

Police Managers' Perception of Organizational Leadership Styles

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This study reviews the various leadership styles and their effect on productivity in the public and private sector. The general literature was related to police management and administration. A scale developed by Likert was administered to law enforcement personnel in the state of Arizona to determine their perception of their departments' organizational and performance characteristics. As a group, they characterized their organizations as being "benevolent-authoritative" while they were desirous that their organizational style be more participative.

The desire to develop better leadership styles is becoming a matter of increasing importance in the public sector and especially in law enforcement agencies. As competition for public resources increases, policy departments have been the subject of critical scrutiny. Pangano and Dintino (1982) have characterized the management of policy resources as: "unimaginative, short-sighted, and crisis-oriented, with little understanding of the need to develop programs which ensure that the organizations most costly resources—its personnel—are properly motivated and utilized in a cost-effective manner."

A universal characteristic which distinguishes police organizations from almost all other public institutions is the para-military structure and climate of the police environment. This structure encourages an authoritarian approach to leadership and would appear to be counterproductive to any movement toward a more participative model. It has been suggested that police personnel, due to their training and experience, would not be supportive of management styles that are developed to provide a participative leadership model. With this in mind, a research plan was implemented to measure the attitude of supervisory and middle management personnel in the state of Arizona as to their preference for various leadership styles. The instrument

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used to measure the attitudes was developed by Likert in his book *New Patterns of Management* (1967).

Since the primary purpose of this article is to report on the difference between where officers perceive their present organizational leadership patterns and where they would like their organization pattern to be, data analysis is limited to those objectives. No efforts were made to determine the overall effectiveness of the various departments and relate the perceived styles accordingly.

Review of Literature

Considerable research has been done in recent years relative to various leadership styles and their effect on productivity in the public and private sector. Leadership is an essential part of management with particular emphasis on the human aspects. Tannenbaum and Massarik (1957) discuss leadership as an "interpersonal influence exercised in situations and directed, through the communication process, toward the attainment of a specified goal or goals."

Much of the early effort in leadership research has been devoted to understanding the traits and behaviors of good leaders. The successful executive was represented as being intelligent, imaginative, and with the capacity to make good decisions.

However, in more recent years, the concept of "group dynamics" has emerged with the focus on members of the group as well as the leaders. Social science research studies the importance of employee involvement and participation in decision-making. The effectiveness of highly directive leadership was questioned and increased research was directed to problems of motivation, participation, and human relations.

Argyris (1964) was an early advocate of the human relations approach and studied the conflict between the demands of the organization and the needs of its followers. Blake and Mouton (1964) found more effective leaders were rated high in both person-oriented and task-oriented behaviors. Katz (1951), Seashore (1954), and Stodgill (1965) studied relationships of leader's behavior to group's productivity. Likert (1961) found results that suggested a supportive attitude toward workers, combined with high group loyalty is associated with the desire for responsibility.

Likert stated:

The leadership and other processes of the organization must be such as to insure a maximum probability that in all interactions and all relationships with the organization each member will, in the light of his background, values, and expectations, view the experience as supportive and one which builds and maintains his sense of personal worth and importance (1961:4).

One of the most influential behavioral scientists is Douglas McGregor. He classified managers (1960) according to basic leadership styles: an authoritarian style which he calls "Theory X," and a more egalitarian style which he calls "Theory Y."

McGregor's Theory X is based on the economic model of man and states that man is inherently lazy, dislikes work, and will avoid work whenever possible. This theory suggests that most human beings are incapable of self-direction and self-control and that they prefer to respond to direct orders rather than to accept responsibility.

The Theory Y leader, by contrast, believes that work can be enjoyable and that people will assume responsibility in the process of achieving organizational goals. It is based on the belief that people really want to do a good job and that their performance will be based on internal rather than external controls. The work situation should be structured so that subordinates can assume self-control and responsibility for the outcome of their efforts.

Recent research has studied the effect of cooperation and competition on productivity. Tjosvald and Andrews (1983) studied three different kinds of leader orientation: cooperative, competitive, and individualistic. The results of the study, along with previous experimental research, suggest that leaders can improve subordinate reactions to their leadership by emphasizing area of overlap between their goals and subordinate goals, by working with and helping subordinates reach their goals, and by sharing the reward of mutual effort. Deutsch (1980) also studied the effects of cooperation and competition. He concluded that people tend to assist each other, communicate and influence each other successfully because in cooperation other effective behavior is rewarding. In competition, the effective behavior of one interferes with other effectiveness; competitors discourage successful behavior.

Human relations research has focused largely on peer relationships and suggests that cooperation and competition help to understand relationships between subordinated and leaders. Researchers have tended to use power as the main force in competitive contexts. Tjosvald (1981) found that, compared to those in cooperation, those persons in competition suspected each other, refused to exchange resources, developed negative interpersonal attitudes, and in general, did not help each other. Campbell (1977) suggested that leadership should be, though often is not, focused on helping subordinates. He emphasized that cooperation between leaders and subordinates is desirable and has important potential implications. He stated that leaders need to demonstrate that they want subordinates to reach their goals as well as reach their own, exchange information and resources, encourage learning and development, and share rewards of their joint efforts.

One of the leading questions in research theory is how and how much those who will have to implement the decisions should participate in the decision-making process. Argyris (1964) and Likert (1967) stated that a participative style of leadership had more chance of being successful than an authoritarian style especially as it relates to job effectiveness and satisfaction. Decisions appear to be more successful if those who have to implement the decisions are given more of an opportunity to be involved and have influence in the decisions made.

Nightingale (1981) examined how both style of leadership and structure of organization effects group outcome. Four organizational factors were measured, namely, alienation, attitude toward management, attitude toward change, and commitment to the organization. Outcomes were most positive for the formally participative/supportive structure and least positive for the hierarchical structure or nonsupportive/nonparticipative style combination. The data also indicated that supervisory style tends to be participative and supportive in those organizations which give rank and file employees the right to participate directly in decision-making. Participatory de-

cision-making has gained in popularity and has been recognized as an effective decision-making strategy in both the public and private sector. Likert (1981) stated that participative management is as effective in achieving superior performance in governmental agencies as in private organizations. Likert cited studies conducted by the Michigan Municipal League, the United States Army, Navy, and Air Force, and the Hawaii State Department of Labor. Moreover, he stated that as the administrators and supervisors of a governmental agency are helped to move their managerial behavior closer to a participative style, there is a corresponding improvement in both the human resources and the productivity of the organization.

In recent years, a number of different theories of leadership have been developed, some of which are complementary, whereas others are contradictory. Fleishman, Harris, and Burt (1962) at Ohio State University developed a leadership questionnaire and then factor-analyzed the individual responses. The factor analysis resulted in two major categories: (1) initiating structure, that is, the degree of structure the supervisor initiated in performing his leadership role; and (2) interpersonal effectiveness. Using grievance rate as a criterion for measuring the supervisors interpersonal consideration, they found that increasing consideration was highly correlated with a lower grievance rate. Likewise, the higher the initiating structure, the higher the grievance rate. The researchers concluded that leadership style is important in organizations but that the difference may not be so much in terms of what the leader does but may be in terms of how it is interpreted by its members. These studies and other studies by the Ohio State University researchers formed the basis for a contingency theory of leadership.

Hershey and Blanchard (1977) suggest that effective leadership is the function of the emphasis given to task and relationship behavior as this relates to different types of situations. Task behavior is defined as "essentially the extent to which a leader engages in one-way communication by explaining what each subordinate is to do as well as when, where, and how tasks are to be accomplished." Relationship behavior is defined as the "extent to which leader engages in two-way communication by providing social support, psychological strokes and facilitating behaviors." Four basic styles were defined: (1) telling, a high task, low relationship emphasis; (2) selling, a high task, high relationship emphasis; (3) participating, a high relationship, low task emphasis; and (4) delegating, a low task, low relationship emphasis. In research related to Hershey and Blanchard's model, Kuykendall and Unsinger (1982) found that police managers tended to either have no dominant style or tended to use a selling approach most frequently. The managers tended to be more effective in using styles with high task emphasis (telling and selling) and least effective in styles requiring a low task orientation (participating and delegating). Hershey and Blanchard found that managerial effectiveness is determined not by adoption of any one style, but by the ability to use all four styles, and further to "fit" the appropriate style to a diagnosed situation.

Vroom (1964) found evidence suggesting that the effects of participation in decision-making on satisfaction depends on the personality of the participant. He found that the relationship between psychological participation and both job satisfaction

and job performance varied with the strength of the need for independence and the degree of authoritarianism of the participant. He also found that people who have weak independence needs really do not want to be, nor are they, influenced by the opportunity to participate in making decisions.

Fielder (1965) further developed the contingency theory asserting that appropriate management style depends on the subordinates, the set of conditions in which the manager finds himself, and the particular situation. He suggested that the manager must either adapt his leadership style to the situation or make the job compatible with his leadership style.

In summary, the literature supports the movement toward greater participation by subordinates in the management process. Vroom states: "When the entire pattern of results is considered, we find substantial basis for the belief that participation in decision-making increases productivity. There is experimental and correlational evidence indicating that higher levels of influence by workers in making decisions that they are to carry out results in higher productivity than lower levels of influence" (1960a:226). However, more recent literature appears to support "no one best way" as an appropriate style for the complexities of modern organization. It is suggested that the most effective way to lead is a dynamic and flexible process that adopts to particular situations.

The Likert Model

Likert examined four basic styles of leadership and related them to a wide range of organizational variables. Each of the four management styles is conceptualized as a complete system. Likert's systems are:

- System 1 – "Exploitive – Authoritative"
- System 2 – "Benevolent – Authoritative"
- System 3 – "Consultative"
- System 4 – "Participative – Group"

The System 1 manager has little confidence in subordinates to make decisions. Fear, threats, and other types of punishment are used to force subordinates to work. Communication flows downward and is viewed with suspicion. The bulk of decisions are made at the top of the organization and orders are issued with respect to goal setting.

The System 4 manager is at the other end of the continuum. Management has complete confidence and trust in subordinates. Rewards are achieved through involvement in setting and achieving goals. Communication flows free both vertically and horizontally. Decision-making is dispersed widely throughout the organization and is integrated through linking process provided by overlapping groups. Except in emergencies, goals are usually set through the participation process.

Likert developed a scale to measure organizational and performance characteristics for the four different management systems. Figure 1 provides a sample of the items he used to determine an organization's position on the continuum. Characteristics of

Figure 1

Organizational and Performance Characteristics of Different Management Systems

Organizational Variable	System 1	System 2	System 3	System 4
<u>Leadership processes used</u>				
Extent to which superiors have confidence and trust in subordinates	Have no confidence and trust in subordinates	Have condescending confidence and trust, such as master has to servant	Substantial but not complete confidence to keep control of decisions	Complete confidence and trust in all matters
<u>Character of motivational forces</u>				
Manner in which motives are used	Fear, threats, punishment, and occasional rewards	Rewards and some actual or potential punishment	Rewards, occasional punishment, and some involvement	Economic rewards based on compensation system developed through participation; group participation and involvement in setting goals, improving methods, appraising progress toward goals, etc.
<u>Character of communication process</u>				
Amount of interaction and communication aimed at achieving organization's objectives	Very little	Little	Quite a bit	Much with both individuals and groups
<u>Character of interaction-influence process</u>				
Amount and character of interaction	Little interaction and always with fear and distrust	Little interaction and usually with some condescension by superiors; fear and caution by subordinates	Moderate interaction often with fair amount of confidence and trust	Extensive, friendly interaction with high degree of confidence and trust

leadership, motivation, communication, decision-making, goal setting, and control processes were developed. A total of 22 characteristics were listed.

Figure 1 (continued)

Organizational Variable	System 1	System 2	System 3	System 4
<u>Character of decision-making process</u>				
At what level in organization are decisions formally made?	Bulk of decisions at top of organization	Policy at top, many decisions within prescribed framework made at lower levels	Broad policy and general decision at top, more specific decisions at lower levels	Decision making widely done throughout organization, although well integrated through linking process provided by overlapping groups
<u>Character of goal setting or ordering</u>				
Manner in which usually done	Orders issued	Orders issued, opportunity to comment may or may not exist	Goals are set or orders issued after discussion with subordinate(s) of problems and planned action	Except in emergencies, goals are usually established by means of group participation
<u>Character of control process</u>				
Extent to which the review and control functions are concentrated	Highly concentrated in top management	Relatively highly concentrated, with some delegated control to middle and lower levels	Moderate downward delegation of review and control processes; lower as well as higher levels feel responsible	Quite widespread responsibility for review and control, with lower units at times imposing more rigorous reviews and tighter controls than top management

METHODOLOGY

The Likert Management Systems Scale was given to 365 law enforcement officers in 10 managerial training programs in Arizona from 1978–1982. A total of 298 sergeants and 67 lieutenants participated in the experiment. Department size was broken into the following categories for data analysis purposes: small (1-50 officers), medium (51-150 officers), and large (150+ officers).

The instrument measures the position of an organization as assessed by the participant on a continuum between the authoritative approach (System 1) and the fully participative approach (System 4). The instrument describes six different organizational variables with a total of 22 characteristics. Each officer was requested to record the point on a scale that best described each variable in the organizational pattern.

Participants were then requested to peruse the variables a second time and record the place on the scale that best described where they would desire their department to be. A sample of the various items is displayed in Figure 1.

RESULTS

A frequency chart was prepared to indicate the distribution of replies relating what an individual officer believes are the present characteristics of his organization and what he would like the characteristics of his organization to be. Figure 2 provides the means scores for all sergeants and lieutenants of each of the 22 categories on a scale of 1 to 20. The mean score for the present characteristics of their departments was 9.3 while mean score of where they would like their department to be was 16.5. The mean scores of their present organization pattern were primarily in System 2 described as the "benevolent-authoritative" style. In expressing the view of where they would like their department to be, all but one mean was in the System 4 or "participative-group" preference.

The lowest average (7.0) relative to present organization pattern resulted from the question of what level in an organization are decisions formally made. The System 2 reply to this category was: "power at top, many decisions within prescribed framework made at lower levels." The same question resulted in the lowest mean for where they would like their organization to be with an average score of 14.8. This average fell into the System 3 "consultative" category. The highest average of present organization pattern was 11.4. The question related to the extent to which supervisors believe that subordinates feel free to discuss important things about their jobs with their immediate supervisor.

The highest average score for where respondents would like their organization to be was the question related to the accuracy of upward communication via formal lines.

SMALL, MEDIUM, AND LARGE DEPARTMENTS

Figure 3 displays the differences between lieutenants in small, medium size, and large departments. It was expected that the larger department personnel would perceive their departments as being less participative than medium size or small departments. The data analysis agreed with this expectation with the larger and medium size departments falling into the System 2 category with means of 9.1 and 9.5 respectively. The smaller department lieutenants had a mean score of 12.2 and could be described as relating to System 3 or "consultative." All three groups would like their management style to be more participative as in the System 4 category.

The scores of sergeants in small, medium, and large departments are shown in Figure 4. Similar to lieutenants, sergeants from small departments characterized their management style as System 3 with a mean of 10.4. Sergeants in medium size and large departments characterized their management style as System 2 scores of 9.1 and 8.6 respectively.

Figure 2

Table of Organizational and Performance Characteristics of Different Management Systems

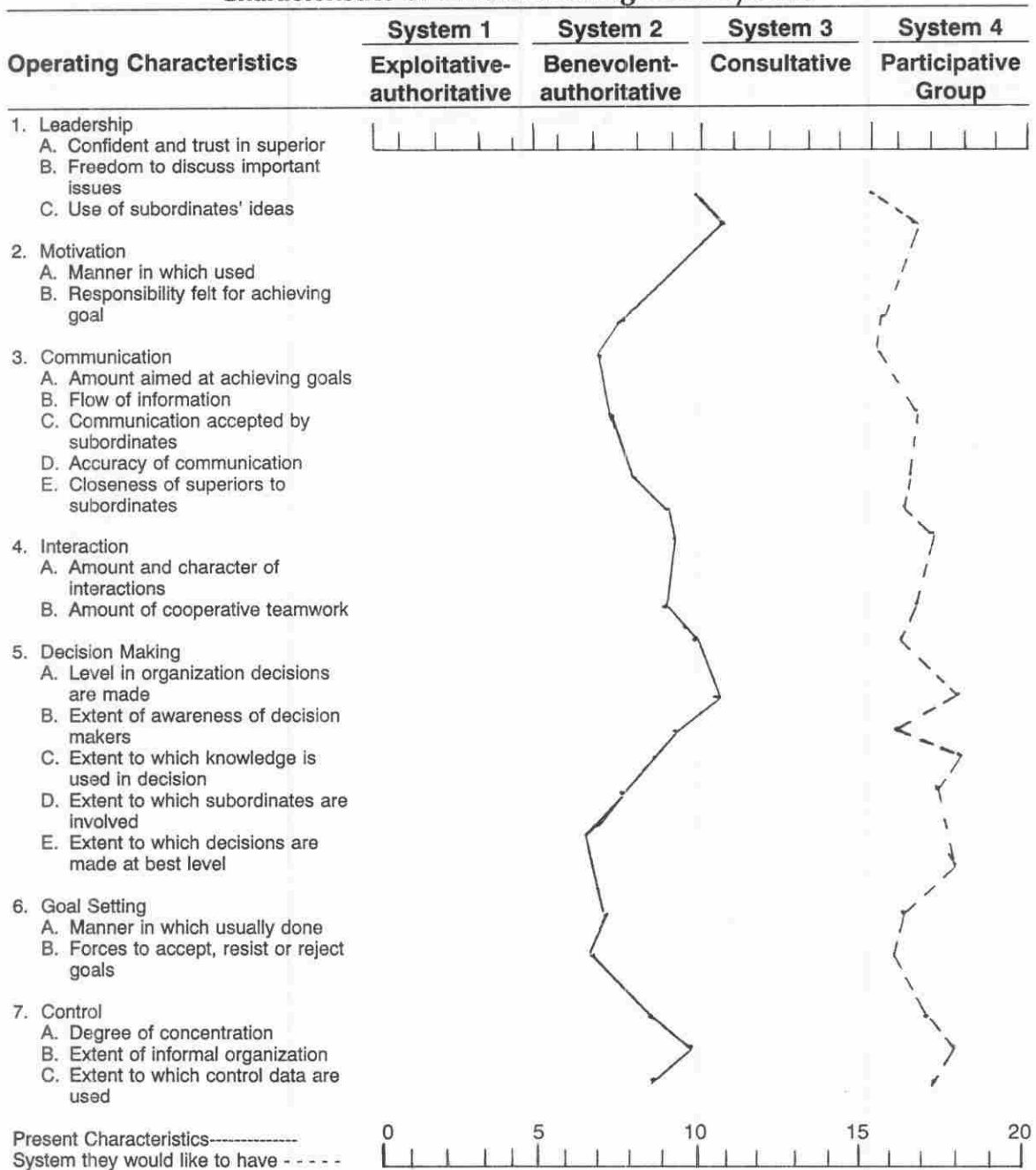


Figure 3

Table of Organizational and Performance Characteristics of Different Management Systems for Police Lieutenants

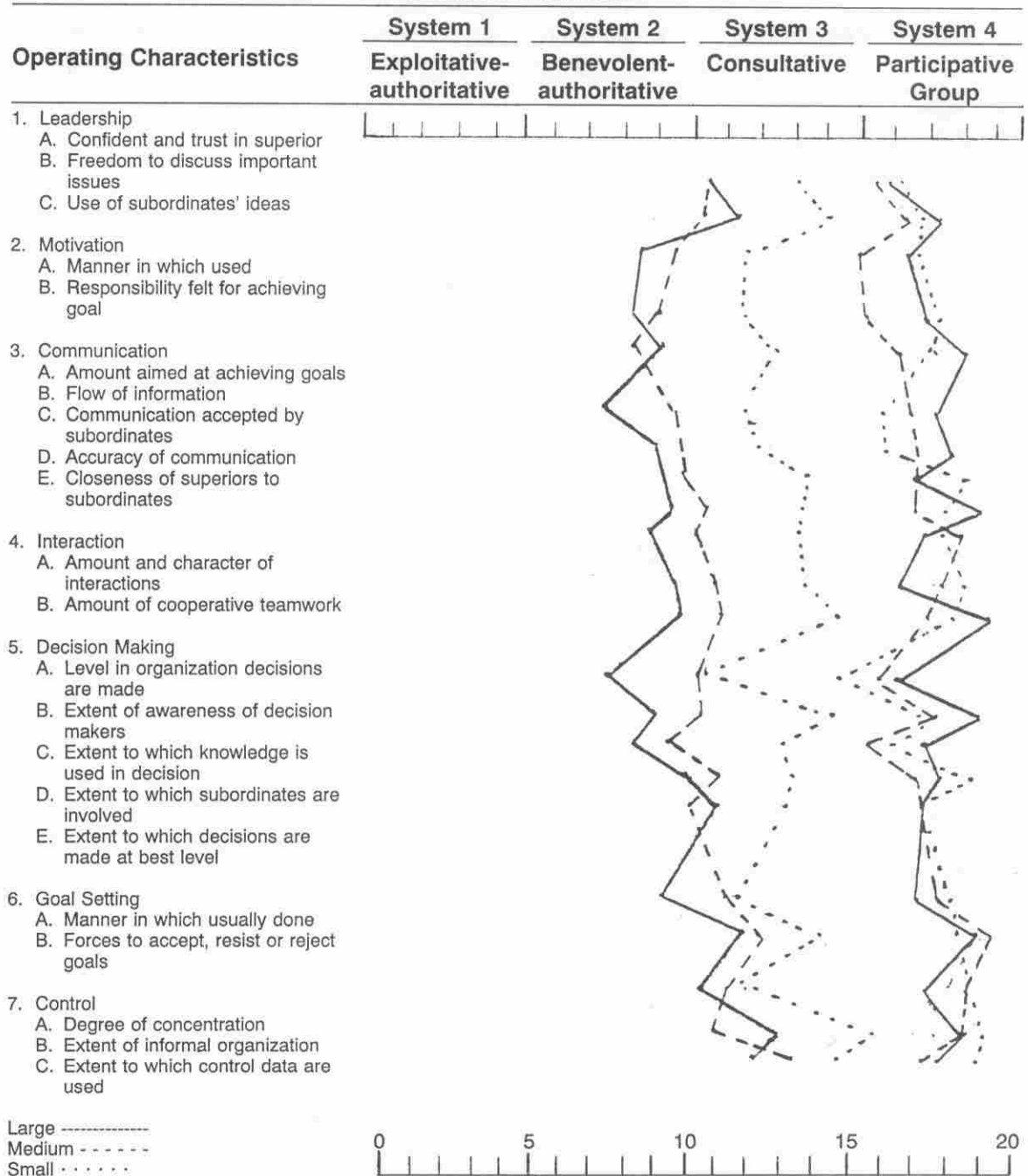
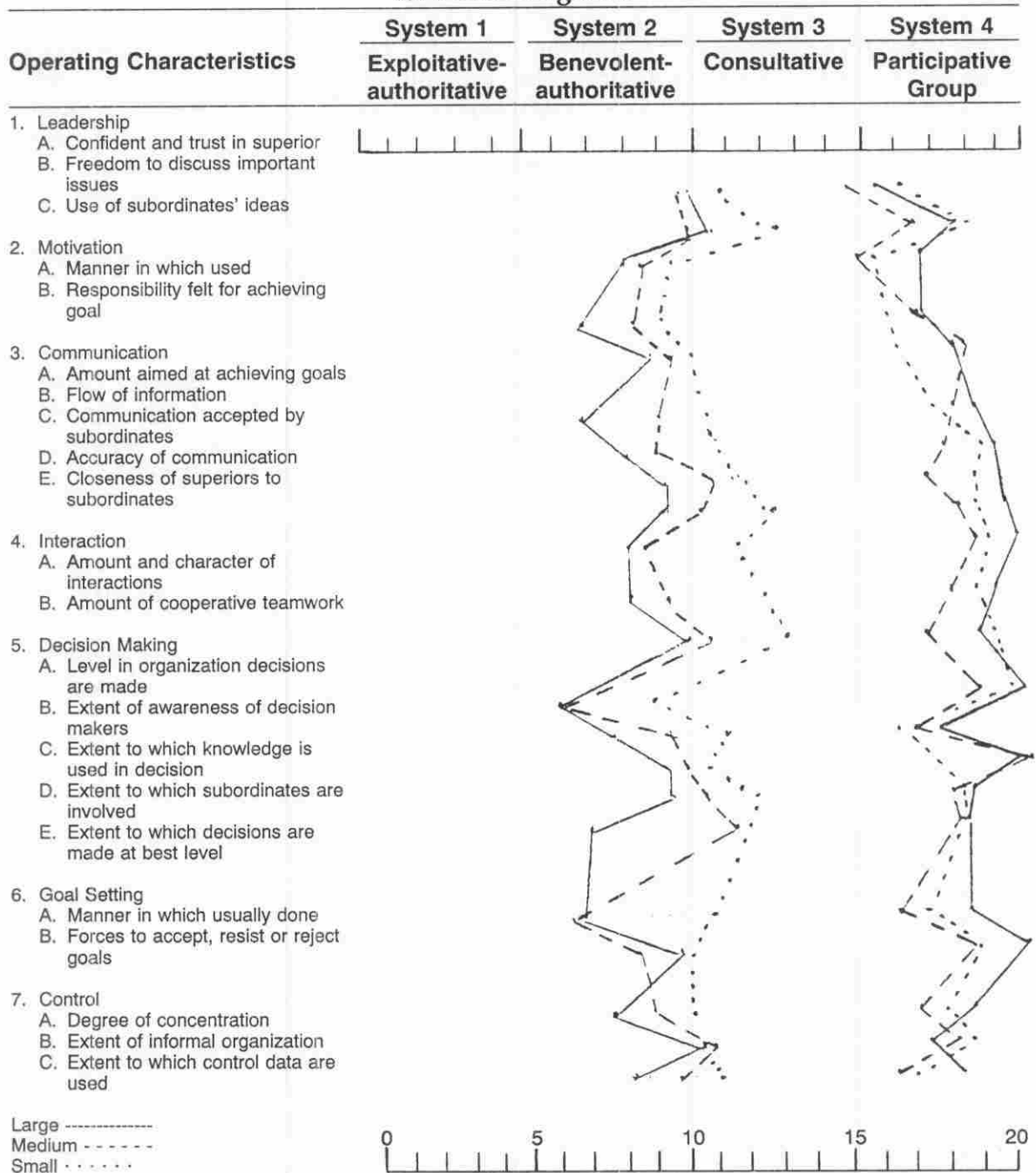


Figure 4

Table of Organizational and Performance Characteristics of Different Management Systems for Police Sergeants



DISCUSSION

The literature supports a style of management in which managers and subordinates work together as equals rather than in an autocratic arrangement. However, due to the autocratic structure of the police environment, it has been suggested that police management personnel would not support a highly participative leadership style. The results of this study indicate that law enforcement supervisors and middle managers in the state of Arizona strongly support a leadership style that is highly participative. There is a tendency when examining Likert's work to interpret System 1 responses as representing "bad" organizational characteristics and System 4 responses representing "good" organizational characteristics. When this happens, we identify organizational characteristics that fall in System 1 or System 2 as being undesirable and requiring some type of corrective action on the part of the leadership to move the organization toward the more desirable goal of System 4.

The authors agree with Likert that System 4 organizations tend to be more productive, but also believe that not all organizations are destined to function best at the System 4 level. This may be particularly true of law enforcement agencies (Reams, Kuykendall, and Burns, 1975). For any organization, it is suggested that the compatibility of the individuals with the organization's structure is of greater importance than where the organization might fall on the continuum between System 1 and System 4.

This exploratory analysis cannot provide a complete picture as to relationships between leadership models and organizational productivity. However, the research does indicate that management and supervisory personnel are highly supportive of a participative model. If the difference between where individuals perceive the organization to be compared to where the leader believes the organization should be can be reduced, it should lead to higher morale and an overall increase in productivity.

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