BETWEEN INSTITUTIONS
AND EVERYDAY LIFE
INTRODUCTION

"Between Institutions and Everyday Life" - such was the name of the Conference organized in November 1987. Its participants were Finnish sociologists from the University of Tampere and Polish sociologists from the University of Lodz. The Conference was to offer an opportunity for presentation of research problems and approaches in both Universities, and give an insight into peculiar ties between institutions and everyday life.

It seems equally justified to speak about ties and about an antagonism.

Institutions mean stable rules of activity aimed at satisfaction of definite social needs. Such a general definition will not suffice to show the theoretical and methodological wealth of studies on institutions in which we live. It is usually believed that the main characteristic of institutions and of an institutional approach is a formal character of rules resulting from their permanence and from the contemporary trend to register and legalize the rules of social life. This is closely related with studies concerning the other side of the problem, i.e., very constant customary rules as well as all modes of non- and extra-institutional activities.

Everyday life as an important sociological category belongs to ethnomethodology. With this category there are also connected key col-words such as social actor, social practices transcending the instrumental logic of institutions, interpretation of everyday life with its ways of interaction and search for sense in situations which create an environment of those social actors. Sociologists being observers of everyday life are also its participants. And this prompts both methods of observation and interpretation.
Krzysztof Konecki

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. 57a], but language upwards 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].
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of becoming a worker, identification with a factory's surroundings, 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" (Kułpińska, 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 (Glasser, Strauss, 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 passages 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 also passages 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 with 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 appartment, which is outside the headman's duties.

In the first days at work, the most important persons for the new worker are the 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 destination. The Role of "Agents" in the Process of Adaptation

Agents who teach the newcomer the topography of the plant may pass him over to other agents before he finally reaches his destination. 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 of 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 [OFFMAN, 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 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 unacceptable by the new workers. This happens when a new worker rejects assistance from agents, regardless of whether he keeps or severes his social contact with them (see Fig. 1).
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Fig. 1. Types of voluntary agents and directions of status change in particular types of agents.

It sometimes happens that an accepted-authentic agent - 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 and the building of the department F-1 in the plant 2. The leader 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 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-workers 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 the. It's real hard work, night hours on your feet (speaking of the
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Richard between the agent and the new worker when the latter chases 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 department 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 skillful 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 awareness 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.

1 The concept of "awareness context" was proposed by B. Gla-sner and A. Strauss [1964]. It refers to the amount and type of inter - actants' knowledge about their partners' identity and their own identity seen through the eyes of their partners. There are four types of awareness context: 1. Open awareness context - each inter - actant knows the authentic identity of his partner as well as his own identity seen through the partner's eyes. 2. Closed awareness context - one of the inter - actuants does not know his partner's identity or his own identity seen through the eyes of the partner. 3. Suspicion awareness 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. Pretense awareness context - both inter - actants know their identity but they pretend not to know who they really are [Gla-sner, A. Strauss, 1964, p. 670] and other sources. Cf. also B. Turner [1971, pp. 132-133].

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

1 New workers solidarize usually with and help themselves. They pass to others newcomers information about important for them problems. We observed, while one of the newcomers lost his 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 communities.
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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 above-mentioned criteria): from authentic-accepted to pretended-
accepted, from pretended-accepted to pretended-unaccepted, from
pretended-accepted to authentic-accepted and from authentic-
unaccepted 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 organi-
zation's sections.

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

According to the data from interviews with new workers
the formal agents are above all the superiors (66. i.e. 86.6%
of indications). Among them there are managers - 48.5% (32),
foremen - 19.7% (13), headmen of working units - 12.1% (8),
student teachers 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 older workers, most
frequently the closest work-mates of new workers (45.4% i.e. 15
indications to ordinary work-mates). More experienced
new workers constitute 6.1% (2) of indications to voluntary agents.
Among the superiors - 35.4% (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-

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 a situa-
tion 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 extrem-
ely low price which he then could, according to the fitter, re-
sell 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 suppos-
edly caused by the lack of space in the fitter's house. The trans-
baction 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 behavior was cancel-
led 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 for-
mation 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 (e.g. 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.
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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 (53% 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 newcomer beyond the sphere of work-operations, concerning his emotional and psychological problems, is rarely practiced.

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

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 of the staff. Such action is called "sentimental work" (S t e r n s , 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 (6.8% 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 (71.1% 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), sending the new worker a bulletin with information about the plant (3.3% i.e. 2 indications). Nevertheless, the superiors pay more attention (in obligatory 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 obligatory 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 (21.3% 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 pertain to claims that any help to new workers is unnecessary. These 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 (47.9% 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 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-
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1. 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-I were apprehensive of a new quality tester. They were disquieted by the worst things which might befall other quality testers, pressers and fitters as a result of his actions. They were afraid that his overvigorous 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 dependency rituals. It means that they enter late in good-fellowship relationships with elder workers and late achieve full occupational qualifications.

2. Conclusions

When new workers come to an industrial plant they are not 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
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The restrictive atmosphere surrounding newcomers is augmented by the "process of initial self-familiarization with the new worker". 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 "tunup" of the group before his first coming. The "tuning 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.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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 pretentious. 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 affecting his socialization. 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 (Goffman, 1971, Linsen and et al., 1975, pp. 435-436). We have the such situation in department F-J, where even older workers imputed psychic illness to new worker (woman), although they were mainly suspicious, they were avoiding her and gossiping about her and they also picketing against her.

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 incomparable to the adaptive efforts to be taken by him" (Szczerpański, 1972, pp. 474-475).

4 New workers most frequently conform to the definition in [Becker, 1963, p. 9]. The distrust of the new workers may raise their distrust of the social environment of the plant. Permanence reciprocity distrust may lead to the so-called "insanity of (work) place" [Goffman, 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 his suspiciousness, oversensitivity and exaggerated reactions to behavior which is not an offensive or arrogant as he imagines. These last features may also make him "inter-


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Krzysztof Konecki

KONIEJZI ARE "POŚREDNIKÓW" W PROCESIE ADAPTCJI NOWYCH ROBOTNIKÓW DO SYTUACJI PRACY


Opisano także, z jakich pozycji organizacyjnych pochodzą różne rodzaje pośredników oraz opisano proces wstępnego oswajania się pośredników z nowym pracownikiem. Analizując powyższe problemy skoncentrowano się głównie na procesach interakcji. Przyjęto za podstawę analiz teoretyczną perspektywę symbolicznego interakcjonizmu oraz tzw. metodologię budowania teorii ugruntowanej.