ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION IN THE EARLY CAREER OF INDUSTRIAL MANAGERS*

Edgar H. Schein

November 1963  #39-63

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Introduction

I would like to begin this paper by giving you a little of the background of my research project. It is a project in midstream, and there are not as yet clearcut results from it. But the conceptual and methodological problems encountered in its execution have been sufficiently fascinating to me to make me want to share some of them with you.

As some of you know, I have worked for some years on the social psychological problems involved in the process of brainwashing, or coercive persuasion, as I prefer to call it. My studies of Western civilian prisoners, imprisoned on the mainland of China, convinced me that their dilemma vis-a-vis their all-powerful Communist captor had its counterpart in the dilemma faced by new members of any large organization or institution. Let me explain this rather blunt statement.

From the point of view of the political prisoner, the dilemma is how to resist the all-powerful and alien forces of his captor. From the point of view of the captor, however, the dilemma is how to root out and convert alien elements in his society. That is, after their take-over, the Chinese Communists found themselves in the position of having to mold new political beliefs in a large segment of their society, and
to eliminate all forces which undermined any such effort. Political neutrality was as much of a crime as being actually hostile to Communism. Full and active support and participation were demanded of all citizens.

If we maintain the perspective of the organization or society, we can see that the need to convert members (citizens) to a new ideology and to root out resistance or sabotage is a problem which many organizations face, notably prisons, hospitals, rehabilitative institutions, and to some degree, industrial organizations. Particularly with respect to new members coming into the organization, it is essential that they be taught the organization goals, values, and preferred ways of dealing with problems. New members must also be taught to be loyal and productive, which is tantamount to saying that they must accept the ideology, participate actively, and refrain from resistance or sabotage.

The fact that much has been written in recent years about "organization men" and illegitimate pressures for conformity in industrial organizations heightened my interest in the possibility of transposing the theoretical notions derived from a study of coercive persuasion to a study of organizational socialization in our own society. In effect then, my initial question was to ask whether the early socialization experiences of managers in companies could be explained best as company
attempts to coercively persuade them. In framing the question in this manner, there is no attempt to imply that industrial organizations are immoral or wrong if they attempt to coercively persuade people. Rather, I am implying the hypothesis that coercive persuasion is a ubiquitous process to be found wherever an institution or organization finds itself having to teach new attitudes and values to incoming members.

With this general question in mind, I launched a longitudinal panel study of graduates of the M.I.T. School of Management. The panel study has several specific objectives which, in combination, are designed to illuminate the larger question.

1. The first objective was to determine whether the attitudes and values of the panel members would change during their first year in industry, and to determine the nature of these changes.

2. A second objective was to determine whether observed changes could be accounted for by organizational attitudes and values; that is, were we dealing with influence or merely change?

3. A third objective was to determine what sorts of early job experiences or induction experiences each pannellist had had and to relate the nature of these experiences to the amount of influence the organization had on him.
4. Only if answers to the first three questions could be obtained, could we raise the fourth question of determining the degree to which those experiences which led to greater or lesser influence could be meaningfully conceptualized in terms of the coercive persuasion paradigm. However, even if this paradigm was not relevant, we would at least obtain useful information on the conscious or unconscious, witting or unwitting influencing forces created by organizations.

Basic Study Design

Having made my general objectives clear, I can now describe to you my research strategy and some of the tactical decisions which have been required in implementing it. First of all, it appeared desirable to conduct a longitudinal study of panels of subjects, rather than attempting to infer change or influence from a comparison of cross-sections. Because of convenience and because relatively little attention has been given to the learning of the role of industrial manager, I chose to select my panels from graduating students in our M.I.T. Masters Degree program in industrial management. Fifteen men per year were selected in the spring of 1961, 1962, and 1963 to form a total group of 45 subjects. Subjects were obtained by selecting randomly from the graduating class and inviting the participation of those selected. In only a few
cases did we have to generate alternative names. The prospect of learning something about themselves seemed to intrigue most of the men approached sufficiently to make them willing to put in long hours of interviewing and testing.

The basic study design can best be explained with the aid of Exhibit 1. You will note that the initial step was to gather a wide variety of data prior to the subject's entry into an organization, in fact, prior to any job decision. The data were gathered in the spring prior to graduation from our two-year Masters program. Following a perusal of available tests or surveys of beliefs, attitudes, and values, I decided that we needed to design our own instruments. Existing ones suffered from three defects: 1) they tended not to be refined enough in the discriminations they made; that is, they dealt only in broad value categories such as those found in the Allport-Vernon-Lindzey Study of Values; 2) they tended to be built to tap the stable parts of the person and thus were designed to be relatively insensitive to change (the F-scale would be a good example); or 3) they tended to ignore the particular beliefs, attitudes, and values associated with the role of business and the businessman in our society.

To provide a broad picture of each subject, I chose to use an interview, objective tests, and some projective instruments. Though this method was expensive, it permitted an
# STUDY DESIGN

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<th>AFTER ENTRY INTO COMPANY</th>
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<td><strong>I.</strong></td>
<td><strong>II.</strong></td>
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<td>1. INTERVIEW</td>
<td>1. OBJECTIVE MEASURES</td>
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<td>2. OBJECTIVE MEASURES</td>
<td>&quot;AS COMPANY MAN WOULD RESPOND&quot;</td>
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<td><strong>III.</strong></td>
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<td>1. INTERVIEW ON JOB EXPERIENCES</td>
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<td>2. INTERVIEW OF BOSS AND PEERS</td>
<td>2. REPEAT OF ITEMS I2, I3 AND I4</td>
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<td>3. OBJECTIVE MEASURES OF BOSS AND PEERS</td>
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**MEASURES**

1. **CHANGE:** I→IV
2. **ANTICIPATORY SOCIALIZATION**
   a. PROJECTED: I vs. II
   b. ACTUAL: I vs. III3
3. **SOCIALIZATION (INFLUENCE):** I→IV vs. III3
assessment of how consistent the person was in his value expression and a determination of which type of instrument was most efficient in obtaining value and attitude information from the subject. This presentation does not permit going into detail, but I can state that we attempted to obtain information about all beliefs, attitudes, and values which bore any relationship to the managerial role and which one might expect to change in any way as a result of joining an organization.

For example, we attempted to find out the subject's views of the rights and obligations of the corporation vis-a-vis society, employees, and consumers; his views of the managerial role and the attributes necessary to be a successful manager; his own aspirations and values with regard to his career; his theories and assumptions about people and organizational arrangements; his day-to-day operating values in the job setting, and so on.

The quality of the data secured depended greatly on the cooperation of the subject. In order to secure good cooperation, I conducted all of the interviews personally and attempted to establish, from the outset, a relationship of trust and confidence with the subjects. I did not deceive them about the purpose of the study, but I did withhold my hypotheses of what might develop for them and refrained from giving them any
feedback which might in any way influence their self-image, values, or attitudes.

The assessment of the men also involved some peer ratings on a set of adjective dimensions. In order to facilitate such ratings a series of group meetings was held for sub-groups of 15. The purpose of these meetings was to bring the mutual acquaintance of the panel to a reasonably high level and to increase the panel's sense of identity as a valued research group. My observation is that this procedure worked well in increasing the commitment of the men to the study.

After each man had made a decision as to the job he was going to take, he was asked to fill in some of the same attitude surveys giving the answers which he thought a typical member of the organization which he was joining would give. The purpose of this step was to determine to what extent the subject would accurately predict the attitudes he would find in the organization, and the degree to which he perceived himself already to have acquired such attitudes.

Before leaving M.I.T., each panel member was told that he would be visited at his place of work some 6 to 9 months after graduation and that the study called for a three-day reunion of the entire panel at the end of one year. The operations described thus far constituted the "pre" measure, the establishment of baseline data against which to measure
changes and influence.

The next problem was to obtain data on the beliefs, attitudes, and values held in the organizations to which the panel members went. In order to determine whether observed changes could be attributed to organizational influences, it was necessary to measure the organizations on the same variables that the panel members were measured on. As you know, the measurement of "organizational" attitudes and values is at best a touchy business because of the problem of defining the boundaries of the relevant social network within which the panel member is located. I decided to attempt this measure by asking each man's immediate superior and one or more peers with whom the panel member felt close to fill in some of the same questionnaires that the panel member had taken. With these data, if they could be obtained, we could then define organizational attitudes either as the attitudes of the boss of some weighted average of the boss and the peers. We did not attempt any wider survey of each organization.

To obtain these data required effort and ingenuity because each supervisor was confronted with a two hour questionnaire, much of it personal, for some researcher with whom he had no prior contact. To elicit cooperation, we decided to work through the panel member who set up an interview for myself or my research assistant with the boss and peers. In most cases,
he was able to elicit enough cooperation to at least give us entry into the organization. A typical visit lasted a day and included the following activities: 1) a lengthy (one to two hours) interview of the panel member to determine what experiences he had had in his first few months at work; this information was required in order to locate kinds of experiences which would produce more or less influence; 2) short interviews with the supervisor and each peer to obtain information about the organization's general climate and the supervisor's general philosophy of how to bring new people into the organization; in these interviews an attempt was made to convince the interviewee to accept the task of filling in and mailing back the questionnaires. This step was successfully accomplished in about 80 percent of the cases.

The final data collection step occurred one year after the men had graduated. Each group of 15 men was brought back to M.I.T. for a three-day reunion and seminar. The purpose of the seminar was two-fold--1) to obtain information on the actual work experiences, observed self-changes, and problems of the first year at work, and 2) to reacquaint the men with each other to permit a second set of peer ratings. During the third day of the seminar the entire battery of attitude questionnaires and peer rating forms was administered. Two reunions have been held with all 15 men attending each one. The third reunion is scheduled for next June.
While we still have Exhibit 1 before us, I would like to comment briefly on the plan for data analysis. You will recall that our first objective is to measure change. On each of the attitude areas or on each separate question we can determine change by comparing the response given during the reunion with the one given prior to leaving M.I.T. To assess influence is more complex. Basically, the idea is to determine how much of the change observed is attributable to the attitudes expressed by the boss and peers. There are some obvious complications: 1) how to combine their answers if they disagree; 2) how to take into account the initial difference between the man and the organizational reference group; 3) how to weight changes which are in a direction different from the attitudes of the boss and peers; and 4) how to weight the effects of a subject's prediction or anticipations obtained in the second data gathering step. We are working on a procedure to develop a meaningful index of influence but have not progressed beyond the point of experimenting with difference indexes.

To categorize the types of work experiences which the subjects have had, we have transcribed all interview information and are content analyzing it in terms of categories which I will mention in a few minutes.
Results

In this section I will have to give you a sample of the different kinds of results we are obtaining. I will not be able to give you definitive data. First, what sort of population of people are we dealing with? Is there a stereotyped M.I.T. graduate among the panellists? Both the interview and objective data indicate large individual differences in values, attitudes, and general outlook. We attempted to reduce the interview to a set of major value themes for each subject. Here are some samples of what comes out as major value themes.

Exhibit 2. Subject A values fairness, acceptance of the facts of life, hard work and doing a good job. Subject B values freedom, autonomy, challenge, adventure, and accomplishment. Subject C values dedication, having a purpose in life, doing a good job, and competence. Subject D values harmony and balance, the good life, comfort, family and aesthetic pursuits. Subject E values adjustment and conformity, understanding other people in order to do the right and appropriate things, and good interpersonal relationships. These kinds of differences are typical.

On an attitude dimension like the rights of the corporation to be free of government and labor interference we have subjects who strongly favor freedom and others who strongly favor control. We have subjects who are highly cynical and others who are highly
Subject A  Fairness; acceptance of the facts of life; hard work; doing a good job.
Subject B  Freedom; autonomy; challenge; adventure; accomplishment.
Subject C  Dedication; having a purpose in life; doing a good job; competence.
Subject D  Harmony and balance; the good life; comfort; family and aesthetics.
Subject E  Adjustment; conformity; understanding others in order to do the right thing; good interpersonal relations.

SAMPLE VALUE THEMES
idealistic; some who trust people, other who do not. In short, our research panels turn out to be quite heterogeneous on many dimensions.

To get an idea of the kinds of changes which occurred as a result of one year at work, we examined the test-retest data on attitude scales as well as on individual items. Averaging the results across individuals revealed that there were some, though only a few, items on which both of the first panels changed consistently. These are shown in Exhibit 3 in terms of the percentage of men agreeing with the item. Also shown are the percentages of a reasonably typical group of young managers who have been in industry 10 years or so, and of a large sample of the faculty of our school.

Notice that on five of the six items the movement of the group is away from the faculty attitudes toward those of the business community. Notice also that the last four items all deal with aspects of the ideology of business. It is around the assumptions of how a business should be organized and how human effort should be managed that we observe some of the greatest conflict between the academic and the practitioner, and also where the greatest changes appear to occur in people.

We aggregated sets of our value items into the scales shown in Exhibit 4. On these scales we observed large shifts
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>PANEL TEST 1</th>
<th>PANEL TEST 2</th>
<th>BUSINESS REFERENCE GROUP*</th>
<th>FACULTY REFERENCE GROUP**</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18. The most important objective of a company is to allow for the maximum development of its employees as individuals.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. One of the major reasons for the existence of company pension plans is that they insure the loyalty of the older employees.</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Private enterprise working through a market economy provides the most equitable distribution of society's goods and services.</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>90***</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99. The welfare of society is best achieved if all businesses pursue profit to the best of their ability.</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90. Strikes are usually caused by union leaders rather than rank-and-file members.</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93. A clearcut hierarchy of authority and responsibility is the cornerstone of the business organization.</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>53</td>
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* Forty-one middle level managers selected for attendance at MIT's Sloan Fellowship Program.
** Fifty-three faculty members of MIT's School of Industrial Management.
*** Item 10 also showed a dramatic shift from 6 to 17 people who "strongly agreed".

SAMPLE CHANGES
in individual subjects but virtually no shifts of the group as a whole. The exhibit shows the original and retest scores of the second panel. Also shown on the Exhibit are the average scores of all of the supervisors on whom we had data as well as the faculty sample. You can observe the differences between the business school values and the businessman values most clearly on scales 1, 3, 5, and 6. On Scale 1 what little movement of the panel there is, is in the business direction. On Scale 2, the panel continues to hold the relatively greater cynicism characteristic of the academic environment. On Scale 5, some movement toward business values occurs, while on Scale 6, the group remains unchanged.

One attitude survey attempted to get panellists to rate which of 44 aspects of the job situation they considered very important on a seven point scale. Only three items shifted consistently in both panels. The importance attached to "motivating people to produce their best efforts" went down from 6.2 to 4.8; the importance attached to "loyalty to own department" went up from 4.0 to 4.6; and the importance attached to "loyalty to company" went up from 4.6 to 5.8.

All in all, the group level results were remarkably stable even though individuals changed considerably, which further underlines the importance of studying the process of socialization longitudinally rather than in terms of cross-sections of people.
Let us examine next an example of influence where it could be observed. We plotted the individual answers on our main attitude survey and determined on how many items the person had changed in the direction of his immediate superior. We took into account the number of items on which the subject and his boss initially differed, and the number of items on which the subject moved in a direction opposite to the superior. On this basis, we were able to identify some subjects who were clearly influenced more than others. Exhibit 5 shows the scale scores of one of these subjects. As can be seen, he clearly moved toward the attitudes of his boss on scales 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 9.

The next step in our plan is to relate patterns of influence to organizational experiences during the first year at work. Some description of the kind of conceptual scheme we are using here will serve to round out this presentation. I believe that the essence of coercive persuasion is to make it difficult or impossible for the person to leave the organization, while persuading him of certain attitudes and values characteristic of the organization. The persuasion or change induction takes the form of disconfirming his old attitudes while providing role models of the new attitudes. The new attitudes are likely to be learned through those persons in the immediate environment who are particularly salient by virtue of their position or personal characteristics. In most cases, we assume that the boss serves as the primary
POQ II SCALE ANALYSIS PROFILE

- Strongly Agree
- Mildly Agree
- Mildly Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Business should be free of control
Business should have broad responsibility
High general cynicism
High cynicism about getting ahead
Theory X orientation, low faith in people
Low faith in groups
Mgt. is tough, and for tough people
In favor of small business
In favor of professional, "cosmopolitan" orientation

Business should be controlled
Business should have limited responsibility
Low general cynicism
Low cynicism about getting ahead
Theory Y orientation, high faith in people
High faith in groups
Mgt. is not tough, not limited to tough people
In favor of large business
In favor of "local" company loyalty orientation
role model.

In terms of these very general notions, we are led to an examination of those forces in the early work experiences which tend to commit the subject to the organization and/or which make it difficult for him to leave. Challenging and interesting work assignments would be an example of the former; liberal benefit programs and stock options would be an example of the latter. Next, we are led to look for factors which create close contact between the subject and potential role models--the nature of the work, the type of relationship he develops with his superior and peers, and the kind of training program he goes through. In the case of the subject mentioned above, for example, we see a person who is not psychologically committed to his work but who finds it inconvenient for a variety of reasons to move to another organization. His major interests lie outside work in a variety of cultural pursuits. He does enjoy his work, however, and he has had close contact with his present superior by virtue of a shared six-months assignment during which the two of them were co-workers on a project.

One case, of course, proves nothing. I mention these few facts only to give you a rough idea of the kinds of experiential factors we are looking for in attempting to unravel the puzzle of why people change or don't change during their first year in
an organization, and what kinds of factors can be assessed
to explain the changes which are observed.

I stated at the outset that this was a report of a project in midstream. Because we have not as yet completed the collection and analysis of our data, I have been able to give you only fragmentary results. I hope that I have been able to give you enough, however, to give you some feelings for the general approach of the study and the directions in which we are headed in the study of organizational socialization.
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