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Deindividualization, Affect and Productivity
in Laboratory Task Groups

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in Laboratory Task Groups

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Abstract

Large scale operations require coordination of many individual efforts. To minimize variation that could interfere, systems of technical and bureaucratic control are often installed. In these depersonalized systems, individuality is not recognized, valued or encouraged. In a highly individualistic culture, an organization's failure to acknowledge one's uniqueness may have dysfunctional consequences for that relationship.

The laboratory experiment reported here tests the effects of another's failure to acknowledge one's individuality on interpersonal affect and willingness to help that person. Undergraduate business students were shown a set of bogus ratings representing their task group leader's perceptions of him/her on thirty personality traits and ten occupational interests. The ratings indicated that the group leader believed the student was somewhat similar (unique) or extremely similar (nonunique) to the typical college student. Consistent with predictions, students receiving nonunique feedback volunteered fewer hours to help the group leader perform his/her duties and were less productive when the group leader was believed to benefit. In spite of these strong behavioral effects, attitude toward the leader (self reports) were not influenced by the uniqueness feedback. After recognizing limits to generalizability, implications for behavior in depersonalized organizations are discussed.

Deindividualization, Affect and Productivity in
Laboratory Task Groups

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In large organizations, coordination of individual efforts can be difficult. To control individual variation that could interfere, systems of technological and bureaucratic control are often installed (Aldrich & Mueller, 1982; Blau & Schoenherr, 1971). The result--standardized, predictable behavior--facilitates coordination.

Various techniques are used to minimize personal characteristics of role incumbents. Division of labor, closely regulated work processes and standard operating procedures minimize individual differences in skills and abilities. Rules governing appearance and work schedules, impersonal supervision and undifferentiated personnel policies suppress individual preferences, goals and desires. Socialization practices aimed at unfreezing personal beliefs and instilling organizational values (e.g., Schein, 1960) stifle individual expression. The result is uniformly programmed, undifferentiated human capital (Braverman, 1974).

The depersonalization of modern organizations raises concern for their individual members (see, for instance, Davis & Cherns, 1975a; Gross & Ostermann, 1971; Scott & Hart, 1979). Standardization and depersonalization of the work environment interfere with individual need fulfillment, opportunity for personal growth and the opportunity to perform meaningful work important to job satisfaction (Davis & Cherns, 1975b; Hackman & Suttle, 1977; Herrick & Maccoby, 1975). Others fear

that self awareness and personal identity can be destroyed when individuality is suppressed (Fromm, 1955; Maslow, 1968; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980; Ziller, 1964).

Organizational Climate

In addition, a direct reaction to the depersonalized environment should be expected. It is assumed that organization members attend to the organizational environment and attach meaning (Indik, 1965). Payne and Mansfield (1973) and Schneider (1975) use the term organizational climate to characterize individual perceptions of the organization environment and propose that organizational climate mediates the relationship between structure, affect and some aspects of behavior. Although James and Jones (1974) prefer the term psychological climate they agree that internalized representation of organizational conditions can influence affect and behavior. In the depersonalized organization, procedures for structuring and controlling organizational behavior indicate that individuality is not valued and will not be encouraged. In a highly individualistic culture, perceptions of a depersonalized climate should be distasteful.

American individualism

Individualism, as an aspect of culture, stresses the supremacy of individual experience (Individualism, 1973). In social values, individualism emphasizes moral equality, personal growth and respect for others. In political and economic theory, it stresses individual needs, rights and desires. Thus, an individualistic culture limits the control of organized society by stressing self-reliance and respect for individuality.

Concern for the individual typifies American political, economic and social thought. Individualistic philosophy and the concept of natural rights form the basis of political ideology, government design and free enterprise (Arieli, 1964; McMurrin, 1968). American culture, expressed in its symbols, folklore and public rhetoric, glorifies the hardy individual and applauds individual initiative and achievement (Lindsay, 1931; Pole, 1980; Turner, 1920). Regard for the individual, often cited as America's greatest strength, provides a source of pride and national identity (McMurrin, 1968; Pole, 1980).

Recent cross cultural surveys confirm this individualistic orientation (Hofstede, 1980b). When asked about personal values, Americans see identity based in the individual rather than the social system, prefer autonomy and individual decisions to group work, value individual initiative and achievement more than a sense of belonging and express a calculative rather than emotional involvement in organizational affairs (Hofstede, 1980b). Summarizing the results of various surveys, the United States emerges the most individualistic culture (Hofstede, 1980a).

Forces that organize, constrain and regiment behavior contradict these individualistic values. Depersonalization of modern institutions clearly indicates that individuality is not valued, will not be recognized or encouraged. While American workers have reluctantly accepted depersonalization and standardization for economic rewards, the necessity of this organizing strategy is now being challenged by social critics (Scott & Hart, 1979), management theorists (Clawson, 1980) and individual workers. As Yankelevich (1978) has discovered,

concern for individuality in organizations may become a powerful dynamic:

When we asked people in our surveys which aspects of work are becoming important to them, they stress, above all else, 'being recognized as an individual person' (pp. 49-50)...

In their eyes, when an individual is subordinated to his role, he is somehow turned into an object and his humanity is reduced in some undefinable but all important sense. In the new value system, the individual says in effect, 'I am more than my role. I am myself' (p. 49).

Responses to unwarranted harm

Thus, in the depersonalized, deindividualized organization climate, organization members feel robbed of rights, respect and consideration expected in individualistic society. The system's failure to recognize one's individuality is experienced as unwarranted harm and responses are likely to be guided by the negative norm of reciprocity. Norms of reciprocity suggest that individual outcomes from a social exchange should reflect personal contributions (Adams, 1963, 1965; Homans, 1961). When input and outcomes are incompatible and their ratio seems unfair, dissatisfaction motivates action to restore perceived equity (Adams, 1963; Walster, Berscheid & Walster, 1976). When inequity derives from unprovoked harm, the negative norm of reciprocity defines appropriate responses--harm those who harm you and/or do not help those who harm you (Berkowitz, Green & McCauley, 1962; Taylor, 1967; Tedeschi & Linkskold, 1976).

Practices aimed at minimizing individuality indicate that individual differences are not valued and the personal characteristics of any particular member will be ignored. In an individualistic society, the

system's failure to recognize one's individuality is experienced as unprovoked harm and responses to the depersonalized climate should be guided by the negative norm of reciprocity. Dissatisfaction, an unwillingness to invest personal resources in role performance (evidenced by low quantity or quality of work or high absenteeism) or even retaliation against the system would be predicted.

In ongoing organizations, factors influencing dissatisfaction, role performance and absenteeism are numerous and complex. When a researcher has little control, it is difficult to attribute variation in affect and behavior to any particular variable. Accordingly, a laboratory experiment was designed to test the effects of another's failure to recognize one's individuality on attitudes and performance in task groups. If this study suggests that task group members resent those who fail to recognize their individuality, studies of deindividualization in on-going organizations should be conducted.

To represent conditions in real-world organizations, the information conveyed by the laboratory manipulation must be similar to that conveyed by depersonalized organizational practices. In the depersonalized organization, procedures and policies indicate that individuality is not valued and will not be acknowledged. In the laboratory experiment to be described, a variation of Fromkin's (1972) uniqueness deprivation paradigm was used to convey that information.

Uniqueness research. In Fromkin's (1968, 1972) study of uniqueness deprivation, self-perceptions of non-uniqueness were manipulated by providing bogus feedback about one's extreme similarity to the

"typical" or "average" person. Undergraduate psychology students were asked to provide information about 90 personal traits, interests and values and later received a personal characteristics profile purportedly showing his/her score and the average score of 10,000 other students on each dimension. By manipulating the distance between the two scores subjects were led to believe that he or she was very highly, highly, moderately or slightly similar to other students. Using this paradigm, self perceived non-uniqueness has been related to negative mood (Fromkin, 1972), a preference for scarce or rare experiences (Fromkin, 1970), enhanced creativity (Fromkin, 1968) and decreased conformity to others' perceptual judgments (Duval, 1972, cited in Snyder & Fromkin, 1980). Using similar procedures, Weir (1971, cited in Snyder & Fromkin, 1980) found that subjects often shift self-reported attitude after discovering many others endorse similar positions and Snyder & Endleman (1979) discovered that subjects prefer to interact with moderately similar rather than extremely similar or dissimilar others.¹

In the study reported here, laboratory task group members were shown a set of bogus ratings representing the group leader's perceptions of him/her on thirty personality traits and ten occupational interests. The ratings were designed to indicate that the group leader believed the subject was extremely similar (non-unique) or only somewhat similar (unique) to the typical college student. The three hypotheses tested assume that in an individualistic culture, another's failure to acknowledge one's individuality is experienced as personal harm and insult. Affective and behavioral response are predicted from the negative norm of reciprocity.

Hypothesis 1: Another's failure to acknowledge one's individuality will influence attitudes toward that person.

Associations of inequity, dissatisfaction and interpersonal affect are likely to influence attitudes toward another who fails to acknowledge one's individuality. The victim of unwarranted harm experiences distress and discomfort. (Walster, Berscheid & Walter, 1976). Through association, the person believed responsible for that distress should come to be disliked. As reinforcement theories predict (Byrne, 1969, 1971) and empirical work demonstrates (Byrne, 1969, 1971; Gouax, Lamberth & Friedrich, 1972; Schwartz, 1966) association with negative affect can decrease interpersonal attraction.

Hypothesis 2: Another's failure to acknowledge one's individuality will influence intentions to help that person.

When non-unique feedback is experienced as unwarranted harm, it is unlikely that group members will volunteer to help the person responsible; helping that person would exacerbate inequity. Therefore, it is predicted that group members receiving non-unique feedback will be less willing to help the leader than those receiving unique feedback.

Hypothesis 3: Another's failure to acknowledge one's individuality will influence helping behavior in a way predicted by the negative norm of reciprocity.

In the experiment described here, perceptions of who benefits from task group members' productivity were manipulated to detect the operation of a negative norm of reciprocity. Task group members were led to believe that group members or the group leader would benefit from

their productivity. When non-unique feedback is experienced as unwarranted harm, group members should be unwilling to benefit the source of that feedback but willingness to help others should be unaffected. That is, the combined effects of receiving non-unique feedback and believing the source of the feedback stands to benefit should have a significant negative effect on productivity. Although a general tendency to help the group more than the leader may be observed, the difference between producing to benefit the group vs. leader when receiving non-unique feedback should be greater than that difference when receiving unique feedback. Subjects who receive non-unique feedback and believe the leader stands to benefit should produce the least.

METHODS

Subjects and design. Sixty students from an undergraduate course in business administration participated to fulfill a course requirement. Subjects were randomly assigned to a treatment group in the 2 x 3 (uniqueness feedback x who benefits) experimental design.

Procedure

Subjects attended two laboratory sessions.

Group discussion session. In session one, groups of students were told that the experimenter had been hired by the Illinois Vocational Research Board (a fictitious organization) to study how working part time might affect full time college students. Each participant was assigned to a four-member (same sex) discussion group to share work experiences and discuss the characteristics of a desirable part time job. The discussion lasted 45 minutes. In addition to providing work

preference information, subjects were told that they would be involved in helping the Board evaluate their College Leader Training Program. According to the experimenter, students from this training program would serve as the discussion group leader.

Group leaders were actually recruited from an undergraduate business course. Prior to the discussion session, group leaders attended a 50 minute training session which included a brief lecture on how to successfully moderate a group discussion and a practice discussion session. Group leaders joined the other participants after the group members had heard the instructions described above.

Individual session. Each group member returned to the lab one to four days after the group discussion, was randomly assigned to a treatment group and then heard these instructions asking them to help evaluate the fictitious leader training program. According to the experimenter:

People differ in personality and the kinds of things they like and dislike; they differ in terms of skills and abilities. People have different occupational interests and aspirations. We think we can train leaders to be more aware of these differences and similarities in people. The group leaders have received some of this training in our program.

After the group discussion on Monday we asked your group leader to rate each of the group members on thirty personality traits and ten occupational interests. We have the results of a survey that was done last year that measured the personality and occupational interests of 10,000 college students. The average score on each trait and interest was used to describe the typical college student. We gave this information to the group leaders and asked them to rate each group member according to how similar they are to the typical college student. Those ratings are shown on this form. The 0's indicate the average response of 10,000 college

students polled last year. The X's are the ratings the leader gave you on each trait. For each trait and interest a difference score has been computed and is shown to the right. This score shows the difference between the rating made by the leader and that of the typical college student.

We want you to look at these ratings and tell us if you think the leader's assessment of how similar you are to the typical college student is correct.

Uniqueness feedback. The uniqueness feedback was presented as a profile of ratings on thirty personality traits and ten occupational interests. The trait adjectives were chosen from the mid-range of Anderson's (1968) list of 555 trait adjectives and the interests were chosen from Kuder's Preference Record (1968). For each trait and interest, a difference score indicating the absolute value of the difference between the individual's rating and the college average was shown. The forms were constructed so that approximately half of the individual's ratings were above the college average and one half were below.

Subjects were led to believe that the leader saw them as extremely similar or moderately similar to the typical college student. Similarity was manipulated by varying the distribution of difference scores on the feedback form. In the extreme similarity/non-unique group the feedback forms showed 37 difference scores of three or less and three equal to or greater than 9. The total difference score was 52. For the unique group twenty-two difference scores equaled 3 or less and 18 scores ranged from 9 to 12. The total difference score was 221. Within each treatment group subjects saw forms that were identical with regard to the distribution of difference scores and their

order on the feedback form. However, the trait or interest label attached to each rating was randomly determined for each subject.

A verbal interpretation of the total difference score was shown at the bottom of the feedback form. A total difference score between 0-175 was said to indicate that the leader saw the individual as an extremely non-unique person. The experimenter augmented this interpretation with this statement, "In other words, your group leader saw you as extremely similar to the typical college student." A difference score between 176-300 was said to indicate that the leader saw you as a unique person--in some ways you are similar to the typical college student but in other ways you are different. The experimenter mentioned, "In other words, your group leader saw you as somewhat similar to the typical college student."

After receiving the uniqueness feedback, subjects completed a questionnaire asking for reactions to the feedback, group leader and other group members. Subjects believed this questionnaire would be used to evaluate the leader's effectiveness. All items were included in a questionnaire booklet with written instructions and subjects were allowed to work at their own pace.

Questionnaire measures. The first two items were designed to check the subjects' understanding of the uniqueness feedback. Items measuring self perceived uniqueness, perceived accuracy of the leaders ratings, felt responsibility for the group's success, willingness to attend another job evaluation session and willingness to participate in another group discussion followed. Group members also indicated how much they

liked their group leader and other group members, how much they would enjoy working further with the group leader and group members and to evaluate the leader's effectiveness as a discussion group leader. Subjects also indicated how much time (0-10 hours) they could volunteer to help the group leader review the job description ratings.

Job evaluation task. After completing the questionnaire, subjects received written instructions for performing the job evaluation task. Participants were to consider a series of job descriptions and indicate the desirableness of each as a part time job. Subjects were urged to evaluate as many job descriptions as possible but when the experimenter left the room the subject was free to determine the length of time devoted to the task and the number of evaluations produced.

Who benefits manipulation. By varying a paragraph in the instructions for the job evaluation task, subjects were led to believe that either the image of the group members or the group leader would be enhanced by their willingness to evaluate many job descriptions or received no information about who might benefit. Subjects in the GROUP BENEFITS condition read these words:

The success of a task group is often measured by the accomplishments of its members. The success of your group depends on your willingness to work hard.

These instructions were given to those in the LEADER BENEFITS group:

The success of a group leader is often measured by the accomplishments of his/her group members. Accordingly, our evaluation of your group leader depends in part on the productivity of the group members. The success of your group leader depends on your willingness to work hard.

A third group received no information about who might benefit.

Results

Manipulation check. The uniqueness manipulation was understood by most subjects in the experimental conditions. Of the twenty eight subjects receiving extremely similar feedback, twenty-two reported that the group leader believed them to be extremely similar to others; six subjects incorrectly reported that the leader saw them as somewhat similar. However, all twenty eight correctly reported that the leader considered them extremely non-unique. The thirty two subjects receiving moderately similar feedback all reported that the leader saw them as somewhat similar and unique. Uniqueness feedback had no reliable effect on agreement with the leader's ratings; overall, subjects tended to be non-committal when asked to agree or disagree ($\bar{X} = 5.68$ on a bipolar 11 point scale). However, entries in a 2 x 3 contingency table indicate differential acceptance of the uniqueness feedback (χ^2 for independence of factors = 7.907; df = 2; $p < .02$). Of those receiving non-unique feedback, 82% reported being less similar than the leader indicated; only 18% agreed with his/her judgment. In contrast, 37.5% agreed with the moderately similar feedback, 50% felt they were less similar and 12.5% felt more similar than indicated. The differential acceptance of unique and non-unique feedback supports the assumption that non-unique feedback is an undesirable evaluation.

Felt uniqueness. The uniqueness feedback had a significant effect on felt similarity to others ($F = 5.50$; df = 2,87; $p < .01$) and self-perceived uniqueness ($F = 5.86$; df = 2,87; $p < .01$). However, group means fall in the mid-range of the response scale and do not reflect intense feelings.

Self report dependent measures. Responses to these items were submitted to a principal axis factor analysis. Four factors with eigenvalues greater than one emerged and all four were retained for interpretation. After oblique rotation, the factor pattern matrix showed simple structure and all 11 questionnaire items were used to interpret the factors.

Factor I represents a willingness to volunteer unrequired time to the group task. Items asking for voluntary participation in additional group discussion and additional evaluation of job descriptions have high loadings on this factor. Willingness to help the leader loaded only moderately high on this factor. Factor II contains items indicating subjects' attitudes toward the group leader. Evaluations of the leader's performance, indications of how much group members liked the leader and willingness to work further with the leader comprise this factor. Factor III indicates dislike for the group members and unwillingness to work further with them and Factor IV is considered an indication of felt personal responsibility for performing well on the assigned task. Regression estimates of factor scores were computed for each subject.

Attitude-toward-leader. Regression estimates of attitude-toward-leader factor scores were submitted to a one-way analysis of variance. Contrary to expectations, uniqueness feedback did not produce a reliable difference in attitudes toward the leader ($F = 1.17$; $df = 1,58$; $p > .05$). Although none was hypothesized, it is useful to note that the feedback effect was also nonsignificant for the other factor scores.

Intentions to help. The type of feedback received had a significant effect on the number of hours volunteered to help the group leader ($F = 13.99$, $df = 1,58$; $p < .001$). Subjects receiving non-unique feedback volunteered fewer hours ($M = .925$ hrs.) than unique subjects ($M = 2.326$ hrs.).

Productivity. The number of job descriptions evaluated ranged from 20 to 100 ($\bar{X} = 50.15$). Table 1 shows the mean number of job descriptions evaluated broken down by uniqueness feedback and who benefits. To test the uniqueness feedback effect described in Hypothesis 3, two contrasts (Hayes, 1973), using four of the six treatment groups, were performed. The first tests the feedback x who benefits interaction by comparing the difference in productivity to benefit the group vs. the leader for subjects receiving non-unique feedback to this difference for those receiving unique feedback. The second comparison tests the nature of this interaction. As shown in Table 1, a significant uniqueness feedback x who benefits interaction was discovered; a larger difference in productivity to help the group vs. the group leader was found between the non-unique groups ($t = 3.33$, $df = 37$; $p < .01$). The second contrast tests for lower productivity in the non-unique/leader benefits group compared to the average of the other three. As expected, subjects receiving non-unique feedback and believing the leader benefits produced less than those in the other three groups ($t = 6.98$, $df = 37$; $p < .01$).

Summary

In these laboratory task groups it is possible to make inferences about the effects of another's failure to acknowledge one's individuality.

TABLE 1

Mean Number of Jobs Evaluated by Uniqueness Feedback
and Who Benefits

Who Benefits	Feedback	
	Non-unique	Unique
Group	55.4 n = 10	57.2 n = 12
Leader	29.8 n = 9	53.6 n = 10

$$\psi_1 = (55.4 - 29.8) - (57.2 - 53.6) = 22.0$$

$$S\psi_1 = 6.16$$

$$t = 3.33 \text{ (df = 37; } p < .01)$$

$$\psi_2 = \frac{(55.4+57.2+53.6)}{3} - 29.8$$

$$S\psi_2 = 3.69$$

$$t = 6.98 \text{ (df = 37; } p < .01)$$

Contrary to predictions (Hypothesis 1), attitudes toward the leader were not influenced by the type of feedback received. It was expected that non-unique feedback would be experienced as unwarranted harm and, through association, the leader would come to be disliked. It seems, however, that non-unique feedback became important only after implications for future interaction became clear.

Attitude toward the leader was measured after providing bogus feedback but prior to manipulating perceptions of who benefits. Therefore, at the time attitudes were measured, non-unique feedback may have been easily dismissed, but, when subjects were asked to invest personal resources to benefit the leader equity considerations and the uniqueness feedback became important. In this study, another's failure to acknowledge one's uniqueness did not have an immediate impact on subjects. It was important only through its implications for future social exchange.

As expected, behavior and behavior intentions were influenced by the uniqueness feedback. Consistent with Hypothesis 2, group members receiving non-unique feedback volunteered fewer hours to help the leader than subjects receiving unique feedback. As predicted in Hypothesis 3, information about who benefits from group members productivity had a much greater impact on actual productivity after receiving non-unique feedback. Subjects receiving non-unique feedback who believed the group leader would benefit produced fewer job evaluations.

The negative norm of reciprocity provides a good explanation for this pattern of results. As explained earlier, when another's failure

to acknowledge individuality is experienced as unwarranted insult and harm, the negative norm of reciprocity predicts an unwillingness to help when it is the source of insult who stands to benefit. However, willingness to help some other person should be unaffected. As expected, when harmed and led to believe the source of harm might benefit, productivity was suppressed.

DISCUSSION

Implications for organizations

In the depersonalized organization, felt inequity derives from the system's disregard for individuality. As in the laboratory experiment, responses to unacknowledged individuality may be guided by the negative norm of reciprocity. Laboratory group members managed inequity by withholding personal resources that could benefit the source of harm. In work organizations similar behavior should appear.

Various responses can resolve inequity (Walster, Berscheid & Walster, 1976). Since terminating the relationship may be costly, initial responses should focus on reducing harm done or altering inputs and outcomes. To reduce harm done, avenues of self expression and distinction could be forced upon the system. Personalizing the work space, adopting unusual attitudes and distinctive dress, adopting a unique function or branding personal output could all serve this purpose.

When attempts to reindividualize the system fail, inputs and outcomes can be manipulated. Since time off the job removes the victim from an unpleasant stimulus, reduces personal input and increases costs to the organization, high absenteeism would be expected. Unless

rewards are tied closely to performance, unwillingness to perform beyond minimal levels required to retain membership or perform activities not explicitly required should also be observed. When anonymity is assured, retaliation is possible. While intentional sabotage is difficult to document, informed observers believe sabotage has increased over the last 20 years (Walton, 1972; Work in America, 1973) and attribute this, in part, to the experience of uniqueness deprivation and depersonalization in work organizations (Walton, 1972; Dyer & Hoffenberg, 1975).

If the laboratory results can be generalized to work organizations, it appears that depersonalization of the organization environment has dysfunctional consequences. While speculation about behavior in organizations seems warranted, it is important to consider differences between ongoing organizations and the laboratory task groups that might limit generalizability. Characteristics of the subject population and the contractual nature of the organizational exchange should be addressed.

There is evidence that age and education are associated with concern for uniqueness (Cherrington, 1980; Yankelovich, 1978); younger and better educated workers report a strong desire for personal growth and a sense of individuality (Walton, 1972; Yankelovich, 1978). Since college students participated, it could be argued that these results are quite limited. However, concern for individuality and uniqueness is likely to be widespread. Hofstede's (1980a,b) study of individualism and American workers showed that value placed on individuality was strong across all levels of organizational hierarchy and

functional specialization. In segments of the work force not included in Hofstede's research concern for individuality may be even stronger; those who consider work an expression of self or believe uniqueness is crucial to success (e.g., artists, scientists) may react violently to depersonalization. And, as younger and better educated workers enter the labor force, resistance to depersonalization in organizations should grow.

The contractual, on-going nature of the organization-member exchange suggests other qualifications. The rational approach to organizing work maintains that division of labor, standardization and behavioral control are necessary for efficient goal attainment. Since this view dominates organization design (Braverman, 1974) some degree of uniqueness deprivation is probably expected and accepted as a legitimate cost of membership, but, excessive depersonalization should be resisted. One hypothesis is that standardization and regulation of activities directly related to the work flow will be more acceptable to workers than standardization of less immediate activities.

And, finally, the on-going nature of the relationship suggests a response not studied in the laboratory experiment. When attempts to change objective characteristics of the inequitable relationship fail and leaving the organization is costly, dissatisfaction may be reduced by manipulating perceptions of the exchange (Walster, Berscheid & Walster, 1976); adjusting perceived inputs and outcomes can produce a seemingly more equitable relationship. Adaptation to the depersonalized environment might involve increased emphasis on available rewards, such as pay and job security, devaluation of individuality or

a general devaluation of self worth. These adjustments relieve inequity by enhancing perceived outcomes, reducing felt harm and decreasing perceived inputs. While this psychological manipulation dissipates negative affect and concern for equity, other long term consequences may be undesirable. Adaptation may deflate self-esteem, reduce aspirations for personal achievement and interfere with a sense of self and personal identity important to overall quality of life (c.f., Erickson, 1968; Rogers, 1954).

So, although the laboratory exercise may have maximized the likelihood of producing these results, implications for the individual-organization exchange are clear--the system's failure to acknowledge and attempts to suppress individuality may have negative consequences for both parties. Dissatisfaction or, in the long run, adaptation may spill over (Meissner, 1971) to spoil non-work activities. For the organization, inability to motivate individual involvement may be costly.

As proponents of improved quality of work life assert, reindividualization of the work place is overdue (Dyer & Hoffenberg, 1975). While coordination and efficiency may require regulation of activities central to the work flow, excessive standardization can be avoided. Individuality and self expression in peripheral activities could be encouraged and a climate emphasizing self control rather than formal external constraints can be created. Small work groups, personalization of the work space, personal responsibility for tools and equipment, names rather than categorical titles, (e.g., soldier, comrade), heterogeneous appearance and identifiable output promote a

sense of uniqueness and personal identity (Ziller, 1964) and could be encouraged in most organizations.

Individualism in our national heritage is associated with strength and achievement. Individualism in formal organizations may produce similar results. Procedures that acknowledge and support individuality and rituals, symbols and stories recognizing individual contributions create a climate consistent with individual initiative, personal responsibility, innovation and creativity, characteristics not often associated with today's depersonalized worker.

FOOTNOTES

¹These results may surprise those familiar with literatures describing conformity, persuasion and the similarity-attraction relationship. Literature reviews (Keisler & Keisler, 1969; Tedeschi & Lindskold, 1976; Sherif & Sherif, 1956) suggest that informational and normative influences are powerful determinants of conformity and persuasion; when another's point of view seems more valid than one's own, when faced with ambiguity or social pressure from a valued group, conformity is expected. Otherwise, threats to one's uniqueness are associated with negative affect and attempts to reestablish individuality (Fromkin, 1968, 1972).

In contrast to Snyder and Endleman's (1979) study of uniqueness deprivation, many studies show a positive relationship between similarity and attraction (Byrne, 1969; 1971). The important distinction between the two lines of research is the number of similar others and the number of similar attributes described. Byrne's studies varied the degree of similarity to one other person on a small number of attributes. The feedback used in Fromkin's paradigm varied similarity to 10,000 others on many. As Byrne (1971) explains, finding a few people similar to oneself would be reinforcing by confirming the acceptability of one's own attributes. However, similarity to many others on many attributes produces perceptions of non-uniqueness (Fromkin, 1972). When an individual experiences himself as extremely similar to many others in the social environment, dissimilar others may be preferred as a means of reaffirming one's uniqueness.

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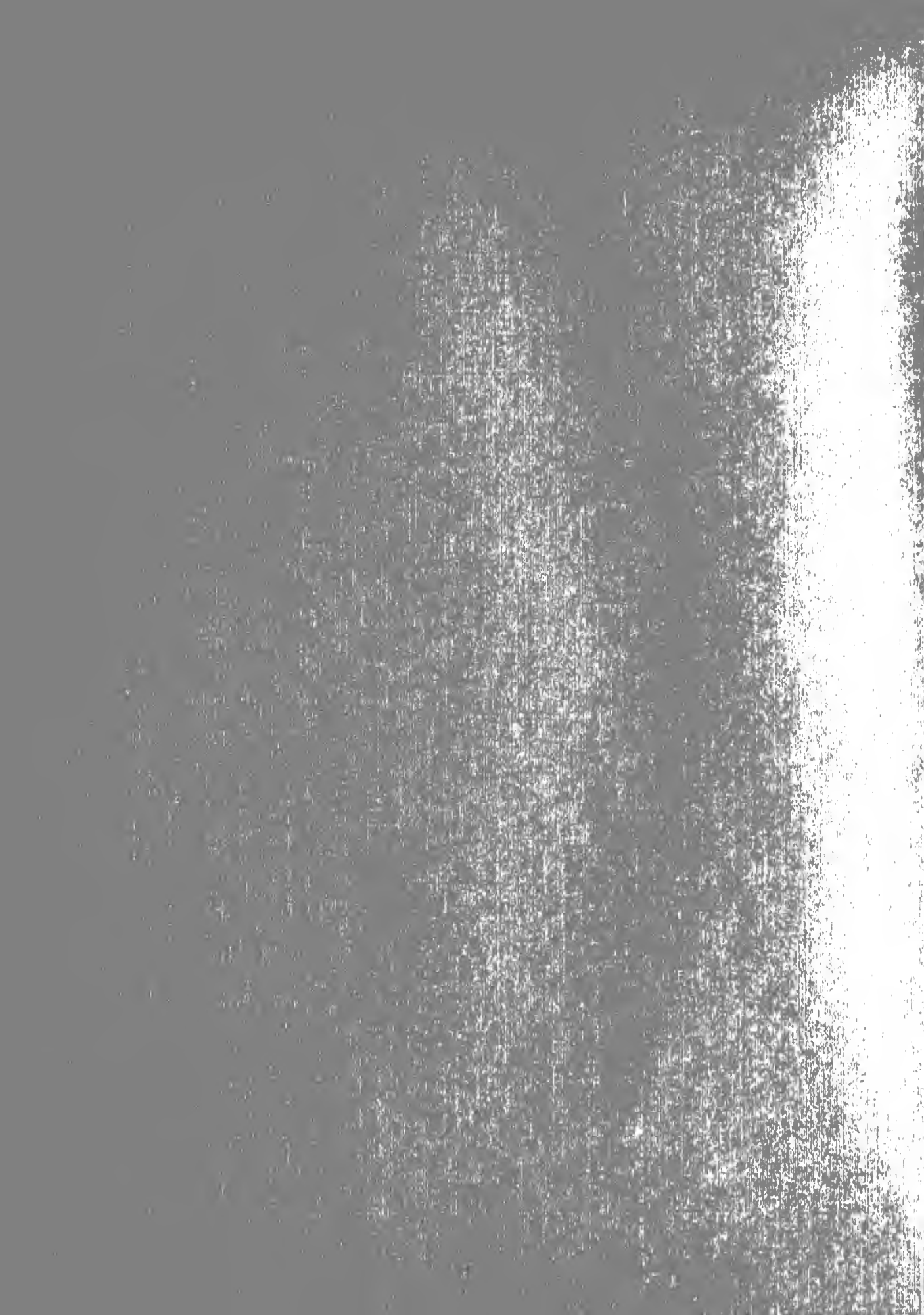
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