ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION:
A SOCIAL LEARNING INTERPRETATION

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Abstract
Although there are number of existing approaches to socialization they lack clear theoretical basis for understanding & application. This paper proposes social learning theoretical framework. Particular attention given to relevancy that modeling & self-control can have for org. socialization. Specific examples of how these concepts & techniques can help facilitate successful socialization of new & existing employees are included throughout.
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ABSTRACT

Organizational socialization, the process by which an employee learns the appropriate norms and required behaviors to participate and become part of the organization, has arrived as an extremely important dimension to the study of organizational behavior. Although there are a number of existing approaches to socialization, they lack a clear theoretical basis for understanding and application. This paper proposes a social learning theoretical framework. Particular attention is given to the relevancy that modeling and self-control can have for organizational socialization. Specific examples of how these concepts and techniques can help facilitate the successful socialization of new and existing employees are included throughout.
ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION: A SOCIAL LEARNING INTERPRETATION

Organizational socialization has arrived as an extremely important dimension to the understanding and prediction of organizational behavior. As Schein (1968) notes, organizational socialization "...is a process that can make or break a career, and which can make or break organizational systems of manpower planning" (p. 2). Socialization is also recognized to be an important ingredient in superior-subordinate relationships (Gabarro, 1979). Although the process of organizational socialization is used a number of different ways by social scientists, its application to organizational behavior is generally recognized to be a process by which an employee learns the appropriate norms and required behaviors necessary to participate as a member of the organization (Van Maanen, 1976). In simpler terms, it has, also, been referred to as "learning the ropes" (Schein, 1968, p. 2).

A basic prerequisite in understanding the socialization process is to give attention to the social environment. Katz (1980), for example, argues that employee behavior cannot be viewed in total isolation. He states that the social context provides employees with information and cues with which they use for defining and interpreting their work experiences (p. 82). Accordingly, any comprehensive theory of organizational socialization would seem to have to consider the social environment. Social learning theory (SLT) provides a framework that incorporates not only the social environment, but also considers the interactive effects of individual cognitive processes and the behavior itself (Bandura, 1977). This paper proposes that such a social learning approach can provide the most viable framework for the understanding and application of the organizational socialization process.
RECOGNIZED APPROACHES TO SOCIALIZATION

There are a number of different ways that organizational socialization has been presented and analyzed. One of the more popular approaches has been to examine organizational newcomers' experiences through stage models of socialization (for example see: Feldman, 1976a, 1976b; Buchanan, 1974; Porter, Lawler, and Hackman, 1975; Schein, 1978). Wanous (1980) has recently provided an integration of these various models into an overall process that includes four stages: (1) confronting and accepting the reality of the organization, (2) achieving role clarity, (3) finding a place for oneself in the organizational context, and (4) detecting "signposts" of socialization success. Although such stage models are obviously a convenient means to describe the various socialization experiences of employees, they lack a clear theoretical basis for understanding and application.

To date, those who have attempted to formulate theoretical frameworks of socialization are primarily cognitive theories. They speak of "cognitive maps" and assume a "rational" view of organizational behavior (Weick, 1979; Van Maanen, 1978). In addition, there is a tendency to speak of prearrival "expectancies" and prior "attitude" formation for organizational members. Use of such constructs indicates an inherent assumption that expectancies and attitudes have general predictive power in determining new employees' behaviors. To counter such underlying assumptions, it should be pointed out that unless aspects of the social situation are included, there is little or no evidence that "expectancies" and "attitudes" have any general predictive validity. In addition, the entire notion of "expectancies" assumes a constant reflective process by individuals. Although an organizational newcomer may compare and contrast certain encounters with previous experiences, the new employees' cognitive faculties are likely to be occupied with monitoring their behavior in the present situation. For example, Schein (1978)
argues that the newcomer is confronted with numerous tasks; learning the actual job, dealing with supervisors and the reward system, adjusting to the reality of the organization, and developing an identity and place in the organization (p. 98). Finally, the idea of "cognitive maps" assumes people continually piece cognitive information together to formulate a type of jigsaw puzzle to make sense of their surroundings and understand what they do. Such a proactive, reflective, rational assumption can be questioned.

Besides the cognitive theoretical approaches to socialization, a few others have emphasized the importance of direct reinforcement on influencing and shaping the newcomers' behaviors. For instance, Porter, Lawler, and Hackman (1975) discuss the period of encounter which "involves a pattern of day to day experiences in which the individual is subjected to the reinforcement policies and practices of the organization and its members" (p. 164).

In addition, Jabionsky and DeVries (1972) recognize direct reinforcement in presenting operant approaches to the understanding of adaptive behaviors. When applied to organizational behavior, an operant approach emphasizes the importance of environmental contingencies (Luthans and Kreitner, 1975). Although such an operant approach may help explain and predict certain adaptive behaviors through direct learning (Davis and Luthans, 1980b), it is an incomplete theoretical framework for explaining complex socialization processes. What is needed is a more comprehensive framework that takes into consideration the interactive effects of the behavior itself, the individual's cognitions, and the social environmental context. Based on considerable experimental and clinical evidence (Bandura, 1977), social learning theory seems to best be able to meet these requirements and provide a meaningful framework for the understanding, analysis and application of organizational socialization. A brief review of SLT and its dimensions applicable to socialization are presented in the balance of the paper.
A SOCIAL LEARNING APPROACH

Understanding the principles of social learning theory may be facilitated by differentiating it from operant theory. Although both the operant and social learning approaches give considerable attention to environmental antecedents and consequences, they differ as to the role of cognitive processes and the recognition of modeling and self control processes (Davis and Luthans, 1980a). The operant model is certainly parsimonious and has pragmatic advantages for predicting and controlling employees' behaviors (Davis and Luthans, 1979; Luthans, 1980). However, SLT expands the operant view by going beyond direct learning via discrete reinforcement contingencies and is thus more applicable to complex socialization processes.

Direct learning through discrete response-reinforcement connections (generally termed operant learning) does not recognize cognitive processes as playing an instrumental role in acquiring and maintaining behavior. The parsimonious direct form of learning results from the positive and negative effects that behaviors produce. It should be acknowledged that such direct learning can explain some socialization behaviors because as Porter, Lawler, and Hackman (1975, p. 164) argue, the organization has three reinforcement tactics available to shape the newcomer’s experiences: (1) reinforcement and confirmation (positive approval), (2) nonreinforcements (ignoring or lack of positive approval), and (3) negative reinforcement (punishing reaction). But seemingly of more relevance to the complex socialization process would be the SLT dimensions of modeling and self control.

A Modeling Explanation of Socialization

Modeling or vicarious learning recognizes the socializing influences that others have on an individual's behavior. This form of learning plays a central role in social learning theory (Bandura, 1969, 1977; Miller and Dollard, 1941) and is usually the dimension most closely associated with SLT.
According to Bandura and other social learning theorists, stimulus contiguity is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the acquisition and performance of models' patterns of behavior. SLT also recognizes the complex interactions of four modeling subprocesses: attentional, retention, motor reproduction, and incentive or reinforcement processes (Bandura, 1977).

Attentional processes refer to an observer's attraction to a particular model and what the observer focuses on regarding the modeled behavior. Retention processes involve a symbolic representation of the model's behavior through imagery and/or verbal coding. Motor reproduction processes determine whether an observer is capable of reproducing the model's behavior by the use of symbolic representations. However, if the individual is physically incapable of appropriately behaving or performing, modeling will fail even if the individual has the appropriate symbolic guides for executing the action. Finally, incentive or reinforcement processes refer to an observer's perceptions of positive and negative outcomes. Vicarious learning or modeling can be facilitated by direct reinforcement to the observer or through vicarious reinforcement to the model. If the observer's behavior or the model's behavior is not followed by reinforcement, observers will attend to other cues for information. These other sources of information include such things as the observers' perceptions of the model's status power or competence (Goldstein and Sorcher, 1974; Rosenbaum, 1978). Such social information processing has important implications for the organization socialization process.

Characteristics of the model and the observer. Research by Weiss (1977) indicates that subordinates who perceive their superiors as being competent and successful tend to show behavioral similarity with them, i.e., they model that behavior. The model's attributes, therefore, lead the observer to believe that
the model's behavior had been rewarded in the past or is an appropriate behavior for the particular situation. However, the attributes of models, even prestigious ones, will not necessarily always lead to similar behaviors in observers.

Failure to model the behavior may be the result of a number of reasons. For example, an employee may not observe the appropriate or relevant behaviors (i.e. failure in attentional processes), may not retain what was observed (i.e. failure in retention processes), or be physically incapable of performing (i.e. failure in motor reproduction processes). Because of these possibilities, providing a model will not automatically create similar behaviors in the observer. In addition, personal characteristics or attributes of the observer might also influence the vicarious learning process. With the exception of Weiss (1977, 1978), who found subordinate self-esteem to be a moderating factor in modeling supervisor behavior, empirical work has yet to be done in this area. But it is important to recognize that vicarious learning can occur through covert as well as overt processes. For example, the effects of modeling can occur symbolically via one's imagination. In other words, vicarious learning does not necessarily depend upon direct observation nor discrete environmental antecedent or consequent contingencies.

**Implications of modeling for the organizational socialization process.**

Vicarious learning or modeling can be a viable means for facilitating organizational socialization. Modeling principles have already been suggested as learning devices for managers (Luthans and Kreitner, 1974; Luthans and Davis, 1980a; Manz and Sims, 1981; Davis and Luthans, in press). For example, Manz and Sims (1981) separate vicarious learning in organizations into two types: modeling on a daily basis and modeling in training and development. But it is important to recognize that vicarious learning can occur through covert as well as overt processes. For example, the effects of modeling can occur symbolically via one's imagination. In other words, vicarious learning does not necessarily depend upon direct observation nor discrete environmental antecedent or consequent contingencies.
Modeling on a day-to-day basis has generally been ignored as a major source of learning, but it could be argued that a substantial amount of behavioral change is accomplished through daily modeling. However, it should be recognized that modeling can also produce undesirable work behaviors. For example, it has been pointed out that modeling can produce dysfunctional as well as functional organizational behavior (Luthans and Kreitner, 1975). Due to the impact that day-to-day modeling can have on the socialization process, efforts should be made to place newcomers in a social environment containing appropriate role models.

Modeling-based training programs have suggested many advantages over traditional training approaches. For example, traditional approaches have encouraged passive listening, while modeling-based programs emphasize learning through active involvement (Goldstein and Sorcher, 1974). In those cases where it is not possible to place newcomers in appropriate day-to-day socializing environments, formal modeling training programs become especially important. Due to the possibility of modeling producing undesirable behaviors, organizations should be aware of providing appropriate role models for newcomers. This can be accomplished through formalized training programs, such as, the widely recognized program developed by Goldstein and Sorcher (1974). This training program consists of four basic steps that are grounded in SLT.

The first step in the Goldstein and Sorcher approach is the presentation of a model exhibiting the desirable organizational behaviors. This step corresponds to Bandura's attentional process. The second step, behavioral rehearsal, corresponds to Bandura's retention process. The third step, transferring what was learned to the actual job situations, corresponds to the motor reproduction process. Finally, the last step of Goldstein and Sorcher's modeling training program consists of feedback and reinforcement for desired behavior. This last step corresponds to Bandura's incentive process. For a more complete discussion of the relationships between Bandura's modeling
processes and Goldstein and Sorcher's modeling-based training programs for organizational applications see Manz and Sims (1981).

A Self-Control Explanation of Socialization

Besides the implications that modeling has for the organizational socialization process, the other major dimension of SLT coming from self-control processes should also be examined. Essentially, self-control is the person's ability and willingness to think through the antecedents and the consequences of various actions. There are three basic component processes in such self-regulatory behavior: the actual performance, the judgmental process, and the self-response (Bandura, 1977).

Performance or behavior may vary along a number of dimensions (e.g., quantity, quality, creativity, etc.). Behavior generates self-evaluation through a cognitively based judgmental process. Behaviors that meet or exceed an individual's internal standard will be judged positively, while behaviors that fall short of one's standard will be judged negatively. Since there are no absolute measures for most behaviors, the question becomes how does an individual evaluate his or her performance? For behaviors gauged by social criteria, three sources of information can be drawn upon to judge a given performance: absolute performance levels, one's own personal standards, and a social referent (Bandura, 1977). If one uses a referent other than for evaluative purposes, performance judgments will vary substantially depending on the level of ability of those chosen for comparisons. Bandura (1977) argues that self-responses are established by modeling or how others have reacted to previous behaviors (p. 133). He goes on to state that although some activities are maintained by anticipated consequences, most behavior is under self-reinforcement control. This is a process in which individuals set standards for performance and respond to their own behavior in self-rewarding or self-punishing ways.
Self-control mechanisms are not necessarily used for acquiring new behaviors, but instead are more concerned with how behavior is regulated. Self-regulation, of course, can have some important implications for organizational socialization. It would be unrealistic for managers to totally depend upon direct reinforcement or attempt to provide appropriate models throughout an employee's socialization process. However, it is important to note the impact that direct reinforcement and modeling can have on self-regulating behavior. Bandura (1977) argues that observing others successfully regulates one's own behavior and increases the likelihood of the observers adhering to self-prescribed contingencies (p. 149). Therefore, modeling can serve as a supportive function in behavioral self-regulation.

It has been argued before that managers must learn to manage themselves effectively before they can expect to manage subordinates, groups or the entire organization effectively (Luthans and Davis, 1979). As stated before, behavioral self-management depends on one's ability and willingness to manage the antecedent stimuli and behavioral consequences. Thus, there are two major strategies for implementing behavioral self management: stimulus and consequence management. Stimulus management involves gradual removal or selective exposure to the stimuli that is believed to evoke the undesirable behaviors and structuring the antecedent stimuli that will lead to the cuing of the desirable behavior. Consequence management involves rearranging the existing reinforcers (or punishers) or implementing new ones in order to change/modify the person's behaviors in the desired direction. Both the antecedent stimuli and the reinforcing or punishing consequences can be overt or covert.

The role of impression management. From a socialization perspective, self-regulating behaviors begin to formulate when the employee first enters the organization. When an employee first appears before others, he or she has many motives for trying to control the impressions others in the social
environment receive. For example, Goffman (1959; 1967) argues that individuals strive to interact with others in ways that maintain both their own "face" and that of other interactants. "Impression Management" becomes important because people and entire organizations are judged every day based on very limited information. Impression management is characterized by Klein and Ritti (1980) in terms of: transfer of information and perception, and how we interpret inputing messages. The actual management of impressions deals with using perceptual principles to convey appropriate information about ourselves to others. Klein and Ritti go on to argue that different organizational roles require different techniques to create favorable impressions (p. 162). They identify four key roles in the relationship between positions (not the positions themselves) within the organization: supervisors, subordinates, specialists, and lower participants. The appropriate superior impression is perceived as being sincere, competent, and poised. The subordinate's impression is to appear loyal to the organization and to the superior and to show proper deference to the superior. The specialist conveys the impressions of being an expert, a disinterested member, and incorruptible. Finally, the impression of the lower participant is to appear busy, compliant, and limited in competence beyond his or her specific task. An important point to emphasize is that the impression one portrays must be appropriate to the prescribed role within the organization.

With regard to the socialization process, management of impressions can readily be seen when a new employee enters the organization. The newcomer is likely to present his/herself in a favorable light and, at the same time, display the appropriate deference and demeanor to other organizational members. First of all, it is immediately reinforcing for newcomers to have others view them in a favorable light. In addition, by thinking through the consequences of various behaviors, the appropriate impression can be created to facilitate the reinforcing consequences of "acceptance" as an organizational member.
Obviously, knowing one's own organizational role becomes important in impression management. Conveying a favorable impression can be facilitated by the organization by making sure the newcomer has role clarity through the orientation process. If the orientation can unambiguously identify and define a new employee's role, the newcomer will be better able to create a favorable impression and, hence, facilitate the socialization process.

Application of self-control techniques to facilitate socialization.

It has been argued that training and development programs can be developed that can convert behavior acquired through direct learning or modeling to self-controlled responses that are managed by the individual (Davis and Luthans, in press). By drawing from SLT principles, the following guidelines for this intervention are proposed: (1) identify the behavior to be changed in the setting, (2) manage the cuing stimuli that sets the stage for an employee's response, (3) manage the cognitive processes that influence behavior, and (4) manage the consequences that tend to reinforce the behavior. Implementing such a program would seem to facilitate the organizational socialization process.

CONCLUSION

Numerous researchers have emphasized the changes that individuals experience as a result of passing through jobs, careers, or life cycles (Bray, Cambell, and Grant, 1974; Van Maanen and Schein, 1977; and Levinson, 1978). When an individual enters an organization there are a number of role changes. These changes in roles have been referred to as organizational "entry transitions" (Louis, 1980). Since there is a general concern that organizations do not have entry practices that effectively ease the transition for newcomers, a theoretically sound and pragmatically viable theory of organizational socialization seems needed.
This paper suggests the use of a social learning framework to gain a better understanding of the organizational socialization process. In addition, specific SLT dimensions such as modeling and self control seem to have considerable potential for facilitating the successful socialization of new and existing employees in today's complex organizations.
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