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# **Democracy and worker representation in the management of change: Lessons from Kurt Lewin and the Harwood Studies**

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## **Abstract**

This paper revisits the famous Harwood studies overseen by Kurt Lewin to include the neglected union perspective which differs markedly from conventional accounts. We explain this discrepancy as arising from unitarist and pluralist views, which assume very different understandings of organization (Fox, 1966). The researchers framed the Harwood organization from a unitarist perspective as monolithic, assuming its members are bound by allegiance to a common cause represented by management. This helps explain their relative indifference to unions and framing of concepts in a manner conducive to management that was incomprehensible from a union perspective. From this we contend that the Harwood studies are best understood as a cautionary tale against the assumption of a monolithic view which equates the interest of management with that of the organization. This is especially relevant given the dominance of a unitarist perspective across several fields of organization today, when management are argued to be increasingly authoritarian and union membership in several countries approaches an all-time low. Recognizing that organization is a balance struck between partially conflicting interests represents a more ethical stance to forestall accusations of partisanship and manipulation and to build towards the establishment of a fairer and more sustainable workplace for all.

## **Keywords**

Harwood, Kurt Lewin, managing change, manipulation, resistance to change, unitarist perspective

## Introduction

At a time of corporate scandal and managerial authoritarianism (Caprino, 2014) there are calls for a return to a management ethos that is democratic and participative (Burnes, 2007). Nostalgia is expressed for a return to democratic “Lewinian” values of openness, based on the empowerment of workers, where the democratic leader acts as a neutral facilitator to free workers from manipulation and caprice (Burnes, 2009: 360; Burnes, 2004: 996). It is argued that these founding principles for Organization Development (OD) are considerably less defined today and consequently OD has lost its sense of purpose and direction (Weisbord, 2004; Burnes, 2004: 369; 2007; 2009: 368-370). These views echo earlier calls that, “action research can help us build a better, freer society” (Greenwood and Levin, 1998:1); it is "about democracy, empowerment, the creation of knowledge in peoples' interests..." (Reason, 1999:487). The empirical basis for these claims is provided by the research overseen by Kurt Lewin at the Harwood factory in Marion, Virginia, of which the most famous is the Coch and French (1948) study of resistance to change. Published in the first volume of *Human Relations*, Coch & French (1948) is one of the most heavily cited papers in management (Piderit, 2000), providing a model for researchers and managers (Burnes, 2015), as the, “classic participation experiment” (Dachler & Wilpert, 1978: 20), that provides definitive proof of the superior efficacy of democratic leadership over autocracy and laissez-faire (Lewin, Lippitt & White, 1939). The Harwood studies have since influenced theorization on leadership, organizational development and the management of change (Burnes, 2004; Burnes; 2007; Burnes & Cooke 2012). Kurt Lewin is hailed as the most important social psychologist of the twentieth century, (Burnes, 2015: 98), from whom the fundamental values of *any* change in a human system are derived (Schein, 2004: 319), who demonstrated the overall efficacy of action research and group dynamics (Cassell & Johnson, 2006).

This paper is written in the spirit of the ‘historical turn’ of management (Kieser, 1994) and in particular, the historiography of the management of change (Burnes & Cooke, 2012; Cooke, 1999). We argue that conventional accounts of the Harwood studies feed a celebratory narrative that generally elides criticism (see Burnes, 2004; 2007 as an exception), omitting to discuss alternative versions of events and in particular the perspective of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU). By recognizing the union perspective we re-contextualize the experiments to argue that they can be better understood as a cautionary tale to remind us of the important role played by unions in representing the interests of workers and of what can go wrong when this role is ignored. We argue that at Harwood this state of affairs was partly brought about by Lewin’s justification of the superiority of democracy over other forms of organization on the basis of its greater efficiency, rather than on ethical grounds. One of the key questions informing the landmark study by Coch & French (1948) was whether direct democracy is superior to representative democracy. There is an irony in that Lewin’s belief in the value of direct over representative democracy may have brought him into line with a unitarist perspective that legitimates managers as the sole basis of authority and regards unions as unnecessary third parties whose presence disturbs the “natural order” of the firm (Fox, 1966; Fox, 1974). In contrast, we argue that Coch and French would have been better served by adopting a pluralist perspective, that unions and management are “two interdependent organizations with separate and often partially conflicting goals” (Fox, 1974; Kochan & Dyer, 1976: 61), that it is more sensitive to power differentials and to issues relating to representation of worker interests.

Below we first describe Lewin’s understanding of democracy and how he devised research programmes in different organizations to test the superior efficacy of democracy over alternatives. We next outline the chronology of the experiments and key related events,

including discussion of contested claims. This is partly informed by the brief exchange of views in *Trans-Action* (1966) between William Gomberg, head of the Engineering Section of the ILGWU, Alfred Marrow, then CEO of Harwood and Walter Bennis (see also Bennis, [1970]; 2016). Curiously, apart from the odd exception (for instance see Lowin, 1968: 87; Wesner, 1995) this exchange has not been mentioned in management journals. We next consider how Lewin and his associates adopted a unitarist understanding of organization to frame concepts such as democratic leadership, resistance to change and we-feeling from a managerial reference point (Fox, 1966) We conclude that the Harwood studies should not be regarded as a model of democratic change but rather as a cautionary tale to convey the lesson that researchers can open themselves up to claims of engaging in pseudo-democracy or democratic social engineering if they fail to take the interests of workers into account. The importance of worker representation and voice is perhaps even more important today when the vast majority of research is informed by a unitarist perspective and union representation is in steep decline.

### **Kurt Lewin and democracy**

Kurt Lewin was committed to democratic values by the age of twenty, (M. Lewin, 1992), envisaging, a democratic socialist society (see Cooke, 2007: 456; John et al., 1989: 166). However, a focal concern in Lewin's later work following his emigration to the USA was the urgent need to reinvigorate democracy in order to protect the "American Dream" from totalitarianism in the emerging isolationism of the Cold War (Lewin, 1945, Adelman, 1993; 1997: 85). Lewin argues that democratic values are not natural and cannot be taken for granted but must be actively fostered by strong leaders in a myriad of local organizational settings (Lewin, 1945: 298–299). Democracy is complex, requiring astute and sensitive leadership to enable individuals to learn and reach their own solutions. Lewin differentiates

authoritarian from democratic and laissez-faire leadership, arguing that their relationship should not be considered to lie on a continuum, with autocracy at one end, democracy somewhere in the middle as a form of 'soft autocracy', and laissez-faire at the other end (Lewin, 1945: 304). Rather the relation is triangular, as the democratic leader is no less a leader, with just as much power as the autocrat. Acknowledging that autocracies can have a 'democratic front' and that such an institution is still an autocracy, he lists several 'honest, deep' differences; the autocrat is aloof from those he rules whereas in democracy, power recognizes the equal right of each person to live the "good life": where autocracy follows vertical lines from follower to leader, democracy consists of horizontal lines; finally, and importantly, for our discussion here Lewin justifies democracy as superior to autocracy and fascism on the ground that it is more efficient.

Lewin and his colleagues tested the efficiency of democracy over autocracy experimentally in small group settings, including a youth summer camp, an adult education class and the Marion pyjama factory. In each setting psychologists first detected patterns of behaviour considered antithetical to democracy and then re-directed these towards achieving a superordinate goal framed by organizational objectives. Lewin argues that just as business managers must be attentive to the vagaries of the market, psychologist must accept these objectives as given. Psychologists play a key role in the two key change processes; firstly, their role is to re-educate leaders away from an authoritarian coercive mode of relation to their followers to one that is reasonable and democratic; secondly, to put a stop to scapegoating and informal patterns of "we-feeling" or "local loyalty" which maintain the status quo within a group of followers. This is achieved by providing a climate where all group members participate in setting and achieving their own objectives in line with the overall organizational objective. At Marion, the first process involved psychologists

facilitating the establishment of a democratic orientation by management and supervisors towards workers (Bavelas & Lewin, 1942; Marrow & French, 1945; French, 1945a), enabling workers to vote (Lewin, 1945; Marrow, 1969) and providing a voice for workers (French, 1945). The second process involved breaking down we-feeling attached to “local loyalty” toward the work-group and its re-direction in line with the goals of management, reflected in the study by Coch & French, (1948). The aim of these projects was intimately related to the goal of raising productivity through increased efficiency” (Marrow, 1969: 184).

### **Chronology of the Harwood Studies**

Although the Harwood studies are regarded as classics, it seems that few authors today feel the need to read them (Burnes, 2015: 94). Given their complexity, Figure 1 approximates some of the key events at Marion from 1939 until 1948, whilst experiments are listed in Table 1 (see Burnes 2007: 225/6; 2015, 96/97, for a slightly different list).

#### *1939–1943*

Lewin is invited to Marion by Alfred Marrow in 1939, owner of Harwood and a student of Lewin. Marrow describes the difficulty that while wages are higher at Marion than elsewhere in the area, the factory is continuously dogged by low productivity. Lewin suggests reducing forces that cause worker strain, such as pressure from supervisors and that workers should be encouraged to think of their job targets as achievable. On Lewin’s suggestion, against local opposition, Marrow hires some highly skilled workers recently made redundant from a factory about forty miles away and following this the output of the Harwood workers increases (Marrow, 1969: 143; Alden, 2012: 55). Lewin convinces Marrow to hire his student Alexander Bavelas to research how job targets might be made more achievable by enabling the direct involvement of employees. This fits Lewin’s wider aim to test the efficacy of democratic



leadership over autocracy. One of the first experiments conducted by Bavelas involves workers deciding their output as a group, rather than being dictated to by management. Bavelas's experiment runs from December 1942 until August 1943 and is proclaimed a great success by Lewin who argues that this indicates, "a substantial permanent increase in production created in a short time by certain methods of "team decision"" (Lewin, 1945: 308/9). Another experiment by Bavelas using "pacing cards" which runs more or less concurrently with that on group decision is also judged successful.

PLEASE INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

*1944–1946*

In 1944 Bavelas is replaced by John French Jr., another of Lewin's students. French writes to Lewin for guidance on research design (French, 1944, in Highhouse, 2007:337), then sets about replicating Bavelas's studies. By February 1944 it transpires that Bavelas' "permanent" success in raising productivity has failed to materialize in the rest of the factory, following Lewin's report that production at Marion has fallen quite steeply (Marrow Papers, 1948; Alden 2012: 57). Lewin advocates opening up communications between management and workers and the cultivation of a more democratic style of management. French (1945b: 325) is also downbeat about the situation in 1944, referring to the "absentee owner" (Marrow) and describing management as remote, authoritarian and uninterested in the views of operators. However he also reports that in 1943 Bavelas eventually gained approval for a change in the structure of the organization involving the establishment of a labor management committee as a common forum for management and employees (French, 1945b 329);

“The dynamics of this method can be illustrated in the creation and functioning of a Labor-Management committee in a factory where there was no union or other group representing labor. Before the organization of this committee under the leadership of the plant psychologist, *the management was not aware of the needs of the workers, nor inclined to do anything about those needs which were not obviously related to production.*” (French, 1945a: 329 – our italics).

Harwood’s top management first rejected Bavelas’s proposal, “fearing that the committee might “stir up trouble” and bring them closer to unionization”, (Alden, 2012: 59/60; Marrow Papers, 1940). However, they eventually acceded to this so long as the committee refrained from discussing substantive matters such as wages or hours, which were deemed as the jurisdiction of management (Alden, 2002: 60). French notes that when he first headed the committee the representatives requested that the workforce be allowed to devote one minute each day to silent prayer for members of the military. He comments, ‘(n)aturally the initial reaction of management was not favourable to this loss of working time’. Management finally agreed to five minutes’ prayer one day a week. The committee started by considering issues of minor importance but eventually was consulted about more substantive issues such as wages, overtime hours and vacations (French, 1945a: 330). We return to discuss this committee later in relation to the unionization of the Marion factory.

In 1944 French conducts six training workshops to educate supervisors in participative techniques (French, 1945a). He also sets about replicating Bavelas’ striking findings from the group decision and pacing cards experiments. These are described as a resounding success, with, “incredulous workers discovering that management is sincere in acting to cooperate with them on an equal footing” (Lippit & Hendry, 1945: 316). French

(1950) demurs, candidly admitting his failure to replicate Bavelas' findings, obtaining "very different" results which he puts down to the difficulty in learning a democratic leadership style, reporting that results improved along with his skill (ibid.: 87). Marrow, impatient for results recommends to French in July 1944 that he conduct group meetings with workers to help reduce absenteeism and relay propaganda messages to them over the loudspeaker system (Highhouse, 2007: 338).

The Marion factory has been lobbied by unions since its inception in 1939 (Marrow, 1966) and in March 1945 the United Mineworkers union achieves a vote of 47% (Marrow, 1966). However in August 1946, "Pajamas and the Ego" appears in *Fortune* magazine to describe Marion as an "industrial heaven" where "labor unions seem to be unable to make headway" (Fortune, 1946: 140). Gomberg (1966a) of the ILGWU accuses Marrow of authorship and "press agency" (1966a), a claim denied by Marrow (1966) and reiterated by Gomberg (1966c). Daniel Bell states that Marrow ignores Lewin's advice to keep the experiments at Marion anonymous, deciding to trumpet the success of Bavelas' group decision experiments in increasing output and escaping unionization. Bell continues that when this comes to the attention of the ILGWU, they send an organizer to the factory who distributes leaflets entitled, "*To the Workers of Harwood Manufacturing, Do you know that you are being used as guinea pigs?*" (Bell, 1960, note 61: 463). Gomberg's account which tallies with Bell, is that following publication of the article the union dispatches an organizer to the Marion, which, "was organized in a record short time" (Gomberg, 1966c: 32). Whilst this is disputed by Marrow (1966), the period between the worker vote for membership of the ILGWU and formal ratification of the agreement in Gomberg's office on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1946, is just four months. (Gomberg, 1966b). Henceforth, the union is formally authorized to represent the workers interests by negotiating piece-rates (Gomberg, 1966c).

1947

Kurt Lewin dies in February. The inexperienced Lester Coch is appointed as Personnel Manager in place of John French, who takes the role of “consultant”. French and Coch attend the first National Training Laboratory (NTL) workshop at Bethel in June and shortly afterwards they embark on the most significant experiment to date. There is disagreement as to the precise timing of the resistance to change experiment. Marrow (1966) places this “in the late fall of 1947, nearly a year after the employees had chosen the International Ladies Garment Workers Union to represent them” (see also Marrow, 1969: 150). This is most unlikely given that the timings provided by Coch & French suggest that the experiment ran for 167 days (Coch & French, 1948: 520, 522, 523), which would have carried them from the beginning of October till mid-March 1948. Bennis (1966) places the date in June 1947, ‘not until about a half-year’ after the signing of the union agreement at the end of December 1946. Sometime in late June is most likely, given that Coch & French (1948) state that the experiment was conducted sometime after they returned from the NTL workshop in early June. Why does Marrow persist in seeking to push the date to the late Fall of 1947? We discuss below that this may have been because he sought to distance the experiment from the industrial action that occurred at that time.

The overall climate at Marion in 1947 described by Coch & French (1948) is markedly different to that described by French (1945b). Where French had relatively recently described a remote and authoritarian regime, Coch & French (1948) state that labor relations were good from the day the plant opened; Marion is a “liberal and progressive” factory, that provides all

kinds of employee services, which 'has enjoyed good labor relations' and places a "high value on fair and open dealing with the employees, who are, "encouraged to take up any problems or grievances with the management at any time" (ibid.: 513).

Four groups of workers are chosen for the experiment. Managers first modify the job and set a new piece rate. The control group of 18 pressers are treated in the "normal" manner by being called into the office and told that the job modification and change to the piece rate are necessary because of competitive pressure, then given the opportunity to ask questions. Experimental Group 1 consists of 13 pajama folders, whose structure mirrors a representative democracy where members are given more detailed information and asked to nominate representatives to participate in designing the new jobs and in setting the new production rates. Experimental groups 2 and 3 and 4 consisting of 8 and 7 pajama folders and 2 sewing machine operators respectively, participate fully in direct democracy, designing their new jobs and setting new production rates. In contrast to the control group the need for cost reduction is vividly conveyed to members of the experimental groups who are told that the retail price of a finished garment is half it was in the previous year (ibid. : 521).

Bennis (1966) writes that the workers enjoyed "due process...and that the union completely supported the experimental program" (ibid.: 36). Gomberg denies this, stating that; "(t)he union not only did not cooperate in the subsequent experimentation, it was unaware of its existence' (Gomberg, 1966b: 35). Marrow confirms Gomberg's assertion writing, "(t)here was no publicity and no announcement of the research. It was carried out as part of normal plant procedure" (Marrow, 1966: 36), although he later states as "improbable", Gomberg's assertion that the union was not informed (ibid.: 37). Gomberg (1966c: 48) reiterates this claim. While the first draft of Coch & French (1948) mentions that the workers

are represented by a strong union, this is excised from the final draft (Alden, 2012: 66), where the union is mentioned once in relation to a dispute over status.

The choice of the 18 hand pressers as the control group is significant, as this group is singled out for mention by Lewin who died some months before the resistance to change experiment. This group is described as exhibiting particularly strong “we-feeling”, restricting production to 50 units per day and scapegoating a member who produced too much. Lewin notes that when the group was disbanded this “nervous” worker achieved rates as high as 92 units per day as an individual (Lewin, 1947; 26/7; Coch & French: 1948: 520). Coch & French (1948) report that almost from the start of the experiment the control group expressed hostility to the supervisor and methods engineer, restricting production and filing grievances over the piece rate, “but when the rate was checked it was found to be a little loose” (ibid.: 521). They report that 17%, or 3 out of the 18 members, left during the first 40 days (ibid.: 522). The group was broken up after 32 days and its members reassigned to new jobs scattered throughout the factory.” (ibid.: 523). Two and a half months later the 13 pressers remaining of the original 18 (we are not told what happened to the two unaccounted for) were brought together for a second experiment, involving a pressing job of comparable difficulty to the first. Coch & French report a dispute relating to “some anxiety over their seniority status’ ...’, that is resolved in a meeting of their elected delegate, the union business agent and a management representative’ (Coch & French, 1948: 524). This is the only time the union is referred to in their paper. The authors report that this time the group was subjected to the ‘total participation’ condition and quickly achieved the desired efficiency (ibid.: 524).

From the ILGWU perspective Gomberg recalls a similar sequence of events but with a more serious outcome. In the early days of unionization, he is contacted by Grace

McWhorter the ILGWU representative at Marion who reports that in her first experience of processing rate grievances, Lester Coch describes her as having, ‘the brain of a cockroach’, telling her he wants to deal with Gomberg direct (Gomberg, 1966c). Gomberg describes that on arrival at Marion Coch shows him charts of “Lewinian field vectors”, informing him that the aggressiveness of workers is manifest in their restricting production. Coch suggests two ways of solving this issue, either by raising the disputed piece rate, or for Gomberg to cooperate with Coch. In Gomberg’s account he informs Coch “in no uncertain terms that we were not interested in his concept of cooperation in which we work together to achieve his exclusive objective. The rate dispute was settled.” (ibid.: 48). Gomberg continues, that this did not settle matters as, ‘tensions grew until the stoppage of work in ‘Utopia’, which led to the meeting between Rolnick of my staff and Marrow in Marion, Virginia” (Gomberg, 1966c: 48). Gomberg admits that ILGWU officials did not at first understand the context of the experiments at Marion;

“When the union officers, in the early days of unionization made the mistake of behaving like statesmen toward this kind of manipulation (which they did not understand completely) the factory elected an aggressive shop steward who damned both the union’s officers and the plant management. Dr. Marrow, the company president, came down to visit the plant with a staff member of the union’s engineering department and departed hastily when he saw the violence of the workers’ feelings.” (Gomberg, 1966a: 34).

The imputation is of an unofficial stoppage led by a worker angered by the union’s lack of responsiveness to the ongoing experiments involving changes to the piece-rate.

Marrow (1966) provides a different explanation of what appears to be the same sequence of events:

“Alas the facts are much less dramatic. In protest against a local union official, a small group of workers began an unauthorized walkout. Top-level union officials, distressed by the illegal wildcat strike, telephoned Harwood executives (including Marrow who was at the plant) to give assurances that the walkout would be ended immediately. It was an intra-union matter which the union was going to handle. The union did” (Marrow, 1966: 37).

When stating that the union was not informed of the experiment, Marrow omits to mention that the experimenters changed the piece-rate; “The aim was to see if technological changes in job methods could be introduced without the usual manifestations of hostility and loss of production” (Marrow, 1966: 36). Indeed he makes no mention of the piece-rate at all, which is odd given that he had earlier acknowledged that grievances were raised in relation to the changed piece-rate (Marrow, 1957). In relation to a work stoppage, Marrow denies that, “observation was arrested at the most crucial part of the Coch-French experiments’ results”, “that the investigation was therefore incomplete” and that, “it was unfortunate that the investigators did not stay at the plant location to see what happened after they ceased their observations.” (op. cit.: 37).

Michael Rose states to the contrary that workers did strike over a union dispute at this time and that this involved a large number of workers, including members of changed experimental groups (Rose, 1988: 172). Walter Bennis (1966) accepts that there was a dispute during the resistance to change experiment but confines this to workers participating



in the experiment; “we are talking about only 28 workers out of 600 ” (Bennis, 1966: 36). In fact 46 workers participated in the experiment (experimental group 1:13; experimental group 2: 8; experimental group 3: 7; control group: 18), an error amended by Marrow (1966: 36). At almost 8% of the workforce, this is far from an insignificant proportion, amounting to over 9% of all female employees. Contrary to Bennis’s argument, fallout from the experiment is likely to have had a considerable effect on other employees. At the very least, it is foreseeable that different justifications for the cut to the piece-rate provided to each of experimental groups would have circulated widely throughout this relatively small plant, resulting in speculation, confusion and consternation amongst the workforce.

### *Epilogue*

John French continued his association with Harwood and with Marrow for many years. However, Lester Coch left in 1948, the year that his famous study with French was published. Gomberg and Marrow agree on two things in the course of their exchange; firstly, neither mentions that Coch left the factory in 1948; and secondly, they agree on the excellent suitability of Coch’s replacement, Gil David. According to Marrow, David, who was appointed as personnel manager on French’s recommendation, “established close working relations with union officials and kept them informed of his projects, research programs and experiments (Marrow, 1966: 37). Contrasting David with Coch, Gomberg describes relations with the latter as cordial, ‘his conduct and behaviour is exactly what was to be expected from any intelligent manager subject to collective bargaining constraints’ (Gomberg, 1966c: 48). Gomberg (1966b: 35) raises no objection to replications of the resistance to change experiment at different factories of the Harwood group (French et al., 1958.) and later in Norway (French & As, 1960) because the plants were unionized and the unions were kept

fully informed. These experiments received much less attention than Coch & French (1948), perhaps because they were less successful in proving their hypotheses.

### **Towards a unitarist explanation**

While by no means a full account, the above description of events at Marion suggests that the conventional version of the Harwood studies relayed by Lewin and his colleagues and retold over and over again (for instance, Burnes, 2007; Burnes, 2015; Oreg, Vakola & Armenakis., 2011) are inadequate. They smooth over a more complex turn of events and present one side of the story, either by failing to mention the existence of a union, or when they acknowledge this, doing so in passing and omitting reference to disputes occurring at the time of the experiments in the context of the recent unionization of the factory, never mind including the union perspective. Authors contradict their opponents, as in the fractious exchange between Gomberg, Bennis and Marrow in *Trans-Action* (1966), and sometimes they contradict themselves. Our aim here is not to try to set the record straight, nor to further criticize the method (Bartlem & Locke, 1981), although there is scope to do so, but rather to understand why the accounts of Lewin and his associates omit discussion of the context of the unionization of the Marion factory. Lefkowitz (2003; 2017) argues that disinterest in unions is an ethical issue as subscription to the apparently benign “collective purpose” specified by management can reflect a system of values that can be detrimental to the interests of workers. In this context, given Coch & French (1948) manipulated the piece rate at a time of acknowledged anxiety amongst workers who had recently ceded power to the ILGWU to negotiate piece rates on their behalf, the likely possibility that the researchers did not inform the union in advance about their experiment is morally questionable if shown to be true. We discuss below the possibility that Lewin and his colleagues framed their

understanding of democracy and developed concepts such as we-feeling and resistance to change in line with a unitarist perspective which sidelines union involvement by theorizing organization as an harmonious whole which serves a common purpose set by management (Fox, 1966).

Fox (1966) explains a consistent omission to mention unions as attributable to a powerful unitarist ideology that informs schools of thought that are otherwise irreconcilable, such as scientific management and human relations. Unitarism is the classical, “view that there is one central source of legitimate authority within the firm and its writ must run supreme throughout” (Fox, 1966: 367). This harmonious view of organization portrays members as being bound by common interests and goals. In this view there is no need for a union, nor for that matter for any form of representative body, as there are simply no alternative interests to represent. Indeed, any rival source of authority would serve to distract its members and reduce their efficiency. Fox discusses how the human relations school interpreted evidence that work groups can establish values and norms of behaviour that are antithetical to organizational goals, as evidence of a sick organization, that must be re-unified by skilled leadership around one central source of authority.

While Fox does not specifically mention Kurt Lewin nor the study by Coch & French (1948) which formed the basis for the study of Organizational Development (OD) (Burnes, 2015: 101), it is argued that this literature conceptualizes the change process in unitarist terms as occurring in a single hierarchical organization whose members are bound by their common identification to a set of transcendent goals (Kochan & Dyer, 1976). Alternatively, a pluralist perspective conceives of an organization of a more fragile system of interdependency, where unions and management have separate and sometimes conflicting goals. From a pluralist

perspective unitarism ignores structural bases of power and attributes the conflict accompanying organizational change in interpersonal, not structural, terms.

The unitarist perspective is powerful today, dominating several fields of organization research. The new psychology of leadership construes its primary task as to embed a shared sense of identity between leaders and followers (Haslam, et al. 2011). The literature on resistance to change has burgeoned since the foundational study by Coch & French (2008), from 38 articles in 1968 to over 8,000 in 2012 (Oreg, Michel & By, 2013: 4). Despite the attempt to introduce unions (Kochan & Dyer, 1976), all of the books and most of the papers on the strategic process of managing organizational change take a managerial perspective to enhance labour productivity by managing people well (Watson, 2007). Proponents argue that this can result in a win-win situation, where improved performance is potentially linked to higher rent-sharing, with no need for unions or other indirect forms of worker voice. However, the lack of collective representation is argued by pluralists to be prejudicial to workers' interests (Tapia, Ibsen & Kochan, 2015: 163). There has been a shift from the study of macro contexts to the micro context of individual recipients of change, where studies focus on topics such as individual dispositions and difference variables, employee adaptability, transformational leadership, anticipatory justice and communications (Oreg et al., 2011; Oreg et al., 2013). Burnes (2015) is critical of approaches which focus narrowly on the individual as the source of resistance (ibid.: 93), citing Coch & French (1948) to argue for a wider consideration of the organization context and the encouragement of participative decision-making through action research (ibid.: 100).

To what extent did Lewin and his associates adopt a unitarist perspective by assuming a single hierarchical organization that serves a transcendent goal? Alternatively,

did they recognize that unions and management are interdependent organizations that can come into conflict because they represent different interests and thus pursue separate goals (Kochan & Dyer, 1976: 81)? We first consider who Lewin and his associates looked to in order to specify the goals of the organization. We next discuss their relation to unions.

### **The Harwood Studies: A unitarist perspective?**

A unitarist perspective is allied to a conception of the organization as monolithic, which promotes management as the single source of legitimate authority where unions are perceived to be at best irrelevant (Fox, 1966: 367).

#### *One single source of legitimate authority?*

Lewin wrote that the precise way in which democratic principles are implemented is contingent on the aims specified in local contexts such as the factory, business, community centre, or school, each of which is governed by a specific objective, which in the context of business organization is specified by management (Lewin, 1944: 200; Lewin, 1945; Lewin, 1947). Just as the manager cannot ignore the reality of the market, the psychologist cannot ignore those with the power to set the overall goal of the organization (Lewin, 1945). John French states in relation to the experiments at Marion that, “(t)he most important method – it is almost a principle – is that the psychologist must work explicitly within the framework of the major goals of management. He has neither the position nor the authority to impose more democratic forms of managing” (French, 1945b: 325). Moreover, the experimenter is “necessarily constrained” to demonstrate the greater efficacy of democratic methods in achieving management goals, to increase productivity, reduce costs and avoid labour trouble. (French, 1945b: 326, see also French, 1950: 91). Coch and French were themselves managers

and although workers who were selected for the full participation condition in the various experiments conducted at Marion were allowed to set their own goals, these were always aligned with the management goal for higher productivity through increased efficiency. There was no commensurate increase in compensation.

*A unitarist versus plural view of organization?*

In the context of the appeal for a return to Lewinian values to provide an ethical footing for organizational change based on employee participation (Burnes, 2009), it seems curious to argue that Lewin's understanding of democracy might be antithetical to the interests of workers. Yet, Lewin (1945; 1947) does not justify democracy at Harwood on ethical grounds, but by arguing for its superior efficiency over autocracy and laissez-faire modes of organization. Here Lewin ought to be understood within the context of his time. His justification of democratic leadership as more efficient than autocracy or laissez-faire chimes with the arguments of Mill, Schumpeter and Lipset, which antecede the Business Case for democracy (Johnson, 2006: 255). In the *Handbook of Social Psychology*, Morawski & Bayer describe how, "(a)mongst historians there exists fair consensus on a reigning social psychology of this moment as one of an overriding sensibility of social engineering or a "psychotechnology" in the service of a "liberal technocratic" America" (Morawski & Bayer, 2003.: 232). Lewin's discussion of the Harwood experiments is entirely technical, focusing on how to improve worker productivity (Lewin, 1945;1947: 24-34). Indeed the first of the six programme areas identified by Lewin's group at MIT was to understand why, "were group enterprises so inefficient or ineffective in getting things done" (Marrow, 1969: 184).

The Lewinians' deep commitment to prove the efficiency of direct democracy is evidenced by Bennis who seeks to justify its use in the Harwood studies; "we view democracy as

applicable “not because of some vague yearning for human rights but because under certain conditions it is a more “efficient” form of social organization” (ibid.: 35). Lewin places strong emphasis on democratic leadership to confront the problem of we-feeling, or local loyalty to the status quo in a group. Democratic skill requires strong leadership; “The leader in a ‘tough democracy’, embarking on a programme of democratic re-education, must ‘have power and be able to hold onto power’ and be ‘rather forceful’ (Lewin, 1945: 304). Effective change cannot occur unless there is a “felt need” by all those concerned, such that no one group should dominate and everyone should play a full and equal part in the process (Lewin, 1947). By means of open and honest discussion, the aim is to foster belongingness and group cohesion through consensus.

Some are concerned that the scope accorded to the leader by Lewin can result in the abuse of democratic participation as a means of engineering the outcomes desired by those in power (Graebner, 1986, 1987; Billig, 2015). One difficulty is that Lewin does not offer any idea as to how to differentiate strong democratic leadership from the “excessive strength” that “might tip the balance towards improper pseudo-democratic, manipulative, or authoritarian methods” (Graebner, 1987: 143). It is argued in the absence of proper representation, that democratic methods can operate as a control technique for management. Billig (2015) summons attention to how apparently neutral phraseology of the kind used by Lewin and his associates, such as “would you like to?...”) conveys a “preference structure” for agreement, such that agreement is invited and disagreement can be problematic (Pomerantz, 1984). Lewin himself advised in relation to the framing of facts that, “(t)he reality is presented correctly, but [only] those aspects are brought to the fore which are linked with the psychological situation of the person in question and are favourable in bringing about permanent motivation (Lewin, 1948: 134, in Van Elteren, 1997: 347-348).

How were the facts framed to the workers at Marion? Were they provided with the knowledge to enable them to make a free decision based on adequate information? Was there really full and frank discussion in the spirit Miriam Lewin (1986) describes, where operators could question the provenance of the information provided by the researcher-managers? Workers were granted autonomy and free choice in determining their output, so long as this conformed to the overall goal of increasing productivity, with no necessary increase in compensation. In the Harwood experiments which were supposedly exercises in self-management, managers set clear limits as to the required minimum (Van Elteren, 1997: 346/347). Coch & French (1948) framed the problem for the experimental groups as dramatically as possible by asking them to compare two garments “one was produced in 1946 and had sold for 100% more than its fellow in 1947” (ibid.: 521). The workers then participated in designing their new jobs (ibid.: 522). There is no mention of questioning or discussion of the reasons offered for changing the job and the piece-rate, but rather the “facts” were simply presented to the workers by the researcher/managers. Nor was there any indication that the researchers might change their opinion or modify their goals if the workers decided on a lower production target.

Imagine the situation of the worker who has recently voted for a union to represent her interest by negotiating piece rates. Managers summon her work group to a meeting where they are informed that the job has been simplified and the piece-rate cut. It is little wonder that she will then file a grievance. Regarding the experimental groups, it is insufficient to state that their members were free to make a decision. This is because a free decision depends crucially on the manner by which information is framed and presented to the individual. It seems beyond dispute in the context of a decision to alter a job and its related piece-rate, that



a union official trained in work study techniques and with industry-wide knowledge of piece-rates and productivity will be much better equipped to discuss these issues and to raise appropriate questions with management than will a poorly educated line worker. For instance, they might seek to check the veracity of the information presented, such as the vivid example used by Coch & French (1948) where they stated that an identical garment produced in 1947 sold for half the price of that produced in 1946. A union representative would have found no evidence of a general fall in prices, never mind such a dramatic fall as described by Coch & French (1948). The Consumer Price Index rose by 17% between June 1946, just after the discontinuance of wartime price controls and March 1947, just before the Coch & French (1948) experiment (United States Department of Labor, 1949). Expenditure on clothing increased from \$247 per head in 1941 to \$385 in 1944 and stood at \$437 by 1950 (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015, Tables 1-3). Employment in manufacturing was high with a low layoff rate and high quit rate reported across US manufacturing in 1946 against the background of a tightening labour market (US Bureau of Economic Analysis, 1946: 3). Average hourly earnings for manufacturing non-durables increased from 80 cents per hour in 1943, to over one dollar per hour in 1947 and one dollar twenty cents in 1948 (Goldstein, 1960). While sales of nightwear such as pyjamas may not have been as strong as other sectors (Atkinson, 1947), our union official would have had no shortage of data to enable them to reframe the facts presented to the workers by Coch & French (1948). Selectively framing the facts in a manner conducive to managers as occurred in Coch & French (1948) is described as a trick, representing a possible misuse of democratic participation (ibid.: 348; Lawrence, 1969: 51; van Strien, 1978: 293). This is likened to the ruse resorted to by parents who use “democratic” methods with their children in conformance with their own pre-ordained decisions (Graebner, 1986: 151; Van Elteren, 1993). Billig (2015) draws a parallel between this technique and the class discussions used nowadays by

schoolteachers, which can hardly be called democracies, because the teacher is in control and retains power even if this is exercised subtly. Miriam Lewin contests this analogy, arguing that Kurt Lewin espoused a vision of democratic leadership where, “the leader clearly and openly puts forward his or her own beliefs and suggestions but with genuine respect for the opinions of others, and a willingness to modify goals or plans in the light of followers’ views” (Lewin, 1986: 131). She distinguishes democracy from pseudo-democracy, where ‘discussion criticism and arguing are permitted but the real goals are always set in advance by the administration and the students know that they have to discuss until they hit the ‘right thing’ (Lewin & Lewin; 1941, in Lewin, 1986: 135). However the researchers at Marion had the power to frame the agenda for discussion in line with their aims as managers. They were not prepared to permit criticism of their goals, nor indeed to change their goals, but rather limited their vision of democracy to discussion of the means to attaining them. In this context the analogy with the controlling parent or teacher seems apt and indeed a degree of coercion is evident in relation to the control group whose members were scattered throughout the factory by management following the first part of the experiment, which they would have construed as punishment (Gardiner, 1977).

Gomberg’s pluralist explanation of organizational democracy is very different from that espoused by Lewin and his associates. Gomberg argues that democracy is a means for distributing power to ensure a balance of interests so that no one interest can dominate the others and is best served in an institutional climate where no single institution can claim a full personal commitment from any individual (Gomberg, 1966a.: 30). In the absence of union representation, the apparently full democratic participation of young, poorly educated and inexperienced workers at Marion, coached by educated experts in line with a management agenda amounted to involuntary manipulation (Gomberg, 1966a: 33). He is flummoxed that

behavioural scientists converted to participative democracy can fail to understand what is in his understanding democracy's most fundamental tenet, that democracy cannot exist where management is free to give and take without any countervailing force. Kariel (1956) makes the related point that Lewin's procedure, which aimed to create group consensus works against traditional liberal-democratic institutions based on the reconciliation of different interests. Moreover, Lewin's focus on efficiency fails to take technocratic power into account because there is no place for the necessary democratic external checks and balances placed on the autocrat from outside the organizational boundary (Gomberg, 1966a: 32). The appropriate representative in the context of Marion was the union, which was not consulted (Gomberg, 1966b).

#### *Attitude to union representation*

Bell's (1960) contention that Marrow authored the *Fortune* (1946) article which claimed the experiments at Marion helped forestall unionization, must be set aside for lack of confirmation. However, Gomberg argues that the aim to forestall unionization might well have influenced management to engage in the studies in participative democracy, that in the USA management only became interested in "human relations" and "behavioral science" following the passage of the Norris LaGuardia Act in 1932, because they could no longer resort to using tactics such as "yellow-dog" contracts, which had allowed companies to sack employees who agitated for unionization (Gomberg, 1966a: 34). While there is no mention of a union in the index to Marrow's (1969) book on Lewin, Marrow earlier argued that unions effectively limit direct democratic participation by focusing narrowly on the discussion of grievances (Marrow, 1950 in Alden, 2012: 7). The hostility of top management at Marion towards unions is better documented in relation to their initial objection to Bavelas's initiative for the formation of a labour-management committee, motivated at least

in part, by fear that this would lead to outright unionization. The factory had been lobbied by three unions since it opened in 1939 (Marrow, 1966), raising the possibility that management's eventual agreement to a workers' council not only furthered the democratic agenda pursued by Bavelas and French, but also constituted their attempt to keep the unions out (Rose, 1988: 172).

What then of the researcher-managers? The tendency for psychologists in the USA to ignore unions has been remarkable (Stagner, 1981: 321). There is general agreement that psychologists at the time of the Harwood experiments prevailingly worked to further the interests of management against organized labor (Baritz, 1960; Shostack, 1964; Gordon & Burt, 1981; Huszyczko Wiggins & Currie, 1984; Haslam, 2004; Zickar & Gibby, 2007). In the wake of the Wagner Act, management turned to industrial psychologists to screen employees for potential agitators and to identify areas of organizations that offered potential for unionization in addition to focusing on key areas of concern to management such as productivity, turnover and job commitment (ibid.: 66). A number of commentators refer to the "bitter" battle that was ongoing at the time for union representation for industrial workers. One argument is that Lewin offered a practical solution to mediate between the antagonistic forces of management and unions (Ash, 1992: 205). Others argue that although not specifically developed as an anti-union strategy Lewin and his associates were either indifferent to unions or left the impression that unions would be unnecessary if management implemented his ideas (Van Elteren, 1997: 348; Wesner, 1995: 59). The latter argument seems most convincing, given that neither Lewin nor his associates mention a union except in the sketchiest of terms. A key tenet is their belief in the superior efficacy of their own version of direct democracy; indeed a key question for Coch & French (1948) was whether direct

democracy is superior to representative democracy, for which they reported limited support (ibid.: 524).

*Resistance to change, or defence of a property right?*

Fox contends that a unitarist frame of reference acts powerfully to influence interpretation and action in line with an harmonious view of organization. Expressions of disagreement by workers to the aims of management may result in accusations of stupidity, or of not being good team players (Fox, 1966: 372). In the context of the Harwood studies the concept of “resistance to change” was framed from a managerial perspective (Dent & Goldberg, 1999), leading Rose (1988) to comment that the title “announces its management bias with almost disarming frankness” (ibid.: 172). Given the sensitivity of piece-rates it is insufficient to argue that the dispute was solely about status, although this is what several commentators seize upon. On the other hand Lawrence argues that the researchers’ treatment of the workers in the control group “effectively” communicated that, they were not the skilled and efficient operators that they thought they were, that they were doing the job inefficiently and some “outsider” would tell them how to do the job right” (Lawrence, 1969: 12).

As mentioned earlier the group of pressers who formed the control group were singled out for mention by Lewin (1947) and Coch & French (1948). A central concern for Lewin (1947) is how to prevent such groups of workers maintaining the status quo by restricting production and scapegoating those who fail to conform. Coch & French (1948) describe resistance to change in relation to the frustration experienced by changed workers immediately after the change and to we-feeling, where “a strong psychological subgroup with negative attitudes towards management will display the strongest resistance to change. (ibid.: 519).

Alternatively, from a pluralist perspective, Coch and French (1948) ignore the interests of workers. In this account the pressers who restricted production were acting to protect their property rights and those of the union (Gomberg, 1961; 120; see also, Mathewson, 1931). This practice, known as featherbedding, contrasts with stretchout, or the injustice that occurs when workers perform more work without additional pay (op. cit.:128). In this understanding, without the checks and balances provided by union representation, Coch & French (1948) can be interpreted as a partisan exercise in ‘stretchout’ that effectively worked against the democratic interests of the employees.

### **Discussion and conclusion: Some lessons from Harwood**

From the above, the Harwood researchers acted generally within the limits of a unitarist view which equated the interests of the organization with those of management and defined concepts such as management of change and we-feeling in relation to management objectives. From a utilitarian perspective it can be argued that they sought a ‘win-win’ situation whereby by increasing their productivity the workers would not only increase overall production and profit but would increase their own wages. However, they framed the actions of the control group in restricting production in a unitarist manner as “we-feeling” that had to be broken down and reconstituted, rather than as a means for workers to protect themselves against the injustice that occurs when asked to increase one’s productivity without a corresponding rise in pay.

The issues discussed in this paper are relevant to consultants and researchers today, when management are argued to be more authoritarian and where in some countries union membership has declined significantly. The Harwood studies offer clear examples of how the

frame of reference, involving the perceptions one brings to bear on a situation, can be shaped by a powerful point of view that colours one's judgement and action in a manner that can be antithetical to the interests of workers. It is important to acknowledge this, given that a unitarist perspective now pervades a number of fields of enquiry into organization. The recognition that this is a partial perspective that is limited to the interests of the most powerful constituency in an organization may provide the stimulus to think more widely, for instance, to understand that what management defines as resistance may not simply be understood as a means to block managerial initiatives but rather as action by workers in defence of their property rights. This calls for a focus on the organizational context of change and not on the individual as the cause of resistance (Burnes, 2015). We argue beyond this that in striving for a more ethical approach to change, it is also necessary to recognize that the organization is not unitarist but is made up of a plurality of interests.

John French draws attention to the practical difficulty that the researcher is constrained to work within the limits set by management and is tolerated to the extent that they comply with management goals (French, 1945a: 325). He makes a valid point, given access to organizations is almost inevitably in the gift of management. However, just because one is constrained by management to work within certain limits, it does not follow that one should rely exclusively on management's understanding of the problem; nor should it follow that management claims of resistance by workers should be taken as read; nor that researchers solely accommodate themselves to the most powerful constituency in an organization.

Consultants and researchers who today embrace the technique of democratic participative group decision making from a unitarist perspective are as open to claims of

manipulation as those directed at Kurt Lewin and his associates (Landsberger, 1958; Lawrence, 1969; Gomberg, 1966; van Strien, 1978; Graebner, 1986; 1987). Others from a union perspective agree with Gomberg (1966) to perceive this form of empowerment as a Trojan Horse (Yates, Lewchuk & Stewart, 2001). Indeed, much more is known today about the precise way in which participatory involvement can serve as a powerful means to encourage people to unwittingly take ownership of a physical object, idea or a decision (Pfeffer & Cialdini, 1998; Ariely, 2009: 136; Norton, Mochan & Ariely, 2012). “Co-creation” is widely used in a range of contexts today to gain commitment, such that Lewin’s pioneering discovery of the power of this technique to facilitate the change in food habits of American housewives and in the work setting of Marion, was well ahead of his time. There are resonances with Foucault’s (2008) explanation of the emergence of new forms of governmentality over free subjects in the modern democratic nation-state. The employment of psychologists as experts in industry provides an image of objectivity and ethicality, lending credibility to management who are seen as professional, working in the interests of all by empowering employees to make their own choices and be responsible for their own improvement (Rose, 1992: 361-363). Yet this unitarist view which professes to be ethical, does not treat workers as ends in their own right but rather as means to serve the ends specified by management. The perspective adopted by Kurt Lewin and his associates which is arguably amongst the most benign expressions of this tendency thus laid them open to the accusation that they acted as servants of power (Baritz, 1960) who used democracy as a means to engineer consent (Graebner, 1986; 1987).

Given the dominance of a unitarist perspective across a number of fields, in the absence of a union, it is useful for researchers, consultants and managers to take into account the issue of worker representation. For instance, one might enquire whether workers have an



effective say in the formulation of objectives? Local or sociotechnical participation occurs where the worker achieves an objective preset by management, whereas political participation or “high goal setting”, involves participation in formulating of objectives (Abrahamsson, 1977; Wall & Lischeron, 1977). Rose (1988) argues that the use of democracy in a sociotechnical context is a way of organizing, exercising and legitimising the political power of management. Another relevant question is whether workers are able to decline invitations by management to increase production?

Coch and French (1948) explicitly sought to test the hypothesis that direct democracy results in more efficient outcomes than representative democracy. While their experiment provides limited evidence for this effect, we have pointed out that there are several potential problems with this unitarist approach, not least of which is that the researchers laid themselves open to charges of manipulation. Their framing of the question in black and white as *either* direct democracy *or* representative democracy removed the possibility that these may work effectively in concert. In contrast, a pluralist perspective argues that some form of worker voice is necessary to defend the pay and living standards of workers. The decline in union representation may partially explain why since the late 1990s, labour productivity growth has decoupled from growth in real median compensation (Schwellnus, Kappeler & Pionnier, 2017). While unions may be detrimental to labour productivity by engaging in so-called restrictive practices, they can play a more positive role (Metcalf, 1990). A Norwegian study found that unions claw back part of additional productivity through a higher union wage premium, and that this premium is larger in more productive firms, which is consistent with rent-sharing (Barth, Bryson & Dale-Olsen, 2017). Unions can be seen as an aid to management by channeling the collective voice of their members rather than relying

on firms themselves eliciting those of individuals, or not bothering (Freeman & Medoff, 1984).

Fox (1974) is pessimistic in his later work about joint consultation between management and unions, arguing from a radical perspective that at least in Britain, this acted as a panacea and became reduced to a technique that failed to realize the cooperative potential of rank and file workers. He attributes this failure to the existence at the time of a low-trust context where workers were subjected to strict authority and control (ibid.: 107). Gomberg argues too that the fruits of participation are rather meagre, pointing to the later experiments conducted by French in Harwood and in Norway, which involved the full cooperation of the unions. However, Fox (1974) could not have envisaged the possibilities offered by network organizations. Although results are limited because there are so few cases, the close involvement of unions in the General Motors' Saturn project (Rubinstein & Kochan, 2001) and at healthcare operator Kaiser Permanente (Kochan, Eaton, McKersie & Adler, 2009), suggest that despite difficulties, active and intense cooperation between unions and management can result in mutually successful outcomes. The Saturn project was on a different scale to the Harwood studies, involving an entire division of 8,000 employees comprising a stakeholder firm and network organization, where complexities involved resolving differences between Saturn and GM central management and local Saturn representatives and the national UAW and in combining collective voice with the representation of individual grievances. The authors argue that the union involvement added value to the work process and the products delivered to customers. Moreover, the ability to regard workers as sources of power and value to achieve mutual gains for the enterprise and the work force were seen as crucial to the enterprise. Additionally, although lacking the effectiveness provided by the ability for unions to engage in strike action, alternative forms of

voice provided in High Performance Work Systems (HPWS), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and International Framework Agreements (IFAs) are also worthy of consideration (Tapia et al., 2015). Such initiatives are certainly necessary if organizations are to adjust to the United Nations (2016) call for organizations to explicitly build towards a sustainable future by recognizing the value of people, where a central goal is to provide decent work for all.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

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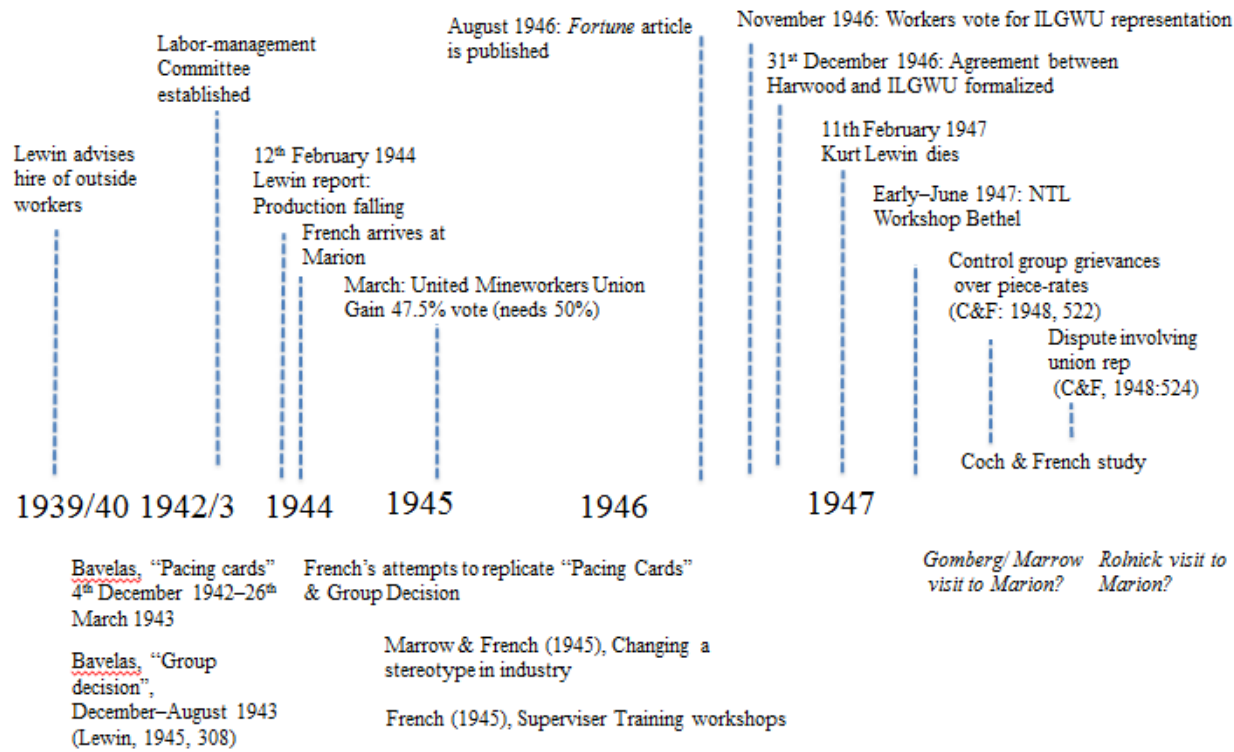
**Table 1: A list of known studies conducted at Marion 1939–1948**

	Researcher/ consultant	Constituency	Management perception of problem	Democratic 'Lewinian' View	Rationale	Outcome
1939  Source: Marrow, 1969: 142.	Lewin	All operators	Insufficient production Plant suffering losses	Goal perceived to be unattainable Provide more realistic goal to workers	-Stop pressurizing individuals - Deal with groups - Adopt realistic approach to develop goal	Implemented, with limited success
1939  Source: Marrow (1969: 142/3)	Marrow?	All operators	Too few workers meet standard	Recruit 60 skilled laborers from 40 miles away	Performance of new hires would raise standards	Output of existing workers rises to standard of skilled labour
1940–1941?  Source: Marrow, 1969: 144.	Bavelas	“High producing operatives”	Discover effects of giving operators greater control over output	Group votes on output.	Freely made group decision on output is more democratic	Output rises to between 75 and 90 units
1940–41?  Source: Lewin (1947: 30)	Bavelas	Trainers	Change style of relation between trainer and worker to more participation	Greater participation enhances production efficiency		Learning curve dramatically steepens – but reduces when original trainer returns
1941?	Bavelas & Lewin	Top Managers		Training in democratic leadership	Reduce tendency towards autocracy	
1942–1943  Source: Lewin, 1945;	Bavelas	Women sewing machine operators		Worker paces or plans their hourly and daily output over a minimum	Individual autonomy reduces group restraint on output Individual autonomy	Output rises from 67 units to 82 against control group

French, 1950: 85						
Dec. 1942– August 1943  Source: Lewin, 1945 308/9, Lewin, 1947: 26. French, 1950: 85.	Bavelas	Women sewing machine operators		Effect of group decision on output on production efficiency	Team decision enhances democracy	Output rises from between 58 and 62 units to between 82 and 92 units
1944–1946?  Source: French, (1945a: 87)	French	Women sewing machine operators		Replication of Bavelas experiments on group decision and pacing cards	Effect of lack of experience on leadership – Democratic leadership requires exercise of great skill	Fewer groups decide to increase production and those that do show little improvement
1944–45  Source: French, (1945).	French	Supervisors	Operators talking reduces productivity  How to talk to operators to raise productivity	Leadership training of supervisors	Equip supervisors with more effective skills of obtaining cooperation. Role playing efficient	None mentioned
1944–1945  Source: Marrow & French, (1945)	Marrow & French	Senior Management	Wartime shortage of labour	Changing stereotypical attitude to older workers	Supervisors devise their own measures to track performance Group decision is more effective than individual decision	Older workers rise to standard

June– December 1947	Coch & French	Pressers Folders Examiners		Using group participation to reduce resistance to change	More participation leads to faster changes in line with productivity target	
Source: Coch & French 1948, Bennis (1966).						





**Figure 1. An outline of some key events at Marion: 1939–December 1947.**

Notes: ILGWU = International Ladies Garment Workers Union; NTL = National Training Laboratories; C&F = Coch and French.

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