programs. All employees had at least a high school education.
Procedure

In order to facilitate the initiation of this project, a meeting was held with the QWL committee chairperson of Department B. At this time, the function of QWL at the utility company was described and contact with Department A was established. One bi-weekly meeting of both Department A's and Department B's QWL committees was attended and observed by the researcher. The researcher also attended meetings with members of Management from each office. Research plans for the study were presented and survey proposals were examined at these meetings. During these meetings, members of the committees and Management were requested to offer suggestions with regard to the items contained in the survey. At this time, a plan to distribute the survey was developed. All of the suggested survey items were accepted by the company. It was explained to the members of both QWL committees and members of Management that completion of the survey was strictly voluntary and that the participants need not identify themselves. As a result of these meetings, it was decided that one survey instrument would be administered to all hourly, including supervisory, personnel in both departments. It was also agreed that the identity of the utility company and the department would remain anonymous (See Appendix A for the Western Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional
The QWL survey consisted of 30 questions (see Appendix B). The questions were constructed by incorporating both suggestions made by the QWL committee members and by identifying the elements of an ideal QWL program, as indicated by a review of the literature. "Ideal" elements of a QWL program were those that appeared consistently across the literature and on other QWL questionnaires. Items requesting specific demographic information were also included on the QWL survey. The survey questions were designed so as to obtain information regarding worker perception of the effectiveness of the QWL program. The Survey was also designed to obtain information that would identify characteristics of an ideal QWL program existing within the QWL program at this company. The participants were asked to record their responses to each item in terms of a five-point Likert scale corresponding to the following labels: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neither Agree or Disagree, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly Agree.

Department A was administered the QWL survey two days before Department B. Prior to administration of the survey to both departments, the researcher explained the purpose of the survey and that the completion of the survey and each item was strictly voluntary. The participants were also requested not to discuss the
contents of the survey until the completed surveys were returned. The researcher was not present during the administration of the QWL survey to either department.

Department A had three hours to complete the QWL survey. The surveys were placed on a table where participants were able to voluntarily pick one up and complete it. Department B had one person distribute the QWL survey to every member of the department, each member had one half hour to complete the survey. In order to ensure participant confidentiality, each department had a special box, located in a designated area, where the completed surveys were placed, face-down. The box was then covered and returned to the researcher.

Data Analysis

Once the surveys were collected, each item was tallied on a Survey Score Sheet (see Appendix C). The QWL Survey Score Sheet was designed to tally the number of responses to each item as well as to record the demographic information. From these tallies, three response comparisons were established. They were: (1) Department A with Department B, (2) QWL committee members with non-committee members, and (3) individuals with company service of 15 years or less with individuals having company service of 16 years or more.

For each item on the survey, responses were tallied
for every category on the five-point Likert scale. Proportions were then calculated for just the Agree and Strongly Agree categories. For each comparison made, the percent agree was calculated by taking the total Agree and Strongly Agree responses and dividing it by the total number of individuals in the group. A nomograph (see Appendix D) was used to test significance of proportions at the five percent level of significance.
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The objective of the QWL survey was to detect discrepancies in responses that would indicate whether ideal characteristics of a Quality of Work Life program were or were not incorporated into the Quality of Work Life program at a utility company. Percentages were calculated on the Agree and the Strongly Agree response alternatives for each of the 25 items. The items included on the survey were structured to be either positive or negative in nature. Ideally, there should be 100 percent agreement to all positive statements and zero percent agreement to negative statements (see Table 1).

Table 2 shows the perceptions of all respondents. The results indicate that 18 items were answered favorably, three unfavorably and four were approximately equal in favorable and unfavorable responses. The three items answered unfavorably were:

11. I feel there is good communication between all levels at . . . . . . . . . . . . (The name of Utility Company).

17. There is no opportunity for me to advance at .......... (The name of Utility Company).

24. Quality of Work Life (QWL) has had an impact on every aspect of my department.
Table 1
Percentage of Responses as Compared to Expected Ideal QWL Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percent Agree</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What happens at the Utility Company is important to me.</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I feel that my department is concerned about safety.</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I trust my fellow employees.</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I used to care more about my work than I do now.</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Around here, I am asked for my ideas.</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. My job is not important to the survival of the Utility Company.</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. My department promotes good customer-company relations.</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Not everyone at the Utility Company is treated fairly and equally.</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I feel that Quality of Work Life (QWL) has made my department a satisfying place to work.</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. People at the Utility Company really care about me.</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I feel there is good communication between all levels at the Utility Company.</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I feel that I have no input into what happens in</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I would like to participate on a Quality of Work Life Committee.</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I feel my fellow employees are irresponsible.</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I am satisfied with my job.</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I feel the people in my department work as a team.</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 -- Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percent Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Real</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. There is no opportunity for me to advance at the Utility Company.</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I feel that Management and Union work well together.</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. The feedback I receive is directly related to my work.</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I know the goals of the Quality of Work Life (QWL) committee in my department.</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I think Quality of Work Life (QWL) is a waste of time.</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Problem-solving in my department is done by one person.</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I feel that my job is a dead-end job.</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Quality of Work Life (QWL) has had an impact on every aspect of my department.</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Being a member of the Quality of Work Life (QWL) committee is strictly voluntary.</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The four items that were almost equal in favorable and unfavorable responses were:

4. I used to care more about my work than I do now.
13. I would like to participate on Quality of Life Work (QWL) committee.
18. I feel that Management and Union work well together.
23. I feel my job is a dead-end job.
Table 2

Percentage of Total Group Responses to All Items on the Quality of Work Life Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What happens at the Utility Company is important to me.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I feel that my department is concerned about safety.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I trust my fellow employees.</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I used to care more about my work than I do now.</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Around here, I am asked for my ideas.</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. My job is not important to the survival of the Utility Company.</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. My department promotes good customer-company relations.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Not everyone at the Utility Company is treated fairly and equally.</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I feel that Quality of Work Life (QWL) has made my department a satisfying place to work.</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. People at the Utility Company really care about me.</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I feel there is good communication between all levels at the Utility Company.</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I feel that I have no input into what happens in</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I would like to participate on a Quality of Work Life Committee.</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I feel my fellow employees are irresponsible.</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I am satisfied with my job.</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I feel the people in my department work as a team.</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. There is no opportunity for me to advance at the Utility Company.</td>
<td>2% 25% 20% 38% 15% 0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I feel that Management and Union work well together.</td>
<td>8% 23% 35% 31% 2% 2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. The feedback I receive is directly related to my work.</td>
<td>2% 20% 22% 57% 0% 0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. I know the goals of the Quality of Work Life (QWL) committee in my department.</td>
<td>3% 8% 15% 66% 6% 2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I think Quality of Work Life (QWL) is a waste of time.</td>
<td>18% 46% 11% 17% 8% 0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Problem-solving in my department is done by one person.</td>
<td>14% 48% 25% 12% 2% 0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. I feel that my job is a dead-end job.</td>
<td>2% 35% 20% 38% 5% 0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Quality of Work Life (QWL) has had an impact on every aspect of my department.</td>
<td>5% 40% 20% 31% 5% 0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Being a member of the Quality of Work Life (QWL) committee is strictly voluntary.</td>
<td>3% 6% 9% 60% 22% 0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** The abbreviated answer choices used in the table are interpreted as:

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, N = Neither agree or disagree, D = Disagree,
S = Strongly Disagree, NA = No Answer.
The remaining 18 items indicated that perceptions of QWL were generally favorable.

Three types of comparisons were used to detect significance of agreement from the information obtained from the completed questionnaires. All comparisons were made after combining the percentages of the Agree and Strongly Agree response categories for each item. First, a comparison of percent of agreement for all Quality of Work Life committee members as compared to all non-committee members for Departments A and B combined. Second, a comparison of percent of agreement between Department A and Department B. Finally, a comparison was made of the percentage of agreement for individuals who had been with the company up to 15 years as compared to individuals who had been with the company 16 years or more. Three tables are used to summarize the results of these three comparisons, showing only those questions for which significant differences were found using an alpha level of .05.

Table 3 represents the results of the comparison between percentages of agreement for QWL committee members as compared to non-committee members. Two items on the questionnaire were found to be significantly different in percentage of agreement. The two items were: (1) What happens at ............(The name of Utility Company) is important to me, and (6) My job is not important to the survival of .............(The name of Utility Company).
### Table 3

**Items Showing Significant Differences for the Total Group of QWL Committee Members vs. Noncommittee Members**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Department A</th>
<th>Department B</th>
<th>Total Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Com</td>
<td>Non</td>
<td>Com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happens at the Utility Company is important to me.</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My job is not important to the survival of the Utility Company.</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Significance at the .05 level with $t_{.05} = 2.000$.

* * Significance Tests were conducted only for the total group.

Committee members showed significantly less agreement to both items than non-committee members. Ideally, committee members and non-committee members should agree 100 percent to Item 1 and zero percent to Item 6. Committee members and non-committee members should not differ in responses to these two items.

The results of the comparison between Department A and Department B are indicated in Table 4. Three items are shown to be significantly different in percentage of agreement. These items are:

1. What happens at ............... (The name of Utility Company) is important to me.
2. I feel that Quality of Work Life has made my department a satisfying place to work.
3. I am satisfied with my job.
Table 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percent Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happens at the Utility Company is important to me.</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that Quality of Work Life (QWL) has made my department a satisfying place to work.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with my job.</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Significance at the .05 level with t.05 = 2.000.

* Significance Tests were conducted for response differences between departments.

Members of Department A agreed significantly less to all three items than members of Department B. Ideally, both departments should agree 100 percent with all three items and should not differ in the manner in which they responded.

Table 5 displays the results of the comparison of percentages of agreement for the total sample (Department A and B combined) based upon years of employment with the utility company. The breakdown in years was arbitrarily dichotomized in order to have two groups of equal size. The results was to identify those who had been with the company up to 15 years and those with the company 16
years or more. Individuals with the company 15 years or less were more likely to agree with the perception that what happens at the company is important to them than individuals who have been with the company 16 years or more. Employees who have worked at the company 16 or more years agree significantly less than employees who have been with the company 15 years or less that they would like to participate on a Quality of Work Life Committee. Ideally, regardless of years at the company, all responses should agree 100 percent to both items and those compared should differ very little in percent of agreement.

All three comparisons resulted in significant differences in percentage of agreement for Item 1: What happens at ..............(The name of Utility Company) is important to me. However, the percentage of agreement was high regardless of the groups being compared. All other items found significant differed depending on which group comparison was being made.
Table 5

Items Showing Significant Differences for All Employees Based on Years With the Company

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Percent Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Department A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-15  16-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happens at the Utility Company is important to me.</td>
<td>77%  100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to participate on a Quality of Work Life (QWL) committee.</td>
<td>22%  14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N  9   7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Significance at the .05 level with t.05 = 2.000.

* Significance Tests were conducted only for the total group.
CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was threefold; to examine the differences between (1) a real and idealized Quality of Work Life program; (2) individual groups and the idealized Quality of Work Life program; and (3) the groups surveyed. The QWL survey that was administered to the employees of a utility company was comprised of 25 items that were structured to reflect either positive or negative statements about the Quality of Work Life program within an organizational unit. Respondents were asked to rate their responses on a five-point Likert scale, with the response alternatives: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree, (4) Agree, and (5) Strongly Agree. Significance tests were based on the percentage of the Agree and Strongly Agree response alternatives for each of the 25 items. Ideally, there should be 100 percent agreement to all positive statements and zero percent agreement to negative statements.

An "ideal" Quality of Work Life program incorporates all of the characteristics identified through a search of past and current research. The "real" Quality of Work Life program is one actually implemented in one
particular organization. By using the perceptions of the total sample, information was obtained about the idealized QWL program as compared to an existing QWL program. Based on the QWL survey, the majority of individuals perceived the Quality of Work Life program at the utility company in a favorable manner. Of the total sample surveyed, 50 percent or more agreed with 18 of the 25 items, expressing approval of QWL in this organization. The results suggest two possible conclusions.

One, the Quality of Work Life program is effective and incorporates many of the characteristics of an "ideal QWL program. Secondly, the responses may simply reflect the employees' support of the organization. Since QWL is a program mandated by the company, the employees' reaction may be a result of the company's enforcement of the program. Failure to answer in a favorable manner may only indicate a lack of organizational support, not an unfavorable perception of QWL.

The individuals surveyed responded unfavorably to three out of the 25 items. One of these items concerned communication. Less than 50 percent of those sampled agreed that there is a good communication between all levels of the organization. The response to this item indicates that this ideal characteristic of a QWL program is absent in some degree. Craver (1983) states, "essential to the success of any QWL program are vertical
and lateral open communications" (p. 13). Ideally, the utility company might have to consider revising the traditional management and employee hierarchy that exists currently in this organization in order to promote communication and solicit input from all members.

Similarly, less than 50 percent of those sampled indicated that they perceived an opportunity for advancement within the utility company. As with many organizations, this utility company has been and will continue to be affected by advancements in technology. Many of these technological advancements have resulted in a reduction of the work force. It is possible that survey results were unfavorable primarily because of this reduction. However, as Walton (cited in Lippitt, 1978) stated:

There must be opportunity for continued growth and security, this. . . .encompasses work assignments and educational pursuits which expands one's capabilities, the prospect of newly acquired knowledge and skills in work assignments, advancement opportunities, and employment or income security associated with one's work. (p. 6)

This suggests, in theory at least, that because the majority of respondents perceived little opportunity for advancement. This suggests that maybe this ideal QWL characteristic is missing or is not possible in some types of organizations.

The majority of individuals surveyed did not
perceive that QWL had an impact on every aspect of their department. It is difficult to know in what manner QWL should, ideally, impact "every" aspect of a department. Ideally, QWL should also have had a favorable impact on all aspects of a department, but it should allow for little change where little is required. Generally this item does not provide a clear indication of the effectiveness of the current QWL program.

Approximately the same percentage of those surveyed agreed and disagreed with four items contained on the QWL survey. These items were:

4. I used to care more about my work than I do now.
13. I would like to participate on a Quality of Work Life (QWL) committee.
18. I feel that Management and Union work well together.
22. I feel my job is a dead-end job.

Ideally, respondents should agree zero percent to Items 4 and 22 and 100 percent with Items 13 and 18. Because there was no opportunity for respondents to explain why they hold these perceptions, these results are difficult to interpret. However, it appears that Items 13 and 18 indicate that there is some disagreement as to the cooperative atmosphere in the organization.

The purpose of the significance tests were to examine the differences in group perceptions of the
existing Quality of Work Life program, dependent variable. The independent variables are: (a) department, (b) tenure, and (c) committee and non-committee membership. The results indicate that there are few significant differences in group perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the Quality of Work Life at the utility company. This finding remains true across the three groups compared: (1) QWL committee members as compared to non-committee members, (2) Department A as compared to Department B, and (3) individuals 15 years or less with the company as compared to individuals 16 years or more with the company. Ideally, there should be no significant differences between the three groups compared. It was anticipated that these comparisons might help clarify the cause of differences in perceptions between various employee groups.

The three group comparisons did result in significant differences on several items. One of these items resulted in differences across all three group comparisons. This item was: What happens at ..........(The name of Utility Company) is important to me. Significantly fewer QWL committee members than non-members agreed that what happens at the utility company is important to them. Ninety-three percent of all committee members agreed with the statement as compared to 100 percent of all non-committee members. A
significant difference of seven percent is not that great and because the percentages are both high, this difference is difficult to interpret. The significant difference (see Table 3) resulted from the committee members in Department A who perceived that what happens at the company is less important to them than all non-committee members and all members of Department B. The results also showed (see Table 4) that all members of Department A agreed significantly less to the above mentioned item than members of Department B. Of the three comparisons examined, the difference in percentages of agreement, to this item, was the largest.

Individuals who have been with the company up to 15 years agreed significantly less that what happens at the utility company is important to them as those who have been employed with the company 16 years or more. In this comparison, the difference was only eight percent. The difference (see Table 5) resulted from those individuals in Department A who have been with the company up to 15 years. This small discrepancy indicates, if anything, that the less experienced workers in Department A perceived that what happens at the company is less important to them than the more experienced workers and all the workers in Department B.

Ideally, there should have been 100 percent agreement by all groups to this item. There may be many
reasons why the importance of what happens at the utility company is significantly lower for committee members, members of Department A, and those who have been with the company 15 years or less. However, consistent across all comparisons, the responses to this item from the members of Department A resulted in a lower percentage of agreement. It thus seems possible that the departmental climate and other environmental factors existing within Department A have contributed to the results. However, the response to this item on the survey can also be considered to be indicative of perceptions of the Quality of Work Life program and not be viewed as the employees' perceptions of Department A. It should also be noted that, although significance was shown on this item for all three group comparisons, the real differences in percent were small.

The percentage of QWL committee members that perceived their job as not important to the survival of the organization is significantly lower than the percentage of non-committee members. For this item, the percentage of agreement was low for committee and non-committee members. As mentioned previously, a high percentage of the total sample perceived that their job is not important to the survival of the company. The members of the Quality of Work Life committees ideally should be concerned with developing human resources.
However, the increasing impact of technology may make this increasingly difficult. The primary concern of all employees may be job security. QWL committee members' perceptions might be the result of their inability to have control over this issue. All members, ideally, should perceive their job as important to the survival of the organization. There should be no significant differences between any of the groups compared.

Members of Department A perceived QWL to be significantly less effective in making their department a more satisfying place to work than members of Department B. These results suggest that Department A might already have been a satisfying place to work prior to implementation of QWL and that the Quality of Work Life program simply did not improve work place satisfaction. If there is a strong relationship between Quality of Work Life programs and work place satisfaction, it could be assumed that there was a greater probability of improving work place satisfaction in Department B. The results support this assumption.

Members of Department B are more satisfied with their job as compared to members of Department A. The results also indicate that the members of Department B agreed that there was an increase in work place satisfaction in their department. The results suggest that there may be a strong relationship between work place
satisfaction and job satisfaction. Ideally this relationship should exist. There is some reason to believe that, at this utility company, where QWL is perceived to increase workplace satisfaction, increased job satisfaction may be perceived. This suggests that QWL is working in Department B better than in Department A.

The final comparison made was based on the total years individuals have worked for the utility company. Individuals employed by the company for up to 15 years agreed significantly greater that they would like to participate on QWL committee than individuals who have been employed by the company 16 years or more. In part, the results may be due to the work ethic of the individuals who have been with the company 16 years or more. Of the entire sample, 25 percent have been with the company over 20 years. The work ethic of individuals who have been with the company a greater number of years may indicate that hard work is necessary to fulfill organizational and personal expectations. They may believe that new programs, such as QWL, will not replace hard work. Although age was not requested on the QWL survey, another possible explanation for these results is that some of the individuals who have been with the company over 20 years may be retiring within the next year. They may not want to participate on a QWL committee because the results are not likely to benefit
them. Also, individuals who have been with the company longer are comfortable and familiar with the way things are and they may be resistant to change.

As stated previously, today's "new breed" of worker demands more from the workplace than ever before. Individuals who have been with the company 15 years or less are more likely to be affected by QWL. By participating on the committee, they may be more likely to have a say in the changes that may result. They thus appear to be more supportive of change than those who have been with the company 16 years or more. They may be staying with the company longer and may want to invest more energy into their possible future with the company.

These results indicate that years with the company does have some impact on perceptions with regards to the Quality of Work Life program at the utility company. Fifty percent of the entire sample identified themselves as being with the company 16 years or more. Forty-three percent of the sample identified themselves as being with the company 15 years or less. Ideally, perceptions as a function of tenure at the company should have little effect on the desire to participate on a QWL committee.

It remains unclear whether the Quality of Work Life program at this utility company is successful in both departments. The findings do indicate that QWL may be more successful in Department B than in Department A.
The results also indicate that many of the elements of the "ideal" Quality of Work Life program are present within both departments, however, some are missing. Generally, the perceptions seem to be favorable with respect to the existing Quality of Work Life program within the utility company. Some exceptions should be noted. Committee members' perceptions were in less agreement than non-committee members that their job is important to the survival of the company. The overall results indicate that the majority of the respondents share the same perception. The results also indicate that departmental differences did have an effect on perceptions with regard to workplace satisfaction and job satisfaction. Moreover, it can be concluded that years with the company results in less support of programs such as Quality of Work Life. Individuals who have been with the company fewer years seem to be more supportive of the program than those who have been with the company for 16 years or more.

Compared to the ideal characteristics of a QWL program (see Table 1), the respondents indicated on nine of the 25 items that QWL was not totally effective in this setting. This suggests that this Quality of Work Life program either did not or could not meet all of the ideal characteristics of a desirable program. It is, of course, possible that no program can meet all of the
ideal characteristics.

For future research, Quality of Work Life programs leave several areas to be explored. With regards to this particular utility company, it would be worthwhile to continue to gather more information on employee perceptions. It would be extremely helpful to know the perceptions of all levels of Management. A follow-up survey, using the same groups as used in this study, should probe more extensively into the items that proved to have identified significant differences in agreement and attempt to find out why these perceptions exist. It would be useful to study the relationship between the departmental climate and the members' perceptions of QWL. On a broader basis, a comparison of this company in Michigan and in others in the state could provide some extremely useful information. It would be helpful to know if existing QWL programs are perceived effective in dealing with the problems as perceived by older and younger workers. Finally, a study on examining Quality of Work Life programs currently in use, their goals, objectives and organizational structure would be extremely informative.

The general findings of this study suggest that surveys, similar to the one used for this study, can be of value in helping evaluate the effectiveness of QWL programs. Quality of Work Life committees might well
consider the use of such instruments in order to gather systematic feedback.
Appendix A

Western Michigan University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board Exempt Approval Form
TO: Noreen Goldschmidt  
FROM: Ellen Page-Robin, Chair  
RE: Research Protocol  
DATE: November 4, 1986.  

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research protocol, "An Investigation into the Characteristics of a Successful Quality of Work Life Program," was approved as exempt by the HSIRB. If you have any questions, please contact me at 383-4917.
LEVEL OF REVIEW: Please indicate here if you think that the research project is exempt from review, subject to expedited review, or subject to full review.

- Exempt (Forward 1 application to IRB Chair)
- Expedited (Forward 2 applications to IRB Chair)
- Subject to full IRB review (Forward 1 applications to IRB Chair)

Comments:

Your application was reviewed and the Human Subject Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) has determined that:

1. The proposed activities, subject to any conditions and/or restrictions indicated in Remarks below, have (a) provided adequate safeguards to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects involved, (b) established appropriate procedures and/or documents to obtain informed consent, and (c) demonstrated that the potential benefits of the research substantially outweigh the risks.

2. The proposed activities, for reasons indicated in Remarks below do not provide adequate protection for the rights and welfare of the human subjects.

At its meeting on __________, the HSIRB (approved) (provisionally approved... see remarks) this application with regard to the treatment of human subjects. The HSIRB categorized this application as:

1. Involving subjects at no more than minimal risk.
2. Involving subjects at more than minimal risk.

REMARKS:

__________________________
Signature HSIRB Chair

__________________________
Date
Appendix B

Quality of Work Life Survey
QUALITY OF WORK LIFE SURVEY

The purpose of this questionnaire is to examine your perceptions of the Quality of Work Life (QWL) programs at the Utility Company. This survey is part of a research project for a Masters Degree at Western Michigan University.

YOUR ANSWERS ARE COMPLETELY CONFIDENTIAL.

Only the questionnaire administrator will see your completed questionnaire. NO ONE at the Utility Company will have access to the completed questionnaires. In order to ensure confidentiality, DO NOT put your name or any other mark on the questionnaire form that may identify you.

For each item, please circle the one (1) answer that best describes your perception.

Answer Choices: SD=Strongly Disagree  D=Disagree
N=Neither Agree nor Disagree  A=Agree
SA=Strongly Agree

1. What happens at the Utility Company is important to me.
   SD D N A SA

2. I feel that my department is concerned about safety.
   SD D N A SA

3. I trust my fellow employees.
   SD D N A SA

4. I used to care more about my work than I do now.
   SD D N A SA

5. Around here, I am asked for my ideas.
   SD D N A SA

6. My job is not important to the survival of the Utility Company.
   SD D N A SA

7. My department promotes good customer-company relations.
   SD D N A SA

8. Not everyone at the Utility Company is treated fairly and equally.
   SD D N A SA

9. I feel that Quality of Work Life (QWL) has made my department a satisfying place to work.
   SD D N A SA
10. People at the Utility Company really care about me.  
11. I feel that there is good communication between all levels at the Utility Company.  
12. I feel that I have no input into what happens in my department.  
13. I would like to participate on a Quality Work Life (QWL) committee.  
14. I feel my fellow employees are irresponsible.  
15. I am satisfied with my job.  
16. I feel the people in my department work as a team.  
17. There is no opportunity for me to advance at the Utility Company.  
18. I feel that Management and Union work well together.  
19. The feedback I receive is directly related to my work.  
20. I know the goals of the Quality of Work Life (QWL) committee in my department.  
21. I think Quality of Work Life (QWL) is a waste of time.  
22. Problem-solving in my department is done by one person.  
23. I feel that my job is a dead-end job.  
24. Quality of Work Life (QWL) has had an impact on every aspect of my department.  
25. Being a member of the Quality of Work Life (QWL) committee is strictly voluntary.  
26. How long have you worked at the Utility Company?  
27. How long have you worked in this department?  
28. Name of your department?  
29. Your job title?  
30. Are you now or have you been a member of a Quality of Work Life (QWL) committee at the Utility Company?  
   Yes  
   No
Appendix C

Quality of Work Life Survey Score Sheet
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER POSSIBLE</th>
<th>OWL SURVEY SCORE SHEET</th>
<th>NUMBER ACTUAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. SD NA</td>
<td>D N A SA</td>
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26. 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 20 & UP

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27. 1-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 20 & UP

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28. DEPT. NAME

29. TITLE: SERVICE REP SUPERVISOR CLERK

            NA            NA UNION STEWARD

30. YES NA NO
Appendix D
Nomograph
Three aids in the evaluation of the significance of the difference between percentages. 

Edu. Psychol. Measmt, 1930, 10, 263-270.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


54

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