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THE ROLE OF "AGENTS" IN THE PROCESS OF ADAPTATION
OF NEW WORKERS TO THE WORK SITUATION

1. Introduction

The present text deals with problems of initiation of new workers to industrial organizations. We have used the term "trajectory of the new worker" to denote the way which he must cover before he is finally accepted by his worker group and before he becomes integrated with his enterprise. Thus the notion of the trajectory of the new worker refers to the course of the new workers accommodation to the requirements of his job and the culture of his work organization, as well as to all practices which are implemented to train him for his job and for a relatively harmonious coexistence with other workers within this culture.

We have identified the culture of the industrial plant with the culture of an organization. It is defined as a "family of concepts", made up of such concepts as symbol, language, ideology, beliefs, rituals, myths which are associated with different aspects of organization. Symbol is the most inclusive category [cf. Pettigrew, 1979, p. 574], but language permeates all categories. However, interaction is the sphere in which symbolic meanings are realized on the level of language. "[...] the use of language is so intimately so inseparably bound up with other non-linguistic activities which men perform, that it is possible to speak of their non-linguistic behaviour also as expressing discursive ideas" [Winch, 1967, p. 128].

A decisive role in the "training of the new worker for his job and for a relatively harmonious coexistence with other workers" is performed by agents. They are persons who supervise and guide the new worker during the period of adaptation and help him attain the formal and non-formal status of a worker, at his plant [cf. Glaser, Strauss, 1971, p. 5, 17, 29, 62]. The majority of training practices are carried out by the agents in the non-formal sphere. Every-day life at the "shop" or individual work-post level is the main field of socialization of the new worker. It is through the interaction with agents that he learns not only how to work but also how to "live" in the new cultural environment. Integration of new workers with the work-organization is then effectuated in the plane of interaction with agents and other fellow-workers.

The present text is based on the results of an empirical study carried out in the electrotechnical plant Z. (1500 employees) situated in a district capital town with 30.000 inhabitants. The qualitative research strategies were derived from the works by B. Glaser and A. Strauss [1967], B. Glaser [1978], B. Turner [1981] and M. Rosen [1986]. The research techniques used in the study were covert participant observation carried out by the researcher K. K. (March 26-June 26, 1985), and covert participant observation carried out by his collaborator U. U. (three months, 1986). The study included free interviews with dispositions which supplied more data on some problems encountered by the new worker (Aug 1-Aug 28, 1985). The interviewees were new workers (61 interviews), elder workers (40 interviews) and foremen (22 interviews).

The method of qualitative data presentation was adopted from a paper by J. Kulpińska [1972] in which she defined basic types of the research problems and their dynamics while descriptions of cases (in our text from participant observations) are treated as the illustrative and exemplicative materials. Kulpińska carried out qualitative analysis of the plots of novels about workmen's circles. She took these plots which appeared most often in Polish novels in fifties and sixties. The plots were associated with such categories as: an integration of workers in the factory, a promotion of workers, process

of becoming a worker, identification with a factory's surrounding, attitudes to work, rites and folklore of a factory etc. After theoretical presentation of the category, she illustrated it with the imaginable citations.

All issues analysed in our text come under the heading of "sociology of industry" since the analysis is focused on the "social behavior of workers and its social regulation" (K u l - p i n s k a, 1974, p. 8).

2. Agents

When a new worker enters the plant Z. for the first time he is oblivious of the factory reality. From the very beginning, however, there appear persons who initiate him to the secrets of his job and the plant in occasional conversations or through a more permanent relationship. I will call these workers agents since they are instrumental (as representatives of the organizational culture) in the attempt to initiate a neophyte to the culture of the plant. They are also a connection between the extra-organizational culture and the culture of their industrial organization.

The actions of agents are associated with a problem of control over status passage of a newcomer. Agents shape the trajectory and try generally to make it irreversible i.e. their actions steer the status passage according to the aims of groups, which are represented by them [G l a s e r, S t r a u s s, 1971, p. 5, 17, 29, 62]. Aims of such groups, here factories, are prescribed by the culture of organization. Agents bring newcomers to changing identities. Agents educate and indoctrinate the passagees in the same way as they were indoctrinated and educated by other agents from the same subculture. Training is conducted by using formal programs and informal communication and through apprenticeship or training in occupational practices. However, agents and also passagees negotiate the shape of status passage. The control over status passage is also negotiable.

Generally speaking, there are two kinds of agents formal

and voluntary. The formal agents are assigned by their institution to introduce the newcomer to his job in the plant. At the beginning of the trajectory of the new worker they are special clerks from the personnel division whose job is to engage workers. Then come the managers of divisions, departments or units who supply the new worker more detailed information about his job (they are frequently responsible for the calculation of the newcomer's wages). Next there is the foreman (this refers only to production units) who gives him a crash course of safety regulations. The foreman assigns the newcomer to a work-post or passes him on to a headman of a working group who gives him a particular job. He is the last formal grade in the hierarchy of agents.

The voluntary agents are those workers who try to help the newcomer on their own initiative, or on his request. They give him advice, instructions and help him at work (and with his personal problems) although they are not formally obliged to do so.

A formal agent can also turn a voluntary one. This happens whenever his help goes beyond his formal duties. It refers both to the sphere of work and the sphere of work and to the personal problems of the new worker eg. help from a headman (formally appointed to take care of new workers in the plant) in obtaining an apartment, which is outside the headman's duties.

In the first days at work the most important persons for the new worker are these formal and voluntary agents who guide him to different places in the plant. This is justified since he has little orientation in the spatial arrangement of various divisions, departments, sections, stores etc. Moreover, the researcher K. K. has observed that before they are assigned their duties new workers receive no information from their formal agents concerning the topography of the plant. In order to find various sections or departments they must ask people to help them. It sometimes happens that an approached fellow-worker is willing to take them to their destination.

Agents who teach the newcomer the topography of the plant may pass him over to other agents before he finally reaches his des-

mination. In such case agents function as transmitting stations in his travels through the plant.

The voluntary agents (this group may also include formal agents), those who want to help new workers, can be divided into four groups. The criterion of division is the truthfulness of the agents' intentions as perceived by the new workers. The actions by agents consist mainly in assisting the newcomers. The truthfulness or authentic character their actions perceived by the new workers refers to disinterestedness and friendliness of intentions which ensures them that the agents are not playing some interactional game with a zero score. "The zero sum game" - it is a game in which any gain for one person is exactly balanced by the loss to the other [G o f f m a n, 1969, p. 101]. Agents well disposed to newcomers are important in a process of adaptation of newcomers to the work situation. Emotional side of adaptation ("kindness generates kindness") i.e. positive emotions of newcomers are conducive to speeding up achieving of occupational skills. Negative emotions and stress delay the course of newcomers' trajectory. In such situation there is usually delay in obtaining a specific knowledge of coping with errors in work. Moreover, there is retarded an acceptance of newcomers by older workers and in such situation it is difficult to find significant others in work-place etc. Kindness and good human relations in work-place can lessen his or her stress associated with adaptation's problems, first of all his or her adjustment to social surrounding.

Basing in this criterion of authentic action we shall classify the agents into pretended and authentic. Agents can be accepted by the new workers who maintain a permanent social contact with them and who accept their tutelar authority even when they suspect the agents of assisting them in view of realizing their own hidden objectives. Both pretended and authentic agents may also be unaccepted by the new workers. This happens when a new worker rejects assistance from agents, regardless of whether he keeps or severs his social contact with them (see Fig. 1).

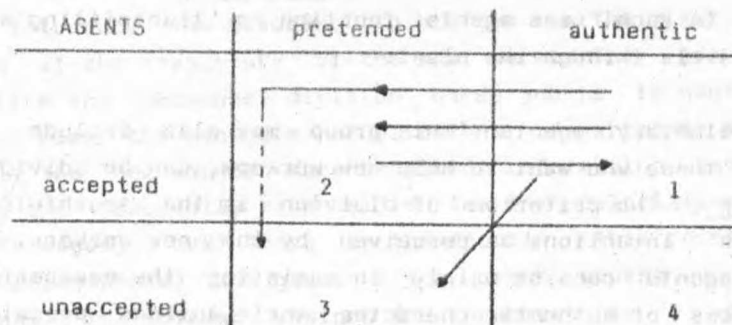


Fig. 1. Types of voluntary agents and directions of status change in particular types of agents

It sometimes happens that an accepted-authentic agents - i.e. a tutor assisting the new worker (helping him at work, warning about dangers and risks in his job, lending the newcomer small sums of money etc.) - loses his tutorial status in the eyes of the new worker when he has used his tutelage for realization of some strategic goals. For instance, the cleaner J. frequently helped a new worker (the researcher K. K.) in his duties i.e. clearing and packaging scrap metal from an open air junk-yard behind the building of the department F-1 in the plant Z. The cleaner J. assured him of his disinterested help and frequently pressed him to work faster and more efficiently. The researcher K. K. worked hard because he was absolutely convinced that J's help was disinterested and thought much of the cleaner's respect for work and order. However, when the researcher noticed that his fellow-worker J. bragged about his help he began to suspect that J's real intention was to boost his image in the eyes of others at the expense of the newcomer. This realization did not make much difference to the new worker (K. K.). On the contrary, he was quite satisfied since he could do his work faster (i.e. clear the heap of scrap-metal - an order he got from a department manager).

In theoretical terms the last case is an example of "agent redefinition" i.e. a transition from the status of authentic-accepted agent to the status of pretended-accepted agent (cf. Fig. 1 - transition from field 1 to field 2 of the diagram).

In such situations maintenance of social relations with the agent may have a temporary nature since these relations are instrumental in realization of some objective on the part of one or both partners of the interaction. Nevertheless, the pretended sympathy of the agent is still approved of by the new worker.

Here is a description of another case in which an authentic-accepted agent gains the status of pretended-accepted agent.

When the researcher K. K. substituted in the cutting bay - the hardest job in the mechanical department, for which there were always vacancies - some of his fellow-cutters tried to talk him into taking it as a permanent job (instead of his job of a scrap-metal packer). They advertised the work at the cutting bay as light (which was untrue since the monotony of this work made one tired from the very beginning) and easy. They told him that their piece-work system permitted them to earn higher wages. They were also trying to convince the manager to put K. K. to work at the cutting bay.

On the other hand, one of K. K.'s closest fellow-worker from the packing bay, the cleaner M., was trying to motivate the researcher to more effective work by saying: "if you work hard the manager will give you a big bonus, only he must see that the heap of junk is getting smaller". It should be noted that for many years before the coming of K. K. there had only worked two people (including the cleaner J.) at the packing bay. M. was also trying to make K. K. work harder by telling him that "the boss is watching you". The researcher did not see this what he did see was that M. was making him do most of his own work.

Internal transport workers were also trying to talk K. K. to take a job with them. They were telling him that their wages were higher since they worked on a piece-work basis (the researcher was paid by the hour) and that their work was easy (which was untrue).

When K. K. told his fellow-worker M. about this "conscription" campaign, the latter got very angry and started cursing: "Don't you listen to them, s-a-b's, nobody wants to work there. It's real hard work, eight hours on your feet (speaking of the

cutting bay) [...] Those bastards, they wanna make a fool of you just to get themselves out of there".

After some time, a conversation with a fellow-worker who explained to K. K. the real motives of all these groups helped the researcher understand the game played by the three above categories of workers¹. There was a permanent deficit of labor in the cutting bay, as well as in internal transport and the packing bay. Employment of every new worker diminished the work load at the unit to which he was assigned, since he was given part of the work so far done by other workers. All three aforesaid categories of workers were keenly interested in the employment of new persons without cutting down on the manning at their unit.

Moreover, a newcomer did not usually know the range of his duties and there was always a chance of making him do part of their own work. It frequently happens that experienced workers choose easier work, leaving the more difficult one to newcomers who can then hardly turn out the daily quota assigned to them (such was the situation in the dept. F-3 of the plant Z.).

Whenever a new-worker learns the agent's real motives he usually changes his opinion of him, the agent may then change status from authentic-accepted to pretended-accepted. The acceptance is usually indispensable in case the agent is one of the newcomer's closest fellow-workers. Lack of acceptance generally obstructs communication between workers which is prerequisite of effective work. This is proved by the aforesaid case of K. K.'s closest work-mate, the cleaner M. (a voluntary agent), who was ultimately given the pretended-accepted status in the eyes of K. K.

An agent may well be unaware of the new worker's knowledge of his real motivation. This may sometimes lead to an open con-

¹ New workers solidarise usually with and help themselves. They pass to others newcomers informations about important for them problems. We observed, while one of the newcomers lost his the all money and from that reason did not have a breakfast, others new workers helped giving him one.

The solidarity of newcomers is a feature of status passage [see Turner, 1974, p. 113]. Newcomers create egalitarian and cohesive communitas.

flict between the agent and the new worker when the latter choses to reproach him with his interested attitude. A description of further development of relations between the new worker (the researcher K. K.) and the cleaner J. may serve as a good example of such situation. When the researcher learned that J.'s help was financially motivated since the dept. manager had promised to pay J. extra for the clearing of the junk-yard (the researcher was not told about it by any of them), he ceased to accept his work-mate. He also made sure to tell him about his reasons. A huge heap of junk was cleared thanks to skillfull manipulation by the management. At the same time, however, it destroyed the relations between J. and K. K.

The described case is an example of transition from the status of the pretended-accepted agent to the status of the pretended-unaccepted one (cf. Fig. 1 - transition from field 1 to field 3 of the diagram).

We may then formulate a hypothesis that an open context of interactional awareness² initiated by a new worker changes the status of the agent from pretended-accepted (which occurred previously in a closed context of awareness) to pretended-unaccepted. As a result, the relations between the two workers become tense which obstructs effective cooperation. This is especially harmful when the redefinition occurs between closest work-mates.

² The concept of "awarness context" was proposed by B. Glaser and A. Strauss [1964]. It refers to the amount and type of interactants' knowledge about their partners' identity and their own identity seen through the eyes of their partners. There are four types of awarness context: 1. Open awarness context - each interactant knows the authentic identity of his partner as well as his own identity seen through the partner's eyes. 2. Closed awarness context - one of the interactants does not know his partner's identity or his own identity seen through the eyes of the partner. 3. Suspicion awarness context - it is modification of the closed context. One of participants does not trust his partner's true identity or the partner's true image of his own identity. 4. Pretence awarness context - it is a modification of the open context. Both interactants know their identity but they pretend not to know who they really are [Glaser, Strauss, 1964, p. 670] and other sources. Cf. also B. Turner [1971, pp. 132-133].

Interactions which occur in a particular type of awarness context may be classified along the same lines. In the present study introduction of the open awarness context refers

Authentic-accepted agents may also undergo a redefinition of status to pretended-unaccepted (this means a direct transition from field 1 to field 3 - see: Fig. 1). We observed such situation in the department F-1. One fitter, having learned about a new worker's bad financial situation, tried to "help" him in a specific way. He offered to sell him five canaries at an extremely low price which he then could, according to the fitter, resell at a big profit. The arguments were convincing. The new worker checked the prices of canaries at various pet shops and the offer seemed to be a bargain. Moreover, the sale was supposedly caused by the lack of space in the fitters house. The transaction was about to take place when another fitter, a bird expert, told the new worker that the birds were of "bad quality" and that he should not buy them. Since then the new worker tried to avoid the bird fancier.

The latter became pretended-unaccepted and the one who gave the newcomer good advice became an authentic-accepted agent although he had belonged to the category of pretended-accepted agents. He had never been trusted by the new worker because he was overinquisitive, asked many questions about his past and his work, made fun of him through the "ridiculing ritual" etc. Nevertheless, the fitter's previous negative behaviour was cancelled out by this single positive act towards the new worker who changed his opinion about the fitter and for some time regarded him as an ally.

Authentic-accepted agents are most important for proper formation of the trajectory of the new worker. Thanks to them the "new ones" are appropriately introduced to the life of the plant. They frequently help the new worker at work, cheer him up in distress (eg. when he has been reprimanded by his boss), tell him "organizational stories" which reveal the importance of some elements of his work situation in the life of the plant etc.

We have also observed a limited occurrence of the authentic-unaccepted status which was exemplified by an old worker who

to the disclosure of J.'s hidden motives by his fellow-worker K. K. From then on the interaction between them took place in the open awareness context.

offered a new worker a room at a very low price when he heard that he was looking for one. However, the new worker was unwilling to become dependent on his work-mates in any way and rejected the offer. It seems that the status of authentic-unaccepted agent is an extremely rare case.

To conclude, we may repeat that our research has documented the following types of agent status transition (according to the aforesaid criteria): from authentic-accepted to pretended-accepted, from pretended-accepted to pretended-unaccepted, from pretended-accepted to authentic-accepted and from authentic-accepted to pretended-unaccepted. Other types of transition are also logically possible but they were not "saturated with empirical data" in the course of our research.

2.1. The organizational positions of agents

We shall now pass to the description of the organizational "extraction" of agents, i.e. their position within the organization or its sections.

These agents shape the trajectory of the newcomer, i.e. they influence whether the trajectory is routinable or problematic and whether it is retarded or accelerated etc.

According to the data from free interviews with new workers the formal agents are above all the superiors (66. i.e. 86,4% of indications). Among them there are managers - 48,5% (32), foreman - 19,7% (13), headmen of working units - 12,1% (8), instructors of occupational training courses - 4,6% (3), one general director - 1,5% (1). It is interesting that 8 out of 61 new workers claim they have never had anything to do with a person formally responsible for their adaptation at the plant (12,1%), in one case the formal agent was a worker.

The voluntary agents are predominantly elder workers, most frequently the closest work-mates of new workers (45,4% i.e. 15 indications to ordinary workers). More experienced new workers constitute 6,1% (2) of indications to voluntary agents. Among the superiors - 33,4% (11) of indications overall - the proportions are: managers 6,1% (2), foreman 12,2% (4), headmen of working units 15,1% (5). It is quite remarkable that accord-

ing to 15,1% of indications agents were family members of the new workers (5 persons). This can be accounted for by the important role played by interpersonal connections (including family members working at the plant Z.) in the decisions concerning job selection.

When elder workers were asked "who ought to introduce new workers to the plant" they pointed above all to various superiors (81,6% i.e. 62 indications). The next group were work-mates and elder workers (18,4% i.e. 14 indications out of the total of 76). The superiors were of the same opinion. According to them new workers should be introduced to work first and foremost by their superiors (85% i.e. 17 out of the total of 20 indications). There were 10% (2) indications to elder workers and 0% indications to work-mates of new workers. One superior said there was no real need to take special care of, or provide tutelage for new workers.

It can be seen from the above data that obligational categories related to indications to organizational positions of agents revealed by elder workers and the superiors are convergent with relations of new workers as to the frequency of occurrence of formal agents among superiors (81,6%, 85,0% and 86,4% respectively). On the other hand, superiors become voluntary agents less frequently (33,4% of indications) than other categories of workers.

When elder workers were asked "who actually introduces new workers to the plant" 76,4% (42) pointed to the superiors, and 18,2% (10) to fellow-workers of the newcomers. It is remarkable that 5,4% (3) of indications refer to the category of visible absence of superiors in the process of introduction of new workers to the plant. On the other hand, the superiors claimed that they were solely responsible for actual introduction of newcomers and that they did not notice elder workers perform this task.

It thus seems that superiors are rather inclined to fulfil their formal duties connected with the introduction of new workers to the plant, which is confirmed by opinions expressed by new as well as elder workers. They become voluntary agents less frequently than other employees, and they fail to notice

the important role of other employees in the process of introduction of newcomers.

2.2. Opinions of agents on ways of shaping a trajectory of a newcomer

Elder workers and superiors have different opinions about contents and dimensions a newcomer's trajectory. It is important here to answer on such question: which actions should be taken most often during trajectory by superiors and elder workers (content) and should be a trajectory (or is) in a dimension of "suspicion" or friendliness?

The above conclusions (from sec. 2.1.) are convergent with answers obtained to the question: "In what way should the new worker be introduced to his place of work?" Elder workers said that superiors should first and foremost be concerned with the actual situation of work (98,2% i.e. 53 indications). They included in this category the following kinds of responsibilities: getting the newcomer acquainted with his job (35% i.e. 20 indications), personal care of the new worker (24,6% i.e. 14 indications). The personal care is help given to the "new one" in his personal problems in order to make him perform his work-duties more efficiently. On the other hand, personal help to the new worker beyond the sphere of work-operations, concerning his emotional and psychological problems, is rarely practiced³.

Other spheres of responsibility are: getting the new worker acquainted with the plant (8,8% i.e. 5 indications), direct

³ In medical situations such as hospitals, sanatoriums the work of the inmates' psyche is a very important element of institutional efficiency. Quite frequently the patient's worries, anxiety, panic or anger must be appeased through appropriate action by the staff. Such action is called "sentimental work" [Strauss et al., 1985]. Its aim is to raise trust in the patient, to appease him in case he is nervous, to build up or rebuild his identity, to ensure a morally appropriate course of interaction.

Sentimental work which is a part of the so called personal care of new workers in an industrial plant may perform a similar function.

supervision of the new worker (8,8% i.e. 5 indications), providing the new worker with information about possibilities of promotion (7% i.e. 4 indications), holding an introductory interview (5,3% i.e. 3 indications), getting him acquainted with the production cycle (5,3% i.e. 3 indications), running a medical check-up with regard to his suitability for the job (3,5% i.e. 2 indications). Strictly educational responsibilities constitute only 1,8% (1) of indications and they relate to the initiation of the new worker to local customs.

Similar results were obtained from the superiors who share an unanimous opinion that introductory responsibilities should concentrate directly on work (71,7% i.e. 43 indications). They point to the following kinds of responsibilities: personal care (16,7% i.e. 10 indications), introductory interview (13,3 i.e. 8 indications), getting the newcomer acquainted with work (10,3% i.e. 6 indications), initial instruction of the new worker concerning his job (10% i.e. 6 indications), getting him acquainted with the plant (10% i.e. 6 indications), conversations stressing the importance of high quality of production (5% i.e. 3 indications), lending the new worker a bulletin with information about the plant (3,3% i.e. 2 indications). Nevertheless, the superiors pay more attention (in obligational categories) to educational responsibilities (21,7% i.e. 13 indications) than elder workers. These include the following: placing the new workers under the supervision of confidential employees (5% i.e. 3 indications), strict control of the new workers' behavior (5% i.e. 3 indications), providing good personal example in the sphere of work and personal conduct (3,3% i.e. 2 indications), keeping the "new ones" away from poor workers (1,7% i.e. 1 indication), providing "general education" (1,7% i.e. 1 indication).

It is remarkable that 3,3% of the superiors claimed that no assistance is necessary for the introduction of new workers.

The answers of elder workers to the question "in what way are new workers actually introduced to the plant?" were consistent with their earlier response in obligational categories. According to them all responsibilities connected with the introduction of new workers are related to their actual situation

of work (98,1% i.e. 53 indications). These responsibilities comprise helping the new worker at work, but only upon an explicit request from the foreman (5,5% i.e. 3 indications), getting the newcomers acquainted with work (22,3% i.e. 12 indications), strict control of their work (9,2% i.e. 5 indications), informing them about the production cycle (1,9% i.e. 1 indication). Giving assistance to new workers is important for the majority of elder workers (50% i.e. 27 indications), 9,2% i.e. 5 indications appertain to claims that any help to new workers is unnecessary. Those respondents who actually help the new workers have been classified by us as voluntary agents.

1,9% i.e. 1 indication refers to behavior connected with the social life of the plant, namely to invitations of new workers to name-day parties of elder workers.

In their answers to the question "in what way are new workers actually introduced to the plant?" managers also use categories closely related to work (100% i.e. 39 indications). These categories refer to the following responsibilities: personal conversations with new workers in which they "are told" how to work (17,9% i.e. 7 indications), helping new workers to solve various problems, not only in the sphere of work, but only upon explicit request from the "new ones" (19,3% i.e. 4 indications), getting them acquainted with work (7,7% i.e. 3 indications), strict control over new workers (5,1% i.e. 2 indications), helping them to pass through the employment procedure (5,1% i.e. 2 indications), giving them a course on safety procedures (2,6% i.e. 1 indication), showing them round the plant (2,6% i.e. 1 indication). All managers claimed to have actually helped new workers in their work (48,7% i.e. 19 indications).

It can be concluded from the above data that managers as well as elder workers are interested first and foremost in responsibilities which facilitate fast adaptation of new workers to the routine of work. Managers and elder workers (potential agents) look at the trajectory of the newcomer as only the trajectory of worker. Moreover, this trajectory newcomer-worker seems to be occurring in the dimension of suspicion. The stress on supervision of the new workers is a sign of distrustful attitude of the managerial staff and elder workers toward newcomers. "Con-

versations" and "telling the new ones how to work" are two examples of such attitude.

Elder employees and managers, i.e. potential formal and voluntary agents, must pass through the phase of initial self familiarization with the new worker before he can enter the interaction with them. This "initial self - familiarization with the new worker" consists in:

1. Carrying out so called "biographical sounding" i.e. putting questions to the new worker about his past. Of course, the "biographical sounding" follows the "welcoming ritual" during which the partners of interaction get acquainted with each other. In the interviews with new workers 59,1% (26 persons) confirmed the occurrence of "biographical soundings". 40,9% of respondents said they had never been asked about their past.

2. Putting questions to other people about the new worker's past. These two features (1 and 2) of the category of "initial self - familiarization with the new worker" are related to the dimension of curiosity of this category, i.e. seeking information about the new worker out of one's own curiosity.

The initial self familiarization with the new worker may also occur in the dimension of suspicion, when elder employees suspect the new worker of being inadequately qualified for his job. They may also suspect him of other things, e.g. of pushing up the daily output quotas, informing against them etc. This dimension has the following features (3 and 4).

3. Temporary break of communicative interchange, e.g. when the topic of conversation is changed abruptly because the presence of the new worker is perceived as a potential threat of revealing some information which is essential for the worker group. Such situation occurred during a break at a foreman's table when a new worker enquired about a cross hanging in his bay and about the Solidarity period in the plant. There followed a sudden silence which lasted for ca 10 second. It was then broken by one of the workers who brought up the subject of pigeon raising.

Sometimes the questions by new workers are also left unanswered because they are thought to be threatening the worker group in some way.

4. Psychological preparation of the team for the coming of a new worker. Even before the new worker comes to work the worker group frequently "tunes up" for the potential changes which his presence may introduce to the accepted customs, their style of work etc. Although they may have never met him they do it on the basis of scanty information which comes from various sources. For instance, workers at the department F-1 were apprehensive of a new quality tester. They were discussing the worst things which might befall other quality testers, pressers and fitters as a result of his actions. They were afraid that his overrigorous testing of the details made by them may impede the continuity of production.

We may thus assume that the "suspicion" dimension of the "initial self - familiarization with the new worker" creates an unfavorable atmosphere for his accommodation to the situation of work. The distrust of the new worker on the part of his social group generates in him a distrust of his fellow workers. This thesis is supported by his reluctance to ask elder workers or superiors for help, e.g. when he makes a mistake in his work.

The phenomenon of distrust refers mainly to those agents (voluntary or formal) who do not help new workers and keep them at a distance.

The trajectory of a newcomer is delayed by these agents, because keeping social and interactional distance retards entering in a communicational net of a working group. New workers in such situations are late exposed to ridiculing and dependancy rituals. It means that they enter late in good-fellowship relationships with elder workers and late achieve full occupational qualifications.

3. Conclusions

When new workers come to an industrial plant they are met by agents who introduce them to their worker groups and help them solve their occupational and personal problems. There are two types of agents: formal (appointed by the managers to take

care of the new worker) and voluntary (workers who help the newcomers on their own initiative). Formal agents may become voluntary ones.

Voluntary agents may be assigned one of the four types of agent status, depending on how authentic are the intentions of their interaction with the new workers and whether they are accepted by the newcomers. Below are the four types of agent status:

- 1) pretended-accepted agents,
- 2) pretended-unaccepted agents,
- 3) authentic-accepted agents,
- 4) authentic-unaccepted agents.

The status of agents may undergo a change relative to the new workers' interpretations of the agents' behavior.

Formal agents are mainly the superiors; voluntary agents are above all elder workers. The superiors claim the right to responsibility for introduction of new workers to the plant. They fail to notice the important role played by other employees in this process. Elder workers as well as the superiors give primary importance to those introductory responsibilities which are immediately related to the situation of work. Personal care which goes beyond assistance in performing work operations into the sphere of the new worker's mental, emotional states is of secondary importance for elder workers and the superiors alike. Whenever they talk of such tutelar-and-educational activity the superiors use restrictive categories, e.g. "subjecting the new workers to the supervision of confidential employees", "strict control of the new workers' behavior", keeping them away from poor workers" etc.⁴

⁴ New workers most frequently conform to the definition in [B e c k e r, 1963, p. 9]. The distrust of the new workers may raise their distrust of the social environment of the plant. Permanent reciprocal distrust may lead to the so called "insanity of (work) place" [G o f f m a n, 1971, pp. 389-450] in which the new worker spends his time. In such cases his immediate environment in the plant may become a place of many problems resulting from this suspiciousness, oversensitivity and exaggerated reactions to behavior which is not as offensive or arrogant as he imagines. These last features may also make him "inter-

The restrictive atmosphere surrounding newcomers is sugmented by the "process of initial self-familiarization with the new worker"⁵. Besides curiosity (which frequently irritates the new worker), expressed in "biographical sounding" and questions by various people concerning his past, the process gives expression to distrust. The distrust is seen in the conscious control of the conversational content in presence of the "new one", and the psychological "tune up" of the group before his first coming. The "tunning up" is done through discussion of the worst possible problems which may arise from cooperation with the new worker. The atmosphere of distrust is further augmented when the new worker comes across pretended agents who base their strategic interaction with him on lack of interactional partnership. The dimension of suspicion causes a trajectory's delay.

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actionally" dangerous. At the same time he may be undergoing a redefinition of self-identity or the identity of other workers. The new worker may feel that others belittle his personal value. Interaction, if it occurs, may thus become insincere and pretended. The new worker may attempt to avoid his fellow-workers and they may try to avoid him. Conversations may become less frequent. The group may start gossiping about the new worker thereby excluding him from socializing. If this happens, the individual becomes deprived of interactional feedback on his behavior. He no longer possesses a basic reality on which he builds his evaluations and conclusions referring to his own behavior [G o f f m a n, 1971, L i n d e s m i t h et al., 1975, pp. 435-436]. We have the such situation in department F-3, where even elder workers imputed psychic illness to new worker (women), although they were mainly suspicious, they were avoiding her and gossiping about her and they also plotting against her.

⁵ The category "the initial self-familiarization with the new worker" indicates that adaptation is two-sided process: "[...] since even a single peasant, coming to a factory, causes that a foreman and workers must adapt to his presence and to his level of qualifications. Although this adaptation is uncomparable to the adaptive efforts to be taken by him" [S z c z e p a n s k i, 1972, pp. 474-475].

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ROLA "POŚREDNIKÓW" W PROCESIE ADAPTACJI NOWYCH ROBOTNIKÓW
DO SYTUACJI PRACY

Niniejszy artykuł dotyczy problemów związanych z adaptacją nowych pracowników w zakładzie przemysłowym. Opisany jest w nim proces psychospołeczny, w którym nowy pracownik nawiązuje kontakty ze starszymi pracownikami. W procesie tym bardzo ważną rolę odgrywają tzw. pośrednicy. Są to osoby, które nadzorują i pomagają nowemu pracownikowi w okresie jego adaptacji do sytuacji pracy. Poprzez interakcje z pośrednikami nowy pracownik uczy się nie tylko jak pracować, ale również jak "żyć" w nowym kulturowym otoczeniu. Można wyróżnić dwa podstawowe rodzaje pośredników, tj. pośredników formalnych (wyznaczonych przez zakład pracy do opieki nad nowym pracownikiem) oraz samorządnych (są to ci pracownicy, którzy z własnej inicjatywy pomagają nowym pracownikom). Pośrednicy samorządni mogą posiadać jeden z czterech statusów w zależności od autentyczności intencji ich działań wobec nowych pracowników oraz w zależności od tego czy są oni akceptowani przez nowych pracowników. Oto cztery rodzaje tych pośredników: pośrednicy rzekomi - akceptowani, rzekomi - nie akceptowani, autentyczni - akceptowani, autentyczni - nie akceptowani. Statusy pośredników mogą ulec zmianie w czasie w zależności od interpretacji działań pośredników dokonywanych przez nowych pracowników. W artykule opisano proces redefinicji tych statusów opierając się na danych empirycznych, uzyskanych z ukrytej obserwacji uczestniczącej.

Opisano także, z jakich pozycji organizacyjnych pochodzą różne rodzaje pośredników oraz opisano proces wstępnego osvajania się pośredników z nowym pracownikiem.

Analizując powyższe problemy koncentrowano się głównie na procesach interakcji. Przyjęto za podstawę analiz teoretyczną perspektywę symbolicznego interakcjonizmu oraz tzw. metodologię budowania teorii ugruntowanej.