

## COMPARING VOLUNTEERS AND EMPLOYEES IN A TEST OF ETZIONI'S COMPLIANCE TYPOLOGY

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Etzioni's (1961) typology of organizations is probably the most prominent social science effort to integrate voluntary associations into a general theory of organizations, and so this work has had particular importance for scholars of voluntary associations. Etzioni (1961) categorizes organizations by the types of compliance systems they use. Coercive organizations are those that use force or coercion to control members. Examples of coercive organizations include prisons and armies. Utilitarian organizations use remuneration as a basis for control of members. In these organizations, individuals subject themselves to certain types of influence in exchange for the rewards derived from the organization. Examples are business and government organizations. Finally, normative organizations use moral control to influence the behaviors of members. Examples of these organizations are political parties, religious groups, and voluntary associations.

Given its theoretical prominence, it is surprising to find relatively little empirical examination of Etzioni's (1961) typology. Hall, Haas and Johnson (1967) used 75 organizations to test Etzioni's (1961) typology. First, they found that many of their sample organizations such as schools, could not be unambiguously classified using the typology. More important, the critical function of the typology is to provide some ordering of organizational phenomena, yet Hall et al. (1967) found that the typology could not clearly differentiate organizations in terms of such characteristics as formalization or change. However, Etzioni (1975), in a review of 60 studies using his typology, concluded that normative organizations have members who are more morally committed than are members of utilitarian and coercive organizations.

Yet, Etzioni's (1961) typology purports to describe more than member commitment. Etzioni (1961) argues that compliance type is associated with such variables as: relative subordination, types of activities controlled

by leaders, communication patterns, and recruitment practices. The present study addresses the relative subordination of members of normative and utilitarian organizations.

Etzioni (1961) asserts that "low-level" members of normative organizations experience less "subordination" than their counterparts in utilitarian organizations, who are, in turn, less subordinated than coercive-organization members. Etzioni's (1961) term "subordination" seems to imply a constellation of features--including formal authority, personal influence, and even the manner in which authority is exercised. Yet to test this prediction we need an operational definition of subordination. The best choice seems to be overall "personal influence," since this seems to be the most comprehensive component.

Therefore, we would expect normative organization members to have relatively more organizational influence than rank-and-file employees of a utilitarian organization, who would have more influence than army privates. Similarly, based on his description, one might assume that those holding positions of authority in these organizations should have relatively less influence--generals are more influential than managers, who are more influential than voluntary association presidents.

The present study is a component of a larger examination of the similarities and differences between voluntary and employing organizations (Pearce, 1978). Since these organizations are relatively "pure" operationalizations of normative and utilitarian organizations we avoid the problems identified by Hall et al. (1967). Seven voluntary organizations were matched with seven employing organizations working on the same, or similar primary tasks. By controlling technology a relatively unambiguous test of the effect of compliance-system on relative organizational influence is possible. Two hypotheses are tested:

- H1: Those holding positions of formal authority in utilitarian organizations are more influential than their counterparts in normative organizations.
- H2: Those holding no formal positions of authority in normative organizations are more influential than their counterparts in utilitarian organizations.

#### METHOD

##### SAMPLE

The sample includes 101 respondents from 14 service organizations. The organizations are two day care centers, two newspapers, two poverty relief agencies, two symphonic orchestras, two family planning clinics, two gift shops, and two fire departments. Summary statistics for these organizations appear in Table 1. The sample of organizations is restricted to those providing services to others because this is the sector in which normative and utilitarian organizations complete similar tasks. There are no significant differences between these types in organizational age, number of hierarchical levels, yearly turnover, members' ages, or members' sex. However, over all

Table 1  
Descriptive Characteristics of Sampled Organizations

Organizations	Number of Members	Number of Clients	Percentage 1977 Turnover	Average Age of Members	Number of Questionnaires and Interviews	Leader Influence	Member Influence
Voluntary Day Care	46	25 children	13	27.59	9	4.22	3.72
Employing Day Care	20	65 children	10	28.16	6	4.00	3.08
Voluntary Newspaper	30	4,000 circulation	67	25.19	3	4.17	2.17
Employing Newspaper	13	50,000 circulation	85	25.76	8	4.31	2.13
Voluntary Poverty Relief	180	13,245 assists	14	44.12	9	4.17	2.56
Employing Poverty Relief	53	2,300 current caseload	25	44.69	10	2.85	2.10
Voluntary Orchestra	90	1,000 per concert	8	38.13	10	4.85	2.10
Employing Orchestra	91	3,000 per concert	2	38.70	6	4.00	3.42
Voluntary Family Planning	14	200 current caseload	0	34.25	7	3.58	2.50
Employing Family Planning	21	4,000 current caseload	10	34.82	10	3.56	2.50
Voluntary Gift Shop	138	288 sq. ft. floor space	4	44.05	7	3.71	2.93
Employing Gift Shop	8	864 sq. ft. floor space	50	44.62	2	4.00	3.00
Voluntary Fire Department	160	15,000 town pop.	3	39.39	5	3.80	2.60
Employing Fire Department	47	26,000 town pop.	0	39.96	9	2.94	2.13

seven tasks, the utilitarian organizations serve more clients ( $p < .001$ ) and have fewer members ( $p < .05$ ) than the normative organizations.

#### INSTRUMENTS

Organizational influence is most commonly defined as "any behavior on the part of one individual which alters the behavior, attitudes, feelings, and so on, of another (Miner, 1975: 298)." Influence is by definition an individual judgment based on the weighing of a complex array of observed and reported behaviors. As such there are no "objective" indicators of influence. The fact that a general is observed "suggesting" while the corporal gives "commands" does not indicate that the corporal has more personal influence. Therefore, relative influence is measured here as the arithmetic mean of the individual judgments of organizational members.

In this study influence is measured by both interview and questionnaire items. Additional indicators of convergence are provided by archival and observational material. First, the structured questionnaire and interview reports, and then the archival and unstructured reports are described.

#### STRUCTURED DATA

Completed interviews and questionnaires were obtained from 101 respondents. Two variables from these instruments are used in the present tests--leader<sup>1</sup> organizational influence, and member organizational influence. The interview items are "Overall, which of these groups--[leaders], [members], or [clients]--has the most say in the way things are done here?" scored on a five-point scale for leader, member, and client influence. The questionnaire items were taken from the scale used by Smith and Tannenbaum (1963):

In general, how much say or influence do you feel each of the following groups has in what goes on in this office?

Little or No Influence	Some Influence	Quite a Bit of Influence	Great Deal of Influence	Very Great Deal of Influence
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Supervisors: \_\_\_\_\_

Rank-and-file: \_\_\_\_\_

For each of the respondents, therefore, there are five-point interview and five-point questionnaire reports of leader and member organizational influence.

As is indicated in the multitrait-multimethod matrix in Table 2 there is substantial convergence between reports obtained by both interview and questionnaire instruments. Trait convergence is considerably stronger than method variance, as defined by Campbell and Fiske (1956). Therefore, the items from the interview and questionnaire are averaged to construct a leader influence scale and a member influence scale. The influence scales are analyzed using procedures appropriate for internal-scale data (one-tailed t-tests of the significance of the differences between the means). Although the individual items composing the scale might be considered ordinal, rather

than interval, Nunnally (1967) has provided the theoretical rationale for treating summated scales as interval scales. Summary statistics for these scales appear in Table 2.

Table 2  
Multitrait-Multimethod Matrix  
and Summary Statistics for Scales

Questionnaire Method	Questionnaire Method		Interview Method		
	Leader Influence	Member Influence	Leader Influence	Member Influence	
Leader Influence	a				
Member Influence	.26	a			
Interview Method					
Leader Influence	.56	.05	(.50)		
Member Influence	.25	.58	.20	(.94)	
Scale	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coefficient Alpha	n
Leader Influence	1.50-5.00	3.84	.86	.72	101
Member Influence	1.00-4.50	2.61	.79	.73	101
$r_{LM} = .22, p = .01$					

<sup>a</sup>Single-item scale.

#### ARCHIVAL AND UNSTRUCTURED DATA

In addition to the structured instruments, the researcher collected a variety of archival and observational data from the fourteen organizations. Archival data included copies of all available written documents--constitutions, labor contracts, training materials, brochures for clients, annual reports, etc. Further, all contacts with any member of each sampled organization were recorded in field notes. Archival data and observational entries in the field notes will be provided to clarify interpretations of the structured data.

#### PROCEDURE

The data collection procedure followed the same pattern in each organization. Both the utilitarian and normative organizations that were matched were studied simultaneously to insure that the passage of time did not confound comparisons of their respective norms and practices. However, since only one researcher collected the data, matched pairs were studied serially, in the order listed in Table 1. Archival data were collected at entry, next all interviews were completed in both organizations, and then questionnaires were

distributed. Observational data were collected throughout the length of the contract. The researcher-organization relationship was completed with the provision of a feedback session for all organizational members. A more detailed description of this sample, instruments, and data collection procedure can be found in Pearce (1978).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### HYPOTHESIS ONE

Based on the scale of leader influence the first hypothesis is not supported ( $\bar{X}_U = 3.56$  vs  $\bar{X}_N = 4.10$ ,  $t = 3.31$ ,  $p < .001$  one-tail,  $\epsilon^2 = .10$ ). In fact, reported leader influence in normative organizations is significantly higher than the influence of leaders in utilitarian organizations ( $p < .001$ , two-tailed). This result is contrary to expectations, and seems illogical. Voluntary leaders are reported to have more influence than employee supervisors. Why are members' reports contrary to the hypothesis drawn from Etzioni's (1961) theory, and laymen's understanding of these organizational types?

Observational data indicate that normative leaders gain considerable influence through their willingness to assume time-consuming responsibilities. Pearce (1980) provides evidence that most members of voluntary service associations avoid positions of leadership because of their great cost (for example, time-consuming completion of projects others have abandoned) and low rewards (few status symbols, and little of the prestige and money associated with such positions in utilitarian organizations). This is indicated by the following excerpts from the interviews:

"[I have] just a vote. Really I'm happy with what I have. I've no time for responsibility (teacher's assistant, voluntary day care center)."

"[I have] quite a bit [of influence] if I want to use it. My judgment is respected by most in the center . . . maybe I have too much; I would like to see other people more involved (treasurer, voluntary day care center)."

In addition, these normative-organization leaders are freer from outside pressures than are their utilitarian counterparts. Governmental organizations must respond to constituencies, and the greater funding requirements of non-profit organizations with salaried employees cause their leaders to respond to the preferences of foundations and fund-raising groups like the United Way. In contrast the following informal interviews with two voluntary association leaders indicates the freedom they felt:

"They referred to the hassle they had with the State Office in reopening their clinic. Since there was a hospital-run clinic in the area they had to prove there was a need in order to get state funds. [The chapter chairwoman] laughed as she reported that the state people had said:

'Oh, you people! You know if you were paid we'd come down a lot harder on you.!'

'Is that really true?' I asked.

'Oh yes, they require us to do things but we say we just don't have the time.'

[The volunteer chairwoman] then told me about an incident in which the State Office Head of Services and suggestions. . .

'She wanted us to be more professional. I took her idea about the smocks to my volunteers and they weren't interested. So I just told the State Office we didn't want to wear smocks.'

(Field notes 6/21/77, informal interview with the chapter and volunteer chairwomen, voluntary family planning clinic)."

In contrast, utilitarian leaders were restricted by civil service regulations in three of these seven organizations, by labor contracts in four of the seven, and by citizen advisory boards in five. None of the normative organizations had civil servants or unions, and only two had advisory boards.

In conclusion, the hypothesis drawn from Etzioni's (1961) work, that utilitarian leaders would have more influence than their normative counterparts is not supported; leaders of normative organizations are reported to be significantly more influential. This is clarified by noting that normative leaders assume the responsibility that others do not want, and they have greater autonomy from outside pressures. In any case, it appears as if Etzioni's (1961) compliance-based classification of organizations is not as useful in understanding internal influence processes as had been hoped.

#### HYPOTHESIS TWO

The second hypothesis finds no support in respondents' reports of member influence ( $\bar{X}_U = 2.50$  vs  $\bar{X}_N = 2.70$ ,  $t = 1.64$ , n.s.). Although members of normative organizations are reported to have greater influence than members of utilitarian organizations this difference is not statistically significant. However, those holding no formal positions of authority in normative organizations do have the responsibility for an important decision not allowed their utilitarian counterparts--the election of leaders. Leaders are elected by members in five of the seven normative organizations but in only one of the utilitarian organizations (the employing orchestra is a musicians' cooperative). If the members of normative organizations have greater formal decision-making authority than do members of utilitarian organizations, why is their organizational influence no greater?

The greater formal authority of non-office-holding volunteers does not translate directly into greater organizational influence primarily because volunteers do not seek to exercise their formal authority. As noted above, Pearce (1980) argues that volunteers avoid positions of leadership because these positions offer few rewards to justify the time and attention they

demand. In practice, formal elections are rarely held. In the voluntary poverty relief agency and family planning clinic there have never been enough interested members to fill vacant positions, let alone provide contested elections. In the voluntary day care center, gift shop, and fire department formal elections are held but contested elections are rare--since norms have developed against challenging those who have offered to assume the position. In all seven of the sampled normative organizations most members echoed the above respondent who preferred having others assume the responsibility and influence of leadership positions. In the utilitarian organizations organizational influence corresponds more closely to formal authority. Pearce (1980) argues that leadership position in employing organizations--

"Bring prerequisites in addition to the ability to influence policy. Employing leadership jobs are usually characterized by more autonomy, less tedious work, more clerical assistance, and more status symbols like a private office."

Therefore, the second hypothesis, that members of normative organizations would be more influential than their utilitarian organization counterparts, has not been supported. Although, there is some evidence that normative members have more formal authority, they apparently are less willing to translate it into actual organizational influence than their equally influential utilitarian counterparts. There appears to be little benefit in normative organizations to the exercise of influence beyond the intrinsic pleasures of affecting the direction of one's organization.

#### CONCLUSION

This test of Etzioni's (1961) typology of organizations provides little indication that his approach to categorizing organizations leads to useful generalizations about their internal influence processes. When seven normative organizations were matched on primary task with seven utilitarian organizations the expected relative influence of those holding positions of formal authority and those not holding such positions was not supported. Perhaps Etzioni (1961) implicitly confounded task and compliance structure. Coercive, utilitarian, and normative organizations do, for the most part, complete very different tasks, and tasks have powerful effects on internal processes.<sup>2</sup> In this sample compliance structure was not nearly as useful a predictor of relative organizational influence as the rewards derived from exercising influence and freedom from dependence on others, and, of course, task. Perhaps Etzioni (1961) implicitly confounded task with compliance system. However, when task is controlled, as in this study, it appears that categorizations of organizations by their compliance systems do not translate into the expected differences in interpersonal influence.

This study is, of course, only a limited attempt to test the relative subordination in two of Etzioni's (1961) three organizational types. Yet, particularly when combined with Hall's et al. (1967) findings, it provides data that raise strong reservations about the usefulness of Etzioni's (1961) compliance systems concept. This is particularly important to researchers studying voluntary associations, since we have fewer comprehensive theories of association structure and design than have those interested in utilitarian organizations.



NOTES

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1. The generic term "leader" is used to represent the supervisors of utilitarian organizations and the office-holders (presidents, coordinators) of normative organizations.
2. In this sample task effects accounted for 20% of the variance in leader influence and 24% of the variance in member influence, compared to 10% and 1% respectively for compliance structure. Mean leader and member influence scores for all fourteen organizations are presented in Table 1.

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