Organizational Socialization: Making Sense of the Past and Present as a Prologue for the Future

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There has been a remarkable resurgence of research in organizational socialization in the past 5 years. In fact, there have been more published studies in this period than in any previous period. The diversity of topics and the use of longitudinal designs has provided a substantial increase in our understanding of the socialization process. In this review of organizational socialization, we attempt to make sense of the last 5 years of research as a prologue for the future. First, we review several theoretical perspectives that have driven most of the research and present a multi-level process model of organizational socialization that integrates current theory and research. Second, we review the research in six major areas: socialization tactics; socialization training; proactive socialization; socialization learning and content; group socialization; and moderators, mediators, and individual differences. Third, we evaluate the methodology and measurement used in socialization research. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of research needs for the next 5 years of organizational socialization research.   © 1997 Academic Press

The past 5 years has seen a resurgence of interest in organizational socialization that has resulted in more published studies than in any previous 5 year period. In fact, for the first time a journal devoted an entire issue to organizational socialization (*International Journal of Selection and Assessment,* January, 1997). This is all the more remarkable given that it was only a decade ago that Fisher (1986) stated that there are ''probably fewer than

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15 good, empirical, longitudinal studies of socialization in organizations'' (p.102), and ''there is a pressing need to better understand organizational socialization'' (p.138). Further, in their review of organizational entry research, Wanous and Colella (1989) noted that in comparison to the other topics they reviewed (i.e., realistic job previews, recruiting source effectiveness, and job choice), organizational socialization had the least amount of research and ''the greatest disparity between theory and data, being theoretically sophisticated yet empirically undeveloped'' (pp.112–113).

The socialization literature has been criticized for the past 20 years for being mostly descriptive; lacking empirical testing; methodologically weak and inadequate; and theoretically and conceptually fragmented to the point that it is poorly understood (Feldman, 1976; Fisher, 1986; Wanous & Colella, 1989). Many of these criticisms have been addressed with methodologically sound and conceptually rich studies in the past 5 years. In this paper, we review the past 5 years of organizational socialization research and point out connections between the past and the present as a prologue for the future. First, we discuss several theoretical perspectives that have informed much of the recent socialization research and present a multi-level and integrated process model of organizational socialization. Second, we review the past 5 years of research in six major areas: socialization tactics; socialization training; proactive socialization; socialization learning and content; group socialization; and moderators, mediators, and individual differences. Third, we evaluate the past 5 years of research with respect to the advances and needed improvements in methodology and measurement. Finally, we present directions for the next 5 years of organizational socialization research.

SOCIALIZATION THEORY, MODELS, AND FRAMEWORKS

The literature on organizational socialization has often been described as fragmented and poorly understood (Fisher, 1986). It has been approached from a variety of perspectives and researched in a piecemeal fashion (Fisher, 1986; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Wanous & Colella, 1989). Although there has been a great deal of research in the past several years, not much theory development or integration of the various perspectives has occurred. As a result, there does not exist a ''theory'' of organizational socialization, and the so-called ''stage models'' (Wanous, 1992) remain the prevailing framework for understanding the socialization process.

Four theoretical perspectives have driven most of the research in the past 5 years. In this section, we briefly summarize these perspectives: (1) Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) model of socialization tactics; (2) uncertainty reduction theory; (3) social cognitive theory; and (4) cognitive and sense making theory. We then attempt to integrate these theories by presenting a multi-level process model of organizational socialization that links the major themes, approaches, and perspectives.

Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) Model of Socialization Tactics

Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) typology of socialization tactics is probably the closest thing in the literature to a testable theory of organizational socialization in the sense that it delineates ''a set of interrelated theoretical propositions about the structure and outcome of organizational socialization processes'' (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p.214). It specifies the linkages between specific socialization variables (i.e., tactics) and the resulting behavioral responses (i.e., role orientation).

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) proposed six bipolar tactics that could be used by organizations to structure the socialization experiences of newcomers (i.e., collective vs individual, formal vs informal, sequential vs random, fixed vs variable, serial vs disjunctive, investiture vs divestiture). They argued that these tactics influence the role orientations that newcomers ultimately adopt and their subsequent adjustment to the organization.

Building on Van Maanen and Schein, Jones (1986) suggested that the six tactics form a gestalt that he termed institutionalized socialization. According to Jones, collective, formal, sequential, fixed, serial, and investiture tactics provide information that reduces the uncertainty and anxiety inherent in early work experiences, and they encourage newcomers to passively accept pre-set roles, thus reproducing the status quo (''custodial role orientation''). Conversely, at the opposite end of the continuum, individual, informal, random, variable, disjunctive, and divestiture tactics encourage newcomers to challenge the status quo and develop their own approaches to their roles (''innovative role orientation''). Thus, Jones termed this end of the continuum individualized socialization. As described below, a fair amount of recent research has examined this model and provided considerable support for its basic propositions.

Uncertainty Reduction Theory

Perhaps the most common theoretical framework driving socialization research has been uncertainty reduction theory (URT; Falcione & Wilson, 1988; Lester, 1987). Following URT, newcomers experience high levels of uncertainty during the organizational entry process. Newcomers, like any organizational members, are motivated to reduce their uncertainty such that the work environment becomes more predictable, understandable, and ultimately controllable. Uncertainty is reduced through the information provided via various communication channels, notably social interactions with superiors and peers. As uncertainty decreases, newcomers become more adept at performing their tasks, more satisfied with their job, and more likely to remain in their organization (Morrison, 1993a). Socialization programs influence newcomers' adjustment in this regard by reducing their high levels of uncertainty and anxiety.

As described later, URT has been the tacit basis for research on socialization tactics, training, and information seeking. For example, according to Mig-

nerey, Rubin, and Gorden (1995), socialization tactics influence the availability and acquisition of information and feedback that newcomers require to reduce their high levels of uncertainty. Baker (1995) found that role certainty is an important latent factor of socialization tactics. Saks (1996) found that both the amount and helpfulness of entry training were related to lower anxiety, and anxiety mediated the relations between entry training and work outcomes. Miller and Jablin's (1991) model of newcomer information seeking has its basis in newcomers' desires to reduce uncertainty.

Social Cognitive Theory

A third theoretical basis for socialization research has been Bandura's (1986, 1997) social cognitive theory and self-efficacy theory. According to social cognitive theory (SCT), human behavior and psychosocial functioning can be explained in terms of triadic reciprocal causation in which behavior, cognitive and personal factors, and environmental events interact and influence each other bidirectionally (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Three aspects of SCT have been recognized as particularly relevant for organizational functioning: vicarious learning and mastery modeling, goal systems, and self-regulatory mechanisms of which self-efficacy beliefs are the most important (Wood & Bandura, 1989a).

Self-efficacy has been defined as ''beliefs in one's capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to meet given situational demands'' (Wood & Bandura, 1989b, p.408). Self-efficacy theory identifies four sources of information that influence self-efficacy perceptions (enactive mastery experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological and affective states) as well as the effects it has on individual behavior and psychological well-being (Bandura, 1986, 1997).

Several studies conducted during the review period used concepts from Bandura's work to understand the socialization process. For example, a number of studies discussed later in the paper have demonstrated the role of self-efficacy as a direct, moderating, and mediating variable. Self-efficacy theory has also been used to integrate the socialization and training literatures (Saks, 1995). Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) interpreted their results as consistent with social cognitive theory. They found that newcomers acquired information from role models (supervisors and co-workers), and through observation and experimentation achieved a sense of mastery of their task and role. Saks and Ashforth's (1996) study on behavioral self-management is based on the self-regulatory component of social cognitive theory.

Cognitive and Sense Making Theory

Finally, Louis' (1980) cognitive approach to socialization, in which newcomers attempt to make sense of the surprises they encounter during socialization, has driven much of the research on information seeking and acquisition. Sense making is a thinking process in which newcomers interpret and impute mean-
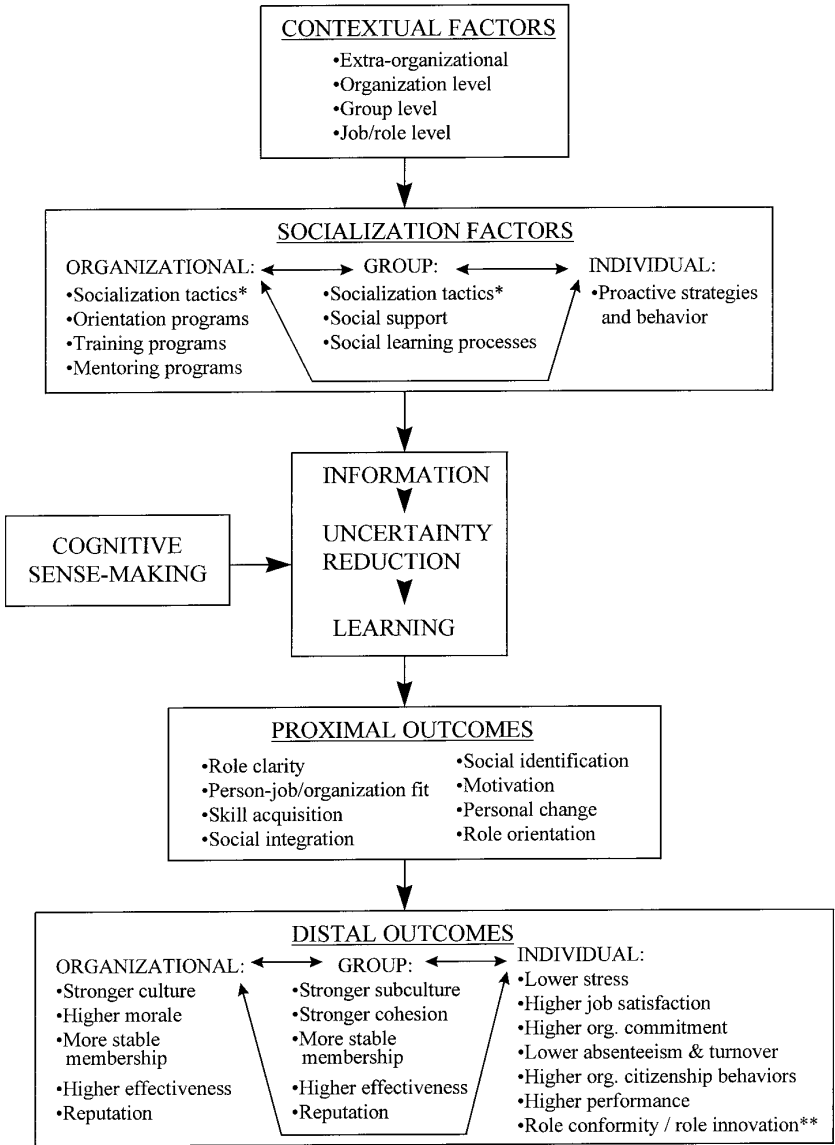
ings to surprises through interactions with insiders, attributional processes, and the alteration of cognitive scripts (Louis, 1980; Reichers, 1987). According to Katz (1980), newcomers strive to construct situational definitions of organizational reality and role identities through social interactions. This is a process of developing an ''interpretive schema'' or ''cognitive map'' of one's organizational surroundings (Falcione & Wilson, 1988; Weick, 1995).

The potential of cognitive and sense making theory to inform our understanding of socialization is vast. For example, this theory has underpinned research on information seeking and acquisition although research has not yet examined the cognitive factors involved in information processing and sense making. Similarly, Baker (1995) found that interactions with job incumbents are an important latent factor of socialization tactics but it is not known how such interactions are cognitively transformed into organizational definitions and meanings. The potential for this type of research has been recognized by Wanous, Reichers, and Malik (1984) who suggested causal mapping as a way to trace the development of newcomers' sense making activities. Thus, although the cognitive approach of sense making has provided the premise for many studies, the focus has been more on information seeking behaviors and interactions and less on the cognitive processes and interpretations that newcomers supposedly enact. The process of sense making has not been a central focus of previous research.

A MULTI-LEVEL PROCESS MODEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION

One of the most problematic aspects of the organizational socialization literature has been the lack of a coherent theory that integrates the major concepts and processes of socialization. This problem has been further compounded by the large amount of research that has been conducted in so many disparate areas in the past 5 years. With this in mind, we attempted to pull together the various theories, concepts, models, and research findings to develop a more integrated model of organizational socialization (see Fig. 1). The focus of the model is information and learning which is consistent with recent research showing that organizational socialization is primarily a learning process (Bauer & Green, 1994; Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994; Holton, 1996; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). The other components of the model specify the antecedents of information and learning and the proximal and distal outcomes that are affected by information and learning.

We will present the model chronologically. First, a variety of contextual variables at the extra-organizational (e.g., national culture, laws, and regulations), organizational (e.g., strategy and structure), group (e.g., size and demographic diversity), and job/role (e.g., job design and physical isolation) levels of analysis are likely to influence socialization factors. Organizational socialization factors include socialization tactics, orientation programs, training

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS
•Extra-organizational
•Organization level
•Group level
•Job/role level

SOCIALIZATION FACTORS

ORGANIZATIONAL: GROUP: INDIVIDUAL:
•Socialization tactics*   •Socialization tactics*   •Proactive strategies
•Orientation programs   •Social support   and behavior
•Training programs   •Social learning processes
•Mentoring programs

INFORMATION

UNCERTAINTY
REDUCTION

LEARNING

COGNITIVE
SENSE-MAKING

PROXIMAL OUTCOMES

•Role clarity   •Social identification
•Person-job/organization fit   •Motivation
•Skill acquisition   •Personal change
•Social integration   •Role orientation

DISTAL OUTCOMES

ORGANIZATIONAL: GROUP: INDIVIDUAL:
•Stronger culture   •Stronger subculture   •Lower stress
•Higher morale   •Stronger cohesion   •Higher job satisfaction
•More stable   •More stable   •Higher org. commitment
 membership   membership   •Lower absenteeism & turnover
•Higher effectiveness   •Higher effectiveness   •Higher org. citizenship behaviors
•Reputation   •Reputation   •Higher performance
                                •Role conformity / role innovation**

* The model assumes institutionalized socialization tactics rather than individualized
**The relative weight depends on the group's and organization's values

FIG. 1. A multi-level process model of organizational socialization.

programs, and mentoring programs. Group socialization factors include
group-level socialization tactics, social support (expressive and instrumental),
and, more generally, the social learning processes discussed in social cognitive

theory (e.g., observation, instruction, reinforcement, and negotiation; Bandura, 1986). Individual socialization factors include various forms of newcomer proactivity (e.g., information seeking, relationship building, and self-management). The bidirectional arrows within the socialization factors box denote that the organizational, group, and individual factors are likely to mutually affect one another.

Second, the socialization factors, along with cognitive sense-making processes, are predicted to directly influence the acquisition of information. Third, information acquisition results in a reduction in newcomers' uncertainty and learning in various content domains of socialization (e.g., organizational goals and values, power structures, and task knowledge). Fourth, learning is predicted to result in proximal outcomes (e.g., role clarity, person–job and person–organization fit, skill acquisition, social integration, social identification, motivation, personal change, and role orientation). Fifth, the proximal outcomes are then expected to influence a wide variety of more distal outcomes at the organization and group levels (e.g., stronger culture, higher morale and cohesion, more stable membership, higher effectiveness, and reputation) and the individual level (e.g., lower stress, absenteeism, and turnover; higher job satisfaction, organization commitment, organization citizenship behaviors, and performance; and, depending on the group's and organization's values, some mix of role conformity and role innovation). The bidirectional arrows within the distal outcomes box denote mutual influences between the organizational, group, and individual levels.

Individual difference variables also figure prominently in the model and are depicted in Fig. 2. Many individual differences are potentially relevant, particularly self-efficacy, self-esteem, tolerance for ambiguity, self-monitoring, desire for control, needs for achievement and affiliation, negative affectivity, and previous work experience. For the sake of both inclusiveness and parsimony, the figure lists the general individual difference categories of personality characteristics, affective dispositions, values and beliefs, needs and motives, and demographic variables.

We recognize that individual differences may influence and be influenced by every variable in Fig. 1. However, the literature to be reviewed focuses primarily on three major sets of associations, as shown in Fig. 2. First, organizational and group socialization factors are likely to affect individual difference variables, and individual differences are likely to affect newcomer proactive strategies and behavior. Second, individual differences are predicted to directly affect cognitive sense-making, and information acquisition and learning. Third, individual differences are predicted to moderate the effects of the socialization factors on information and learning, and the effects of information and learning on the proximal outcomes.

Finally, there are many potential feedback loops in the model, indeed, too many to depict. For example, poor newcomer performance may lead an organization to introduce a formal mentoring program. Strong cohesion at
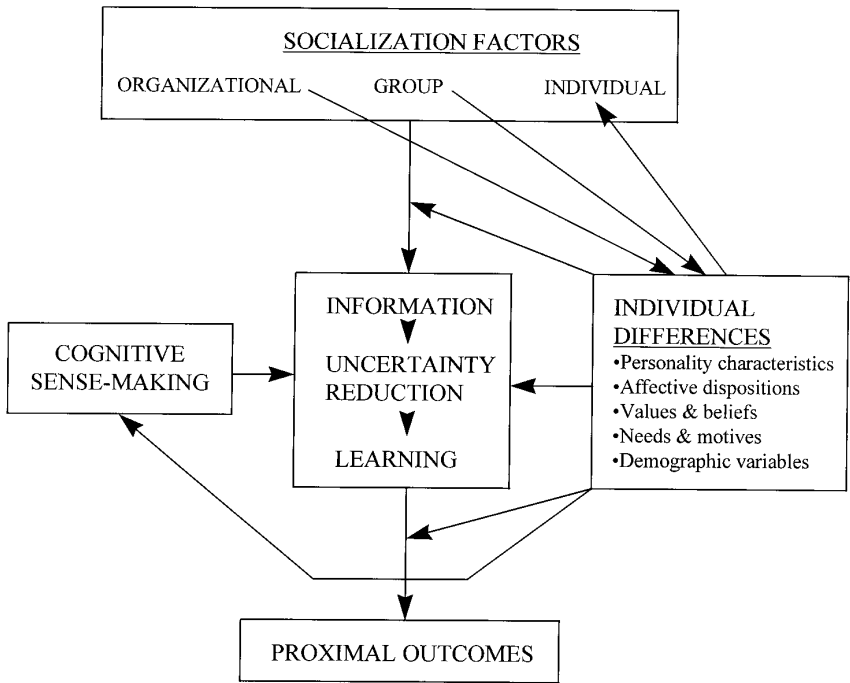
Fig. 2. The role of individual differences in organizational socialization.

the group level may buffer the effect on the individual of unwanted organization level socialization efforts; a pronounced organizational reputation may render the organization more or less attractive to certain kinds of potential recruits, ultimately skewing the distribution of various individual differences within the organization.

In sum, this model represents the current state of theory and research on organizational socialization. It is intended to serve as a rough framework for our literature review and, hopefully, for future research and theory development.

ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION RESEARCH: 1992–1996

Although a diversity of organizational socialization topics have been investigated in the past 5 years, six topics have received most of the attention and are likely to continue to be topics of interest during the next 5 years. Further, each of these topics has been considered in the socialization literature in the past, but only recently has begun to receive serious empirical attention. In this section, we review research on socialization tactics, socialization training, proactive socialization, socialization learning and content, and group socialization. In the section that follows, we review research on moderators, mediators, and individual differences.

Socialization Tactics

One of the most active areas of socialization research has been investigation of Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) model of organizational socialization. In the past 5 years, there have been 11 published studies on socialization tactics. All have more or less followed the path first set forth by Jones (1986). All but two (Fullagar, Clark, Gallagher, & Gordon, 1994; Fullagar, Gallagher, Gordon, & Clark, 1995) used some version of the scales Jones (1986) designed to measure the six tactics, all measured some of the same outcome criteria (e.g., role ambiguity, role conflict, intentions to quit, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and role orientation), and all based their hypotheses on his categorization of the tactical dimensions (i.e., institutionalized versus individualized socialization).

In general, the results of these studies are consistent with Jones' (1986) findings. Following URT, institutionalized socialization tactics are related to lower role ambiguity, role conflict, and intentions to quit (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Mignerey et al., 1995; Saks & Ashforth, 1997), and higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Baker, 1992; Laker & Steffy, 1995; Mignerey et al., 1995; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Individualized socialization tactics are related to attempted and actual role innovation (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Black & Ashford, 1995; Mignerey et al., 1995; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Black (1992), however, found that the collective tactic was positively related to role innovation among expatriate managers.

Some studies assessed other outcome measures. Baker (1992) examined the socialization tactics used in a union versus nonunion setting. There were no differences between the two settings in their use of the six tactics, and, in general, the tactics associated with institutionalized socialization were positively related to the quality of supervision, employee autonomy, union support, working conditions, and skill use.

Orpen (1995) found that institutionalized socialization was negatively related to career satisfaction but not to salary growth or the number of promotions received. Mignerey et al. (1995) found that institutionalized socialization tactics were positively related to communication satisfaction and attributional confidence (i.e., the degree to which newcomers perceive themselves as able to make accurate and confident predictions about their supervisor's behavior, values, attitudes, and emotions). Ashforth and Saks (1996) found that institutionalized tactics were related to lower stress and higher organizational identification, and individualized tactics were related to higher self-appraised performance. Saks and Ashforth (1997) reported that institutionalized tactics were positively related to task mastery and negatively related to anxiety. Black and Ashford (1995) and Ashforth and Saks (1996) found that the investiture tactic was negatively related to person change, while Ashforth and Saks (1996) also found that the collective tactic was positively related.

Two studies also examined moderating relations. In a study of American expatriates, Black (1992) found that the positive relation between the collective tactic and role innovation was stronger for expatriates with longer tenure in their firm, and the negative relation between the serial tactic and role innovation was stronger for expatriates with shorter tenure. Following self-efficacy theory, Laker and Steffy (1995) examined self-efficacy as a moderator but did not find that it moderated the relation between socialization tactics and goal-directed behavior and organizational commitment.

Tactics as a socialization process. Wanous and Colella (1989) suggested that research on socialization tactics should be more process oriented and focus on how the tactics influence newcomers' adjustment. An important development in the past 5 years has been the inclusion of process variables and outcomes. Four studies examined the processes underlying the socialization tactics. Two studies examined the role of information and feedback processes. Following URT, Mignerey et al. (1995) argued ''that newcomers' successful passage through the entry phase is dependent on their ability to obtain sufficient information to reduce uncertainty'' (p.55), and that socialization tactics are an important antecedent of communication behavior (i.e., information/feedback-seeking and critical involvement behaviors). In support, they found that institutionalized socialization was related to increased information/feedback-seeking behavior.

Similarly, Saks and Ashforth (1997) examined the relation between socialization tactics and information acquisition (feedback and observation) and found that institutionalized socialization (collective, serial, and investiture) was positively related to the frequency of newcomers' feedback and observation, and feedback and observation mediated the relation between socialization tactics and outcomes. They concluded that what newcomers can do to socialize themselves through information acquisition is partly a function of the tactics organizations use to socialize newcomers.

Laker and Steffy (1995) examined the impact of socialization tactics on self-managing behaviors. They found that individualized socialization tactics (variable, random, and investiture) were positively related to goal-directed behavior but not to the other self-managing behaviors (i.e., self-criticism and self-control). Finally, Baker (1995) reanalyzed Allen and Meyer's (1990a) data and found two latent factors corresponding to interaction with job incumbents (serial, fixed, sequential, and investiture tactics) and role certainty (serial, collective, formal, fixed, and sequential tactics).

Other studies. Fullagar et al. (1994, 1995) applied the socialization tactics model to newcomers' experiences in a labor union and found that individualized socialization was positively associated with attitudes toward the union, whereas institutionalized socialization was ''ineffective at best and counterproductive at worst'' (Fullagar et al., 1995, p.147). However, the operationalization of the tactics differed markedly from the studies reviewed above and is suspect. First, institutionalized tactics were operationalized simply as the

duration of the formal orientation session and the number of topics and the amount of information that was covered in the session. This is a very narrow operationalization of the rich set of tactics described by Van Maanen and Schein (1979). Further, Fullagar et al. (1995) suggested that the negative effect of the formal orientation was perhaps attributable to the use of such orientations by larger union locals because the size of these locals tends to deter involvement in union activities.

Second, individualized socialization was operationalized as 14 informal experiences, such as ''having received an invitation to a union meeting, help in solving a work problem, support or encouragement by the union, or an introduction to the steward'' (Fullagar et al., 1995, p.150). Fullagar et al. (1995) attributed the effects of these experiences to ''a modelling process . . . whereby new recruits imitated the role behaviors required of active union members by observing the behavior of other union members or officers'' (p. 155). While the experiences measured by Fullagar et al. (1995) may indeed reflect individualized socialization through the use of the individual and informal tactics, these experiences strongly reflect institutionalized socialization in the form of the serial and perhaps investiture tactics. Thus, the positive effect of the 14 experiences cannot be attributed solely to the use of individualized socialization.

Socialization Training

According to Feldman (1989), formal training programs have become the main socialization process for many newcomers and to many have become synonymous with socialization. Further, ''the overall training program plays a major role in how individuals make sense of and adjust to their new job settings'' (Feldman, 1989, p.399). Although both training and socialization are critical for the development of newcomers, research in each area has tended to ignore the other (Holton, 1996). Thus, a strong urge has emerged in the past few years to integrate these two research streams (Anderson, Cunningham-Snell, & Haigh, 1996; Feldman, 1989; Holton, 1995, 1996) and several studies have begun to do so.

Nelson and Quick (1991) examined the availability and helpfulness of 10 socialization practices originally examined by Louis, Posner, and Powell (1983). They found that formal orientation was rated as one of the most available practices, whereas offsite training sessions were rated as one of the least available. However, the availability of formal orientation was not related to newcomers' adjustment, and the availability of offsite training was only related to psychological distress symptoms. Newcomers for whom offsite training was not available reported greater psychological distress. Neither the helpfulness of formal orientation nor offsite training was related to adjustment.

Saks (1996) extended this work by measuring the amount of training rather than just its availability. He found that newcomers' perceptions of the amount received was significantly related to their ratings of training helpfulness, and

both the amount and helpfulness were related to work outcomes. In addition, while none of the interactions between the amount and helpfulness of training were significant, some support was found for the hypothesis that anxiety reduction mediates the relation between training and work outcomes.

Chatman (1991) included a measure of formal training in her research on person–organization fit in public accounting firms. Attending firm-sponsored events and spending time with a mentor were positively related to newcomers' person–organization fit, but formal training was not. She suggested that her results might be sample-specific because formal training in accounting firms is likely to focus more on the technical aspects of auditing than firm norms and values.

Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas, and Cannon-Bowers (1991) examined training fulfillment in the socialization of military trainees. They defined fulfillment as ''the extent to which training meets or fulfills a trainee's expectations and desires'' (p.760), and found that fulfillment was positively related to post-training organizational commitment, training motivation, and self-efficacy.

Anderson et al. (1996) found that an overwhelming majority of 100 major British organizations provided new hires with formalized, off-the-job induction training within 4 weeks of entry. Most of the organizations provided standardized programs that were designed and conducted by in-house personnel practitioners. The content of induction training was general in nature and pertained mostly to health and safety, terms and conditions of employment, organizational history and structure, specific training provisions, and human resource management policies and procedures. Although most organizations evaluated their induction training, they relied almost exclusively on reaction measures rather than more sophisticated measures of training evaluation. Interestingly, organizations that used pre- and post-course tests were less satisfied with their training program and the socialization process in general than organizations that relied solely on reaction measures.

Only one study conducted an actual experiment to test the effectiveness of a training intervention on newcomer adjustment. Waung (1995) compared an experimental group of new hires in entry-level service jobs who received self-regulatory training (i.e., cognitive restructuring, positive self-talk, and statements to bolster self-efficacy) to a comparison group that received only information about the negative aspects of the job and coping behaviors. The experimental group reported higher levels of organizational supportiveness immediately after the training (but not 4 weeks later) and higher job satisfaction. Surprisingly, the experimental group also had higher turnover after 4 weeks. No differences were found between the groups for self-efficacy, organizational commitment, anxiety, or intentions to quit, thus providing only limited support for self-regulatory training.

Finally, several studies examined the role of newcomers' self-efficacy. For example, Saks (1994, 1995) found that self-efficacy moderated the effects of formal and tutorial training on newcomers' anxiety, and moderated and medi-

ated the relation between the amount of formal training and work adjustment. However, Waung (1995) found no moderating effect of self-efficacy on the effect of self-regulatory training on newcomer adjustment.

Proactive Socialization

The traditional approach to organizational socialization portrays newcomers as passive or reactive recipients of socialization programs and practices (i.e., what organizations do to newcomers and on how newcomers respond; Morrison, 1993a). One of the most important areas of socialization research to emerge in the past 5 years has been that of proactive socialization, a trend first noted by Fisher (1986). The proactive approach regards newcomers as agents who actively work to reduce uncertainty in their work environments through their own initiative (Comer, 1991; Feij, Whitely, Peiró, & Taris, 1995; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 1993a). As the stereotypic notion of the one-organization career continues to fade, organizations are likely to place less emphasis on centralized socialization and training programs, and more on creating task-centered opportunities for learning (Schein, 1996). Thus, the utility of proactivity should become increasingly apparent to newcomers and organizations alike.

Information seeking and acquisition. Information seeking and acquisition has been the primary method of newcomer proactivity examined in socialization research in the past 5 years. Ostroff and Kozlowksi (1992), for example, found that newcomers' acquisition of information was related to their knowledge of different contextual domains as well as to higher satisfaction, commitment, and adjustment, and lower turnover intentions and stress. Morrison (1993a,b) found that the frequency of information seeking was positively related to task mastery, role clarity, social integration, job satisfaction, and job performance and negatively related to intentions to leave.

In addition to testing the relations between information seeking/acquisition and socialization outcomes, the types, methods, and sources used to acquire feedback and information also have been studied. The most thorough example is Miller and Jablin's (1991) model of newcomers' information-seeking behaviors, in which they argued that certain types and sources of information, individual differences, and contextual factors affect the use of seven information-seeking tactics (overt questions, indirect questions, third parties, testing limits, disguising conversations, observing, and surveillance). These tactics are in turn argued to reduce newcomer role ambiguity and role conflict. Research in the past 5 years has shown that some of these tactics are particularly helpful for newcomers' socialization.

Ostroff and Kozlowksi (1992) examined newcomers' acquisition of information in four content domains (task, role, group, and organization), from six information sources (mentor, supervisor, co-workers, observation, trial and error, and organization manual). Newcomers relied primarily on observation, followed by interpersonal sources (i.e., supervisors and co-workers); they

used different sources to obtain information about the different content domains, and they acquired the most information about the task domain, followed by the role, group, and organization domains. Supervisors were the information source most strongly related to positive socialization outcomes.

Ostroff and Kozlowski (1993) reported that newcomers who had mentors relied on the observation of others and their mentors for information, while newcomers without mentors relied on observation and co-workers. Newcomers with mentors acquired more information about organizational issues and practices.

Morrison (1993a) examined five types of information (technical, referent, normative, performance feedback, and social feedback), two forms of information seeking (monitoring and inquiry), and four sources of information (supervisors, experienced co-workers, other newcomers, and written documents). She found that newcomers used monitoring more frequently than inquiry, and used different modes and sources of information seeking for different types of information. Newcomers sought less normative and technical information, and less social feedback over time, but sought more referent information and performance feedback. Overall, newcomers demonstrated considerable stability in terms of the frequency, mode, and source usage of their information seeking behavior. In a related study, Morrison (1993b) found that the frequency of seeking specific types of information was related to different tasks of the socialization process.

Other forms of proactivity. In addition to information seeking, several other forms of proactive socialization behavior have been studied. Saks and Ashforth (1996) investigated behavioral self-management (i.e., self-observation, self-goal-setting, self-reward, self-punishment, and rehearsal) and found that newcomers who were proactive in self-managing their behavior reported lower levels of anxiety and stress during their first month, and more positive work outcomes six months later. Ashford and Black (1996) investigated newcomers' use of seven proactive socialization tactics (i.e., networking, general socializing, building relationships with one's boss, negotiating job changes, positive framing, information seeking, and feedback seeking) and found the set of tactics was related to job satisfaction and self-reported job performance 12 months after entry. However, in contrast to previous findings (Morrison, 1993a), feedback seeking was not related to job satisfaction or performance. Feij et al. (1995) reported that newcomers' use of career-enhancing strategies (i.e., career planning, help or advice seeking, communicating work goals and aspirations, developing skills, working extra hours, and networking) predicted co-worker and supervisor support, job content innovation, intrinsic work values, and the continued use of the behaviors 1 year later.

Antecedents. Several studies also explored the antecedents of proactivity. Feij et al. (1995) found that instrumental and expressive support from co-workers and superiors and ''positive discorrespondence'' (where experiences exceed expectations; Whitely, Peiró, Feij, & Taris, 1995) were positively

associated with the career-enhancing strategies listed above. Ashford and Black (1996) found that newcomers' with a high desire for control were more likely to seek information, socialize at work, build relationships with co-workers, negotiate job changes, and positively frame their situations. However, only limited support was found for the hypothesis that proactive behaviors mediate the effects of desire for control on job satisfaction and job performance.

Mignerey et al. (1995) found a direct positive link between institutionalized socialization tactics and information/feedback-seeking behavior. They also found that the value that newcomers placed on feedback and critical involvement attitudes predicted information/feedback-seeking behavior, and this behavior was related to an innovative role orientation and attributional confidence, but not to organizational commitment, communication satisfaction, or role ambiguity.

Saks and Ashforth (1997) also examined the relation between socialization tactics and newcomer information acquisition (i.e., feedback and observation) in an attempt to link the proactive socialization perspective with the more traditional or situationalist perspective. They argued that the use of socialization tactics sets the stage for information acquisition, which in turn explains the relation between socialization tactics and outcomes. They found that the institutionalized tactics were positively related to the frequency of feedback and observation acquired from co-workers and supervisors. In addition, information acquisition was positively related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and task mastery and negatively related to anxiety. The relations between information acquisition and job performance, intentions to quit, and turnover approached significance.

Major and Kozlowski (1997) examined the effects of task interdependence, physical accessibility to insiders, and self-efficacy on the information seeking of coop students participating in career-relevant internships. They found that task interdependence was positively related to the frequency of information seeking. Further, they found a three-way interaction between the antecedents. In effect, task interdependence resulted in greater information seeking for newcomers with low self-efficacy, particularly if they had high insider accessibility.

Socialization Learning and Content

In the past 5 years, a number of studies have examined socialization as a learning process by focusing on what newcomers actually learn and internalize (Chao et al., 1994; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). These studies have tended to focus simultaneously on three main themes: defining the content domain or dimensions of learning; the socialization processes and interventions that influence learning; and the relation between learning and socialization outcomes.

Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) found that observation and experimentation were the major sources of knowledge in four content domains: job-related

tasks, work roles, group processes, and organizational attributes. In addition, they found that newcomers' knowledge was initially highest in the group domain and lowest in the organization domain, and after approximately 5 months, highest in the task domain and again lowest in the organization domain. Further, knowledge was positively related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and adjustment. Knowledge in the task and role domains contributed the most to successful socialization.

Bauer and Green (1994) tested a longitudinal model of newcomer involvement in work-related activities ''in which newcomers are seen as participants in a cumulative process of learning and accommodation'' (p.211). They argued that involvement provides opportunities to learn about roles, jobs, coworkers, and the organization. In support, they found that doctoral students' involvement in professional activities predicted accommodation (perceived group acceptance and lower role ambiguity), and involvement in research activities predicted productivity (research submissions and publications).

In the most thorough research on socialization content and learning to date, Chao et al. (1994) conducted three studies to assess the specific content dimensions of learning, changes in the dimensions as employees mature and switch jobs and organizations, and the relation between the dimensions and career outcomes. First, they developed and tested a measure of the content dimensions. A factor analysis indicated six dimensions: (1) performance proficiency, involving the tasks and knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for the job; (2) the people domain, pertaining to successful working relationships; (3) politics, information about the formal and informal work relationships and the power structures in the organization; (4) the language domain, the technical language and jargon that is unique to one's profession and the organization; (5) organizational goals and values, the mission and means of the organization; and (6) the history domain, the organization's traditions, customs, and stories.

Second, Chao et al. (1994) examined the effects of the socialization process on learning, comparing job incumbents (did not change jobs) to job changers and organization changers and found significant differences on five of the six content dimensions. Job incumbents had the highest levels of socialization on the five dimensions, followed by job changers, and then organization changers. The content dimensions and socialization changes were significantly related to various measures of career effectiveness (above that explained by tenure). In terms of the content dimensions, organizational goals and values were most strongly related to career effectiveness and (low) organizational turnover. Perhaps this dimension is most critical for developing a high degree of person–organization fit, which strongly predicts successful socialization (Chatman, 1991).

Adkins (1995) examined the relations between four major tasks of the socialization process (i.e., developing a sense of task competence, role clarity, realistic job expectations, and interpersonal relationships) and socialization

outcomes and found that perceived task competence was related to self-rated performance, and role ambiguity and role conflict were related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Holton (1996) integrated the literatures on socialization learning and task-related training and proposed a taxonomy of learning tasks consisting of four learning content domains that are further subdivided into three learning tasks (resulting in 12 tasks): individual domain (attitudes, expectations, and break-ing-in); people domain (impression management, relationships, and supervi-sor); organization domain (culture, savvy, and roles); and work task domain (work savvy, task knowledge, and knowledge, skills, and abilities). According to Holton, newcomer learning is a cyclical process that is accomplished by three categories of learning interventions (orientation programs, job-training programs, and workplace learning). Thus, newcomers repeatedly undergo learning tasks and events during their socialization. While no research has tested this taxonomy or the interventions, it does provide a useful framework for future research on the effects of socialization practices on newcomer learning and adjustment.

Group Socialization

Over 10 years ago, Wanous et al. (1984) offered suggestions for the integra-tion of organizational socialization and group development based on the tem-poral and conceptual similarities of these two processes. More recently, Major, Kozlowski, Chao, and Gardner (1995) noted that socialization is a process that occurs interactively within the context of groups. Anderson and Thomas (1996) argued that the proximal work group is the focal point for the transmis-sion of an organization's culture, and the socialization of new members into groups is critical to group functioning and performance. Moreland and Levine (in press) added that, for many newcomers, work group socialization is more important than organizational socialization. In fact, many of the findings of organizational socialization research indirectly provide strong support for the relevance and importance of work group socialization and the role of the proximal group in the successful socialization of newcomers (Anderson & Thomas, 1996). Given these conceptual leads, it is surprising that research on group socialization has been neglected in the organizational socialization literature. As Anderson and Thomas (1996) observe, socialization research has been primarily concerned with the individual and organizational levels of analysis.

Group socialization has received some conceptual attention in the past 5 years. Most of the work on group socialization has been informed by Moreland and Levine's (1982) model which postulates three psychological processes underlying group socialization: (1) individuals and groups engage in ongoing evaluations of their relationship; (2) based on these evaluations, they develop feelings of commitment toward one another that rise and fall relative to established decision criteria; and (3) when a decision criterion is reached, a

role transition takes place in which the individual enters a new phase of group membership and the relationship is transformed. This process of evaluation, commitment, and role transition then repeats itself (Cini, Moreland, & Levine, 1993; Levine & Moreland, 1994; Moreland & Levine, in press).

Further, the process of group socialization consists of five phases of group membership (investigation, socialization, maintenance, resocialization, and remembrance), where successive phases are separated by distinct role transitions (entry, acceptance, divergence, and exit; Cini et al., 1993; Levine & Moreland, 1994). Following the investigation phase and the entry transition, the group attempts to change the individual in order to contribute more to the group's goals, and the individual attempts to change the group in order to satisfy his/her personal needs. If this phase is successful, the individual will experience assimilation and the group will experience accommodation. When levels of commitment reach the acceptance criterion, an individual undergoes the role transition of acceptance and becomes a full member of the group. In the phases that follow, individuals and groups further negotiate their roles (maintenance), attempt to restore commitment if it wanes and active membership is no longer warranted (resocialization), and exit from the group if commitment levels continue to fall and group membership ends (remembrance). Moreland and Levine have expanded their model to include other small group phenomena and processes, such as role transitions, commitment, innovation, group development, work group cultures, and intergroup relations, and have also conducted numerous studies (Moreland & Levine, in press).

Anderson and Thomas (1996), however, have argued that Moreland and Levine's model is based on socialization into social groups, and that the usefulness of the model for work groups is limited because it does not consider characteristics of the individual, group, and organization that can affect the socialization process and outcomes. They developed a three-stage bidirectional process model of work group socialization in which both the newcomer and work group engage in mutual influence. The model incorporates the stages of anticipation, encounter, and adjustment, and thus resembles earlier stage models of organizational socialization. However, unlike these earlier models, Anderson and Thomas (1996) suggest that their model focuses on work group socialization, highlights the bidirectional nature of the process, and contains outcomes for both the individual and the work group. Anderson and Thomas (1996) argue that work group socialization should be considered a distinct research topic. Unfortunately, research has lagged theory development.

In the only study published in the past 5 years, Cini et al. (1993) examined the relation between staffing levels and group socialization practices among student groups on a college campus. Compared to groups that were overstaffed, understaffed groups were more open to new members, assigned fewer special duties to newcomers, evaluated their behavior less often, used fewer methods of evaluation, dealt less harshly with newcomers who caused problems, and had lower acceptance criteria for full group membership.

MODERATORS, MEDIATORS, AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

There has been considerable criticism over the years that socialization research has overemphasized situationalist perspectives and neglected the role of individual differences. This has led to calls for a more interactionist approach to socialization in which both individual and situationalist factors are considered (Jones, 1983; Reichers, 1987; Schneider, 1983; Wanous & Colella, 1989). Similarly, the need to better understand why individuals react differently to socialization practices has been discussed (Fisher, 1986; Wanous & Colella, 1989). Finally, there have also been calls for socialization research to be more process oriented (Wanous & Colella, 1989).

These recommendations require that socialization research include moderating and mediating variables in addition to investigating the direct effects of individual difference variables on newcomer' adjustment. Fortunately, in the past 5 years socialization research has begun to address these concerns.

Individual Difference Variables

A variety of individual difference variables were tested as predictors of socialization outcomes during the review period. We focus here on the variables that received the most attention.

Self-efficacy. One of the most prominent individual difference variables to appear in socialization research in the past 5 years has been self-efficacy. Socialization research tested self-efficacy as a direct, moderating, and mediating variable (the latter applications are discussed later). As a direct predictor of socialization outcomes, self-efficacy has been found to be positively related to newcomers' ability to cope, job satisfaction, organizational and career commitment, and job performance and negatively related to anxiety, intentions to quit, and turnover (Bauer & Green, 1994; Laker & Steffy, 1995; Saks, 1994, 1995; Tannenbaum et al., 1991).

Motivational orientation. Nicholson's (1984; Nicholson & West, 1988) work role transitions theory maintains that a newcomer's desire for feedback positively predicts reactive change in oneself to suit the situation, whereas a desire for control positively predicts altering the role to suit oneself. However, three recent studies provide only mixed support for these predictions. Black and Ashford (1995) found that desire for feedback was positively related to personal development (self-change), whereas desire for control was unrelated to role development (job change) but negatively related to personal development. Ashforth and Saks (1995) found that desire for feedback was positively related to personal development at 4 months but not at 10 months, and that desire for control was unrelated to either role or personal development at 4 or 10 months. Ashford and Black (1996) found that desire for control was positively related to five of seven proactive socialization tactics, including ''negotiation of job changes'' and self-reported performance. Ashforth and Saks (1995) suggest that newcomers' motives may be aroused by situation-

specific and life-stage factors rather than stable, generalized, and salient desires. For example, a desire for feedback may be evoked by role ambiguity and the co-occurrence of other destabilizing transitions, such as a geographical relocation.

Previous work experience. Several studies examined the effects of previous work experience on the socialization process. This is an important issue because socialization largely involves making sense of the surprises and contrasts one encounters during role transitions (Louis, 1980). Thus, experience should affect what is seen as noteworthy and how one makes sense of it. Meglino, DeNisi, and Ravlin (1993) exposed applicants for a correctional officer position to a realistic job preview and found that those with prior correctional experience were less likely to accept an offer of employment or to remain on the job during the probationary period. They suggested that the negative aspects of the job presented in the preview were more salient to the experienced applicants. Adkins (1995) found that previous experience had little effect on the adjustment of mental health specialists, but that the general pattern of results suggested that experience inhibited adjustment. She speculated that this was attributable to a ''false confidence'' effect, whereby prior experience in a similar setting induced newcomers to be ''less attentive to formal instructions and organizational cues'' (p. 856).

In contrast, Bauer and Green (1994) found that prior research experience was positively related to doctoral students' current research activities, professional involvement, and research submissions and publications. Ashforth and Saks (1995) reported that previous work experience among recent business school graduates was positively related to role development. In these two studies, experience likely provided the skills and confidence to perform and innovate.

Demographic variables. Jackson, Stone, and Alvarez (1993) postulated that a newcomer's demographic dissimilarity to team members (or, more broadly, other salient organizational members) would impede social integration. They theorized that a salient dissimilarity, such as being the only Asian-American in a work group, induces others to perceive one in terms of the social identity implied by the dissimilarity; that is, to categorize one as an outgroup member and to impute stereotypic attributes (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995). Because individuals prefer to interact with ingroup members, dissimilar newcomers may be denied instrumental and expressive social support, especially if their social identity has low status (Jackson et al., 1993). Thus, what appears to impair effective socialization is not so much one's particular gender, race, ethnicity, or age per se, but the extent to which one is perceived (by others and oneself) to be different from others. For example, Kirchmeyer (1995) found little evidence of on-the-job discrimination against female and minority managers during their first 9 months of work, but managers who were most dissimilar to their work group in terms of age, education, and lifestyle (though not gender or ethnic background) reported the least job challenge and poorest

integration with their work group. Colella (1996) recently extended this pro-vocative argument of social identity contrasts to the socialization of newcom-ers with disabilities.

Moderating and Mediating Variables

Moderating variables. Baron and Kenny (1986) define a moderator as a ''variable that affects the direction and/or strength of the relation between an independent or predictor variable and a dependent or criterion variable'' (p.1174). In other words, a variable is considered to be a moderator if the relationship between two other variables is a function of the level of that variable. Mediation, on the other hand, occurs where an antecedent influences a consequence through an intervening variable. In short, ''Whereas moderator variables specify when certain effects will hold, mediators speak to how or why such effects occur'' (p.1176).

In the past 5 years, research has begun to actively examine possible modera-tors of the socialization experience. For example, self-efficacy has been treated as a moderating variable in several studies. Saks (1994) found that self-efficacy moderated the relation between training method and anxiety. Formal orientation and training were related to lower anxiety for newcomers having low technical self-efficacy, and tutorial training was related to higher anxiety for newcomers with low academic self-efficacy. The relation between training and anxiety did not vary by training method for newcomers with high self-efficacy. Saks (1995) found that newcomers' initial self-efficacy moderated the relation between the amount of training and adjustment. A greater amount of training was more helpful for newcomers with low self-efficacy. He con-cluded that socialization practices may be both differentially available to (Louis et al., 1983) and differentially effective for newcomers.

Major and Kozlowski (1997) found that self-efficacy moderated the rela-tions between task interdependence and insider accessibility on the frequency of newcomers' proactive information seeking. However, self-efficacy did not moderate the effects of socialization tactics on self-managing behavior or organizational commitment (Laker & Steffy, 1995), nor the effects of self-regulatory training on newcomer adjustment (Waung, 1995). The failure to find moderating effects for self-efficacy in the latter two studies is consistent with the generally weak findings in both studies. Nonetheless, future research is needed to reconcile these seemingly contradictory findings.

Black (1992) found that tenure moderated the relation between socialization tactics and role orientation. Black and Ashford (1995) found that the correla-tion between job discretion and job change was considerably greater for newcomers with low person–job fit compared to those with high fit. They concluded that discretion is more likely to result in job change as a mode of adjustment if newcomers perceive that the job is a poor fit.

Research has also found that situational variables moderate the relations between socialization variables and outcomes. For example, Major et al.

(1995) found the negative effects of unmet expectations on socialization outcomes were ameliorated by favorable role development relationships with supervisors or co-workers. They inferred that ''newcomers who have quality relations with supervisors are better able to overcome reality shock and become adjusted to their new roles'' (p.429).

Mediating variables. Socialization research has been criticized for ignoring the psychological (and social) processes that mediate the relations between socialization programs and outcomes (Wanous & Colella, 1989). A number of studies have begun to assess mediation in the past 5 years. Ashford and Black (1996) found that cognitive framing (i.e., positively constructing one's situations) mediated the relation between the desire for control and self-reported job performance. Saks and Ashforth (1996) reported that newcomers' entry anxiety and stress mediated the relations between behavioral self-management and ability to cope and task-specific anxiety. Saks and Ashforth (1997) found that information acquisition mediated the relations between socialization tactics and outcomes. A reduction in newcomers' anxiety and increased post-training self-efficacy also have been found to mediate the relations between the amount of training and newcomer adjustment (Saks, 1995, 1996). Waung (1995) found that organizational supportiveness mediated the relation between the amount of self-regulatory coping information and organizational commitment.

SUMMARY

The past 5 years of research on organizational socialization have provided a wealth of information that has enriched the socialization literature. Research on socialization tactics has provided strong support for Jones' (1986) findings that institutionalized socialization tactics are negatively related to role ambiguity, role conflict, and intentions to quit and positively related to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and a custodial role orientation. In addition, the socialization tactics have been found to be related to a number of other outcome variables in theoretically plausible ways. Research that has examined the processes underlying the effects of socialization tactics has provided some isolated insights into the workings of the tactics.

Training has become an important part of the socialization process and research in the past 5 years has begun to integrate these two research streams. Research on socialization training has found that most organizations use induction training as part of the socialization process. Although the content of these training programs is general in nature, entry training has been found to be related to socialization outcomes.

The past 5 years of research have yielded some compelling insights into how newcomers are proactive during socialization rather than passive recipients of practices initiated by organizations. The results of several studies indicate that newcomer proactivity is related to work adjustment. In addition, the types, methods, and sources used to acquire feedback and information

also have been studied as well as different forms of newcomer proactive behavior.

Research on socialization content and learning has provided a much better understanding of the content of what newcomers learn during socialization, the processes that influence learning and knowledge, and the relation between learning and adjustment. Observation, experimentation, and involvement in work-related activities have been shown to be major sources of learning, and learning has been found to be related to socialization outcomes.

Unlike the other areas of research reviewed, research on group socialization has been characterized by vigorous conceptual work and theory development but relatively little empirical research. This is surprising considering how important groups have become to organizations and the pervasive role played by work groups in the socialization of newcomers. Much more empirical work is needed in this area.

Finally, the past 5 years of research have provided some evidence of the importance of individual differences in the socialization process and their role as direct, moderating, and mediating variables. Several variables have been found to moderate the relations between socialization practices and outcomes providing some support for the notion that the effectiveness of socialization programs depends in part on the characteristics of newcomers. Also, some initial glimpses of the processes underlying the effects of socialization practices on newcomer adjustment have been provided. In particular, newcomers' acquisition of information, perceptions (e.g., self-efficacy, cognitive framing, and organizational support), and reactions (e.g., anxiety and stress) appear to play a key role in the relation between individual differences, socialization practices, and socialization outcomes.

EVALUATION

Socialization research has long been criticized for its methodological short-comings and the less than adequate measurement of its constructs (Fisher, 1986; Wanous & Colella, 1989). Most socialization research is still based on self-report and same-source data. Problems of common method variance have been somewhat ameliorated by the use of longitudinal research designs in the past 5 years, but this does not remove the potential for self-report biases such as consistency and social desirability. Further, one area in particular (i.e., socialization tactics) has a number of methodological and measurement weaknesses. In this section, we evaluate and discuss the advances and short-comings in the methodology and measurement of socialization research conducted during the past 5 years.

Methodology

Longitudinal research. Organizational socialization is a dynamic process in which the most fundamental characteristic is change. Cross-sectional designs and retrospective accounts of individuals' socialization experiences do

not adequately capture the dynamic nature of the socialization process. In the past 5 years, close to a dozen longitudinal investigations have been reported in which newcomers responded to surveys several times during their socialization (e.g., Adkins, 1995; Ashford & Black, 1996; Bauer & Green, 1994; Chao et al., 1994). Unfortunately, research on socialization tactics remains the one area of research that lags behind the others in the use of longitudinal research designs. Only one of the 11 studies on socialization tactics reviewed earlier used a longitudinal design (Ashforth & Saks, 1996). Thus, the relations reported in previous studies might be inflated by common method variance or priming effects caused by assessing both the socialization tactics and adjustment indicators at the same time using the same questionnaire.

It is also possible that socialization tactics might be more important for newcomers' adjustment during the first several months of work. The structure provided by institutionalized socialization may help alleviate the debilitating uncertainty described by URT. As newcomers begin to develop a more secure sense of their roles and what is expected of them, other desires may emerge (Katz, 1980), making newcomers less responsive to institutionalized socialization. If this happens, the positive relations between institutionalized tactics and adjustment found in most studies will begin to diminish. Ashforth and Saks (1996) found that the relations between the tactics and outcomes were relatively stable over time but that the impact of the tactics was stronger at 4 months than at 10 months. This might reflect real changes in socialization dynamics during the first year of socialization but in the absence of longitudinal studies, it is not known to what extent the effects of socialization tactics will persist, or if and when newcomers' needs and responses to particular tactics will change. Thus, there is a pressing need for more longitudinal research designs in future research on socialization tactics.

In the other areas of socialization research the use of longitudinal research designs has made salient the issue of the appropriate time lines for longitudinal data collection. While it is well known that the socialization process unfolds over time, socialization theory does not specify the intervals for particular changes (Chao et al., 1994) and it is not yet clear at what points data should be gathered to best assess socialization processes and outcomes. In research during the past 5 years, the time 1 data collection point has ranged from prior to entry to 17 weeks after entry, and the time 2 point typically has ranged from 4 weeks to 6 months. Little is known about socialization after 6 months of entry; longer time frames are required to ''allow outcomes to be more fully influenced by socialization processes'' (Bauer & Green, 1994, p.221). Although Reichers (1987) persuasively argued for measuring the rate of newcomer adjustment, this still remains a neglected issue in the design of socialization research.

Two provocative findings bear on the issue of the timing of measurement. First, most of the effects of socialization processes on newcomers appear to occur relatively rapidly. Bauer and Green (1994) found that the adjustment

perceptions of doctoral students assessed 3 weeks after entry into their doc-
toral programs were the best predictors of those perceptions when measured
after 9 months. They suggested that preentry experiences and early encounters
may strongly affect newcomer responses such that accommodation and adjust-
ment occur much more rapidly than anticipated by various socialization mod-
els. Similarly, Major et al. (1995) found that newcomer experiences were
associated with socialization outcomes measured only 4 weeks after entry.

Second, in addition to occurring rapidly, newcomer adjustment appears to
be relatively stable for at least the first 6 to 10 months of the job. Morrison
(1993b) found a strong relation between outcome measures at entry and 6
months later. Adkins (1995) found that newcomers' predictions of their job
performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment at the time of
organizational entry were the best predictors of these outcomes 6 months
later. Ashforth and Saks (1995) found that personal and role change reported
by newcomers at 4 months strongly predicted the amount of cumulative
change at 10 months.

These twin findings—rapid change followed by relative stability—suggest
that socialization variables need to be measured very early in the process.
Further, the relations between socialization processes and outcomes are likely
to be inaccurately interpreted and overestimated if processes and outcomes
are not measured and controlled at entry (Adkins, 1995; Bauer & Green,
1994). However, Morrison (1993b) argues that some changes may occur
relatively early, whereas others take much longer to occur. For example,
newcomers may quickly imitate desired behaviors and form preliminary im-
pressions of person–job/organization fit and satisfaction, but organization-
based values and social identities may take much longer to fully internalize.
As indicated earlier, Ostroff and Kozlowksi (1992) found that newcomers'
level of knowledge was initially highest in the group domain but after 5
months it was highest in the task domain and remained lowest in the organiza-
tion domain. Thus, the speed of knowledge acquisition and learning appears
to depend on the socialization content or domain.

Further, researchers must remain alert for beta and gamma changes (Golem-
biewski, Billingsley, & Yeager, 1976). Because newcomers are in the process
of learning about their new setting, roles, and relationships, their responses
to a given survey item over time may reflect not only changes in level (alpha
change; for example, job satisfaction increases) but a recalibration of the
levels (beta change; the earlier level of job satisfaction is recalled as higher
than it actually was) or a redefinition of the construct itself (gamma change;
the meaning of job satisfaction is transformed). In short, the often upending
nature of socialization may lead the newcomer to adopt different perspectives
over time, obscuring the interpretation of survey responses. Using a sample
of newcomers to a bank, Vandenberg and Self (1993) demonstrated the pres-
ence of gamma change over a 6-month period in measures of affective and
continuance commitment. They conclude that researchers should test for the

presence of beta and gamma changes when assessing changes in newcomers' attitudes following entry, and that some measures might not be appropriate for use at entry.

Experimental research. Although recent socialization research has shown improvements in methodology, there continues to be a glaring lack of experimental or quasi-experimental studies. That is, relatively few studies have compared the effectiveness of different socialization interventions on similar types of newcomers, or the experiences of different types of newcomers undergoing common socialization programs. This seriously restricts the conclusions that can be drawn from socialization research. For example, because of the failure to use experimental designs to test the effectiveness of different methods of socialization training, we do not know if training programs have a causal effect on newcomers' adjustment. Experimental studies will enable researchers to make strong statements regarding cause–effect relations. The potential of experimental research is obviously great from both a theory development and practical standpoint.

Samples. Socialization research has tended to rely on a narrow sample of recent graduates and newcomers from only a handful of occupations. For example, studies of socialization tactics (Saks & Ashforth, 1997), information seeking (Morrison, 1993a,b), and person–organization fit (Chatman, 1991) used entry-level accountants employed in large accounting firms. Other studies used recent graduates (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Black & Ashford, 1995; Laker & Steffy, 1995; Mignerey et al., 1995; Orpen, 1995). The reliance on a relatively limited and more or less homogeneous sample restricts the generalizations that can be made regarding socialization processes and their consequences. The perceptions, actions, and reactions of newcomers and the methods organizations use to socialize them might be considerably different in samples of older, less educated, nonprofessional, and more experienced newcomers. Socialization research needs to include a much more diverse sample of newcomers from a greater variety of occupations.

Measurement

Self-reports. Measurement in socialization research has often been criticized for consisting of retrospective and self-reports of newcomers' socialization experiences. The increasing number of longitudinal designs in the past 5 years has reduced the use of retrospective reports, but data collection still relies primarily on self-reports, with their potential for bias, inaccuracy, and common method variance. For example, a serious limitation of research on socialization training is that, with the exception of Waung, (1995), research has relied on newcomers' self-reports of training content, expectations, and outcomes.

Self-reports might be appropriate when one is mostly concerned with perceived experiences. As Bauer and Green (1994) state, ''when individual perceptions and attitudes are determining employees' responses to work,

self-reports should be a valid and useful source of data'' (p.22). For example, Saks (1996) found that newcomers' assessment of whether they had received an appropriate amount of training was more relevant in terms of their reactions and attitudes than was the actual time spent in training. However, the exclusive reliance on self-reports to measure newcomers' actual experiences and to measure socialization outcomes is suspect and should be supplemented by more objective measures from supervisors and organizational records.

One area that has been particularly problematic has been the measurement of socialization tactics. Most studies have used Jones' (1986) 5-item self-report scales to measure socialization tactics, but all except Ashforth and Saks (1996) used shortened versions of the scales. This is a concern for several reasons. First, relatively little attention has been given to evaluating and improving the psychometric properties of the scales. As a result, the reliability and factor structure of the scales has varied widely across studies and the poorest reliabilities have been obtained in those studies that used shortened scales. Second, because Jones (1986) wrote each item to reflect a separate facet of the content domain of each tactic, there is minimal redundancy among the items. Thus, shortened scales provide an incomplete representation of each domain. In comparison to the full scales, the shortened scales are not psychometrically equivalent and the content validity is questionable. Investigators should avoid the use of shortened versions of Jones' (1986) scales unless specific items are known to be irrelevant or misleading to the sample of interest.

In addition, more attention must be given to refining and validating these scales. Ashforth and Saks (1996) described one effort to modify the investiture scale to more accurately reflect Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) original definition. They provided evidence of its convergent, discriminant, concurrent, and predictive validity but its reliability remains questionable. At any rate, newcomers' self-report measures should be validated and supplemented with data from alternate sources, such as peers, supervisors, documents, and observation (Wanous & Colella, 1989).

The increasing number of studies measuring newcomers' self-efficacy also raises some important measurement issues. A serious limitation has been the use of different measures across studies and the use of general work-related scales rather than measures that are specific to socialization. Therefore, what is required is a reliable and valid measure that is specific to socialization self-efficacy. A self-efficacy measure for socialization should be commensurate with socialization learning dimensions. For example, a self-efficacy scale for organizational socialization might include items that measure newcomers' task, role, group, and organization self-efficacy. Besides being more specific to socialization and therefore more likely to accurately predict socialization outcomes, a socialization self-efficacy scale would be applicable for most studies on socialization, thereby facilitating comparisons across studies.

Finally, research on the role of newcomers' previous experience requires the development of more refined measures of pre-entry work experience (Adkins, 1995) that reflect the duration, variety, similarity to current experience, and reason for termination of previous experiences. Given that the relation between newcomers' prior work experience and job performance evaluations has been found to depend on the measure of work experience (Saks & Waldman, in press), it is vital that future research measure a variety of indicators of prior work experience.

Outcomes. Another weakness has been the continued reliance on traditional socialization outcomes, including stressors (role ambiguity and role conflict), affective responses and job attitudes (job satisfaction and organizational commitment), and behavioral intentions (intentions to quit). More theoretically relevant outcomes must be assessed, including learning, knowledge, skill acquisition, social integration, and person–organization fit (Chao et al., 1994; Chatman, 1981; Major et al., 1995; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Furthermore, the focus of a socialization program may be unique to an organization's culture and strategy so the criteria should be related to the outcomes of interest to the organization. For example, if an organization is most concerned with creating risk takers and innovators it does not make sense to focus on job satisfaction and intentions to quit as the primary outcome measures. More attention needs to be given to aligning the socialization outcomes criteria with the goals of an organization's socialization program.

In addition, more emphasis should be placed on behavioral outcomes. Other than job performance and turnover, few newcomer behaviors have been assessed in previous research. For example, indicators of adjustment such as organizational citizenship behaviors and absenteeism would be useful.

Finally, given the similarities between socialization and training, it is surprising that socialization research has rarely borrowed from the rich literature on training evaluation. For example, Kirkpatrick's (1994) four levels of training evaluation (i.e., reactions, learning, behavior, and results) seems well suited for socialization research. It would be worthwhile for research to begin to assess newcomers' reactions to socialization programs in addition to learning and behavioral outcomes. Furthermore, the highest level of training evaluation (i.e., results) should also be included in socialization research, especially in light of recent findings that human resource management practices are related to level four or results-type measures (i.e., organizational performance and effectiveness; Delaney & Huselid, 1996; Delery & Doty, 1996; Huselid, 1995).

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In the final section of this review we discuss directions for future research on organizational socialization. We discuss research directions in the six areas reviewed earlier in the paper and conclude with a discussion of research directions for a number of broader issues.

Socialization Tactics

There are many promising areas for future research on socialization tactics. One involves an intriguing contradiction in socialization theory. Newcomers' needs may evolve as they mature in the job. The finding that different and various job-related concerns tend to arise over time (Katz, 1980) suggests that the effect of socialization tactics on newcomer adjustment becomes attenuated as newcomers ''outgrow'' initial socialization practices. However, the research suggests that initial experiences can trigger a ''career success cycle,'' wherein positive socialization practices impart the necessary confidence, knowledge, and credibility for the newcomer to perform effectively, thus reinforcing these attributes and increasing the likelihood of future success (Feldman, 1988; Hall, 1976). Early success may lay the foundation for subsequent successes. This scenario suggests that the effects of socialization tactics will become amplified with time. Longitudinal research is needed to resolve this apparent paradox.

Second, researchers should investigate the effects of socialization tactics within the context of other topics in the socialization literature. For example, socialization tactics may affect person–job and person–organization fit (Chatman, 1991), learning socialization content (Chao et al., 1994), and involvement in work-related activities (Bauer & Green, 1994). In addition, more research is needed on the processes involved in the relations between socialization tactics and outcomes. Other processes that might underlie the impact of socialization tactics on newcomer adjustment include social support, reward mechanisms, and opportunities to develop relationships (Bauer & Green, 1994; Wanous & Colella, 1989).

Third, only two moderators for the relation between socialization tactics and newcomer adjustment have been examined (i.e., self-efficacy and tenure) in the past 5 years. Research on other potential moderator variables is needed. This is especially important in light of our increasing understanding of the importance of individual differences and the repeated calls for a more interactionist approach to socialization. Potential moderators that should be investigated include tolerance for ambiguity, self-monitoring, desire for control, self-esteem, needs for achievement and affiliation, and previous work experience.

Fourth, research is needed on how the organizational context affects the selection and application of socialization tactics. Several recent studies have examined how contextual variables influence an organization's use of human resource practices (Colarelli, 1996; Olian & Rynes, 1984). Some writers have argued that the context likely influences the choice and effectiveness of socialization practices (Fisher, 1986; Wanous & Colarelli, 1989) but research has not yet examined such linkages. Thus, little is known about why organizations use certain socialization tactics. We discuss promising contextual variables later in the section on Reinstating Context.

Finally, at least two other socialization tactics in addition to those identified by Van Maanen and Schein (1979) have been discussed in the literature (i.e., tournament vs contest and open vs closed; see Van Maanen, 1982, and Cooper, Graham, & Dyke, 1993). These tactics have not been studied to date. Research is needed to assess the effects of these neglected tactics.

Socialization Training

As noted earlier, there have been numerous calls for research that integrates the training and socialization literatures. Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992), for instance, suggested research on training methods that are based on social cognitive theory. Recent research in the training literature has demonstrated the potential of this approach for increasing training effectiveness. For example, training in behavioral modeling has been found to be more effective than more traditional training methods (i.e., lectures, tutorials; Gist, Rosen, & Schwoerer, 1988; Gist, Schwoerer, & Benson, 1989). Behavioral modeling and other training techniques based on social cognitive theory such as self-management and relapse prevention might be particularly useful for the socialization of newcomers (Gist, Bavetta, & Stevens, 1990; Gist, Stevens, & Bavetta, 1991). In addition to training methods, the integration of training and socialization research might also include the adoption of training procedures for needs assessment, socialization objectives, design of socialization programs, and appropriate criteria for evaluation (Anderson et al., 1996).

Research is also needed to determine when to provide training during the socialization process as well as the nature or content of training material that should be emphasized. For example, it is not known if socialization training should focus on technical, role, group, or organization content or on all content areas. Anderson et al. (1996) found the content of induction training to be so general that they questioned its usefulness. Indeed, this might explain why formal socialization practices such as training have been found to be less effective than more informal practices (Chatman, 1991; Louis et al., 1983; Nelson & Quick, 1991; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Thus, future research should identify the methods and content of training that are most likely to facilitate newcomers' adjustment.

Research is also needed to examine the effectiveness of different training methods relative to the characteristics of newcomers. For example, Saks (1996) found that newcomers' subjective perceptions of the amount of training they received mattered more than the actual amount. Saks (1994, 1995) reported that the effectiveness of some training methods and training in general depended on the newcomer's self-efficacy. Research that tailors entry training to newcomers' needs, expectations, and individual differences would improve our understanding of when, how much, and what methods of training are most likely to facilitate adjustment. This might require some form of needs-assessment in the design of training and socialization programs because most

organizations provide standardized training programs that do not consider newcomers' needs or specific job groups (Anderson et al., 1996).

One final area of research worth considering is the transfer of socialization training. Transfer of training is an area that has received an increasing amount of research in the training literature in the past several years but has not received very much attention in the socialization literature (for an exception, see Feldman, 1989). Some interesting issues might revolve around investigating those factors that predict newcomer transfer, and the types of interventions that are likely to facilitate newcomers' transfer of socialization training. The role of mentors, supervisors, and peers is particularly likely to be important for newcomer transfer (Feldman, 1989).

Proactive Socialization

Although proactive socialization was one of the most active areas of research in the past 5 years, many research questions remain. For example, further research is needed on the antecedents of newcomer proactivity. Possible antecedents of feedback seeking and information acquisition include the desire for control, uncertainty, perceived social costs, perceived quality of information, and the role of insiders (Ashford & Black, 1996; Major & Kozlowski, 1997; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 1993a). Although a model of newcomers' information-seeking behavior has been proposed (Miller & Jablin, 1991), the research to date has only examined parts of the total process. Future research is required to examine the complete array of factors involved including antecedents, information-seeking tactics, and outcomes. Research also should assess a greater array of information-seeking tactics available to newcomers, the amount and quality of the information received, and how the use of tactics changes over time (Miller & Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 1993a).

As noted by Ashford and Black (1996), research is needed on various individual differences and organizational characteristics, as well as more proximal outcomes such as role clarity and job understanding. Feij et al. (1995) suggest work centrality as an individual difference variable and Ashford and Black (1996) suggest tolerance for ambiguity and generalized cognitive ability. Ashford and Black (1996) also suggest socialization tactics and cultural sanctioning of proactivity as potential situational variables.

In addition, research is needed to better understand the processes involved in the relation between information seeking/proactivity and socialization outcomes (Morrison, 1993a; Saks & Ashforth, 1996). Most studies have not measured socialization processes, but rather, traditional outcomes. Therefore, it is important that future research investigate a more theoretically developed set of socialization processes and outcomes, such as learning, acculturation, and skill development. For example, it is not clear what newcomers actually do with the information they obtain. As Anderson and Thomas (1996) suggest, research is needed on how newcomers assimilate information and develop cognitive schemas and knowledge structures. This will require research that

goes beyond just seeking information to the cognitive processing of information, an approach that has been taken in other areas of industrial and organizational psychology (Lord & Maher, 1991).

Research is also needed on socialization programs that are most likely to facilitate proactivity. For example, mentors and institutionalized socialization tactics have been found to positively influence newcomer information acquisition (Mignerey et al., 1995; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). There is some evidence that newcomers' use of various forms of proactive behavior is actually quite limited (Holton, 1995; Saks & Ashforth, 1996). Given the importance of this behavior for work adjustment, it would be worthwhile to investigate the extent to which training newcomers in the use of proactive strategies increases their proactivity.

Finally, research on newcomer proactivity has focused only on what individuals can do to socialize themselves. Being proactive, however, can involve a much broader range of possibilities. For example, newcomer proactivity might include attempts to change group norms and behavior. As an example, consider a newly hired assistant professor who enters a department where research activity has waned over the years. A proactive newcomer might organize brown bag lunch meetings and an invited speakers series in order to stimulate research interest. Such proactivity might very well lead to some changes in department norms and values not to mention increased participation in research activities. This is consistent with Anderson and Thomas' (1996) notion of bi-directional influence in which newcomers can be proactive by changing their role, work group, and the organization.

Socialization Content and Learning

Although the past 5 years of research has provided some valuable insights into the content of learning during socialization, much more research is needed to establish a more exhaustive and accepted taxonomy of the content of socialization learning. Chao et al.'s (1994) six content areas represent a good beginning but other content areas of organizational socialization may exist. For example, work group socialization is an important part of organizational socialization (Anderson & Thomas, 1996) not represented in the Chao et al. (1994) taxonomy. Given the increasing importance of groups in organizations and work group socialization in particular, it would be useful to design a scale that deals exclusively with work group content and learning. In addition, the Chao et al. (1994) taxonomy does not include a dimension of role learning (i.e., newcomers' knowledge of the requirements, boundaries, responsibilities, and expectations of their role(s) within an organization). Thus, validation and extension of Chao et al.'s (1994) work is needed.

Research also is needed on the socialization strategies, processes, and interventions that facilitate learning the various content domains. Certain experiences and processes may be particularly effective for learning specific content areas. For example, training is most likely to result in learning performance

proficiency content while mentoring likely promotes learning about politics, organizational goals and values, and the organization's history (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993). Further research is needed to determine what socialization practices are most effective for newcomer learning in general and for learning specific content domains.

Research that links the learning of socialization content to socialization processes and outcomes would be worthwhile. For example, learning organizational goals and values might be related to career effectiveness because it improves person–organization fit, and performance proficiency might result in more positive job attitudes and behavior because it improves person–job fit. Research is needed on the relations between socialization learning and other key aspects of socialization, like role development, social integration, and personal change.

Finally, there is a pressing need for better measures of learning. Measures of socialization learning typically have consisted of self-reports of the extent of one's learning or knowledge rather than measuring actual knowledge. Research is needed in which independent, objective measures of newcomer learning and knowledge (e.g., work samples or supervisor evaluations) are used (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). In addition, the development of more sophisticated measures of learning and skill acquisition (i.e., measures of declarative knowledge, knowledge compilation, and procedural knowledge) is necessary to advance this research beyond its current state (Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989). Future research also would benefit by measuring socialization learning with respect to cognitive, skill-based, and affective outcomes (see Kraiger, Ford, and Salas, 1993).

Group Socialization

Anderson and Thomas (1996) remarked that the main problem associated with research on group socialization is where to begin, given the many possible directions for research. One starting point would be to test Moreland and Levine's (1982) group socialization model using organizational work groups. Moreland and Levine (in press) have cautioned that their model has some weaknesses that could limit its usefulness for work groups. Social groups tend to be more autonomous and voluntary than work groups, and Moreland and Levine's (in press) conceptualization of commitment is simpler than organizational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990b). In addition, most research has been conducted with college students in the context of artificial experimental groups or campus groups, and has tended to focus only on the first two phases of the model (i.e., investigation and socialization). This is unfortunate given that a strength of the model is its view of socialization as a multifaceted process. Thus, there is much that needs to be done to investigate the usefulness of this model for understanding work groups in organizations.

Anderson and Thomas' (1996) model also deserves scrutiny. This model has much in common with stage models of organizational socialization and

might prove most useful when integrated with some of the key aspects of Moreland and Levine's (1982) model. For example, Moreland and Levine's (1982) model is extremely micro in its description of the phases of group membership, the stages of group socialization, and the various role transitions but it lacks contextual and organizationally relevant phenomena. On the other hand, Anderson and Thomas' (1996) model incorporates the stages of organizational socialization (i.e., anticipation, encounter, and adjustment) and organizationally relevant variables (e.g., newcomer and work group characteristics, selection systems, job expectations, psychological contract, socialization processes, and performance-related outcomes). Research that integrates the more micro aspects of Moreland and Levine's (1982) model of group socialization into the organizational phenomena found in Anderson and Thomas' (1996) model is likely to be most fruitful for understanding work group socialization in organizations.

Also worth considering are the similarities and differences between work group and organizational socialization. The experience of the two forms of socialization may be quite distinct for many newcomers (Moreland & Levine, in press), especially in organizations where strong subcultures exist at the group or departmental level. This raises a number of questions about how group and organizational socialization processes differ, how newcomers interpret and react to these differences, and how managers determine which socialization practices should be based at the head or regional office and which at the subunit level. We speculate that organizational socialization will dominate in ''holographic'' organizations, where each subunit exhibits the properties of the whole, and group socialization will dominate in ''ideographic'' organizations, where each subunit exhibits a unique identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Future research should pay closer attention to the points of convergence and divergence between work group and organizational socialization and the effects each has on individual, group, and organizational outcomes.

One final promising area of research concerns the socialization of an entirely new group that is formed to complete a particular project, as opposed to the socialization of individuals into existing work groups (Anderson & Thomas, 1996; Wanous, 1992). In this case, the group itself is a new entity within the organization, and it can be expected to experience some form of organizational socialization. With the increasing use of project teams and cross-functional groups, research on the socialization of entire work groups would have great utility.

Moderators, Mediators, and Individual Differences

Although the past 5 years of research has provided empirical support for the role of individual differences in the socialization of newcomers, research in this area is still the exception rather than the rule. Further, the number of individual difference variables studied has been limited. In this regard, there

are several individual difference variables in the training literature that might be relevant for socialization research.

For example, motivation to learn and motivation to transfer have been found to be important predictors of training effectiveness (Mathieu, Tannenbaum, & Salas, 1992; Noe, 1986; Tannenbaum & Yukl, 1992). Given the immense amount of learning required of newcomers, one would expect that newcomers' motivation to learn will facilitate task, role, group, and organization learning, and motivation to transfer will facilitate newcomers' application of what they learn. Along these lines, Tannenbaum et al. (1991) found that newcomers' pre-training motivation was related to post-training commitment and self-efficacy, and suggested that ''pretraining motivation may prepare participants to receive the maximum benefits from training'' (p.765). Future research might examine ways to increase newcomers' pre-training or pre-socialization levels of motivation to learn and transfer (Tannenbaum et al., 1991).

Another potentially relevant individual difference from the training litera-ture is one's conception of ability. Individuals have been shown to adopt one of two major conceptions of ability. Those who construe ability as an acquir-able skill believe that ability can be continually improved with knowledge and practice. Individuals who construe ability as a fixed entity believe that their ability is relatively fixed and stable (Wood & Bandura, 1989b). Martoc-chio (1994) used a pre-test–post-test design and manipulated subjects' con-ceptions of ability as either a fixed entity or an acquirable skill. Subjects in the acquirable skill condition decreased in computer anxiety and increased in self-efficacy, but subjects in the fixed entity condition decreased in self-efficacy. Wood and Bandura (1989b) also manipulated conceptions of ability and found that subjects in an acquirable skill condition had higher self-efficacy, set more challenging goals, used analytic strategies more effectively, and performed better on a complex decision making task than subjects in a fixed entity condition. Based on these findings one might expect newcomers who view their ability as an acquirable skill to display greater learning and skill acquisition than newcomers who view their ability as a fixed entity.

Future research on moderating variables might consider what newcomers desire and expect during their socialization. The use of some form of needs assessment would enable the matching of individual characteristics to particu-lar types of socialization programs and the ability to test the effectiveness of socialization practices relative to newcomers' needs and individual character-istics. This approach would help in the development of a contingency ap-proach to organizational socialization (Fisher, 1986).

Much more process research that tests for mediation is also needed. Future research should investigate a much broader range of mediation variables in relation to a greater variety of socialization programs. Many possibilities can be found in Fig. 1 where the proximal outcomes are proposed as mediators for the effects of the socialization factors and learning on the distal outcomes. For example, future research might examine the extent to which variables

such as person–organization fit and person–job fit mediate the effects of learning on the distal outcomes.

Reinstating Context

As the process through which individuals learn to function effectively within a given organizational milieu, socialization is necessarily embedded within a specific context. The identity, structure, strategy, culture, and size of an organization shape socialization options. Baker and Feldman (1991), for instance, offer a normative model that links corporate human resource management strategies to socialization tactics. Thus, it is remarkable that so little research has focused on the contextual factors that facilitate and constrain socialization practices and outcomes.

Job design, technical systems, reward systems, communication systems, and leadership styles are some organizational attributes that create a local context that shapes the nature and experience of work. Factors that are likely to increase the amount and informality of interaction such as task interdependencies, task complexity, physical proximity, role ambiguity, participative leadership and decision making, group-based rather than individual-based rewards, and rewards for mentoring should increase the rate and potency of socialization. For example, Morrison and Brantner (1992) describe how job characteristics, organizational context, and environment factors are related to learning a new job, and Aryee and Chay (1994) and Chao, Walz, and Gardner (1992) chronicle the salutary effects of mentoring on the adjustment of newcomers.

The notion of context can be broadened to include extra-organizational forces, such as national culture, societal shifts in job and career preferences, emerging organizational forms and practices, changes in laws and regulations, the professionalization of occupations, development of government-sponsored and school-centered training programs, and industry and occupational norms for socialization. Research is needed that can identify the contextual factors and socialization processes that are most important, as well as on those factors that can act as substitutes or as catalysts. Socialization processes and content are shaped by and in turn shape the dynamic systems in which they are embedded. Thus, socialization research also needs to be informed by the context of work.

Socialization as a mediator of context. A fundamental tenet of the organizational behavior literature is that the milieu in which work is performed strongly affects the individual. Research has shown that organizational structures, cultures, and processes affect the cognitions, affective states, and behaviors of individuals in myriad ways (e.g., Berger & Cummings, 1979; Morgan, 1996) but the specific mechanisms through which the context produces these effects (House, Rousseau, & Thomas-Hunt, 1995; Mowday & Sutton, 1993) is unknown. We maintain that the socialization process is one key mechanism that renders the context of work both salient and meaningful to the individual. Given that work contexts are often complex and overdetermined (i.e., designed

to realize multiple purposes), the meaning(s) of a given context is inherently ambiguous and socialization helps highlight and interpret aspects of the context by structuring early work experiences and facilitating accounts of those experiences (Falcione & Wilson, 1988; Van Maanen, 1976).

Thus, depending on the course of socialization, a given context can come to connote somewhat different things to newcomers. Research on the power of socialization to mediate the meaning of context is needed to better understand these processes. For example, future research might examine the latitude that exists in interpreting a given work context, the extent to which organizations tend to extol certain themes (e.g., the organization as family) in certain contexts, the extent to which socialization can help counter negative public images of an organization or occupation, and the conditions under which newcomers actively ''collude'' in their own socialization, that is, willingly accept the interpretations that are offered.

Reinstating Richness

Socialization research typically appearing in management journals seems at times to be sterile. It emphasizes quantitative analyses of individual behaviors, attitudes, and cognitions that only scratch the surface of the individual's phenomenological experience of the dynamic process of socialization. Research could be greatly enriched by including such phenomenological constructs as identity, purpose and desire, ambivalence and resistance, intense emotion (e.g., excitement, frustration, and anger), meaning and ideology, intuition, flexibility and creativity, and hopes and dreams. Research could be further enriched by focusing on the complexities of the process through which socialization occurs, including the role of equivocality and surprise, conflict, defense mechanisms, key events, mistakes and chances, obstacles, friendships and rivalries, exploration and experimentation, personal development, and markers of progress.

Complementing organizational research with occupational research. The default assumptions of most management scholars is that of a large, for-profit organization, whose members anticipate a long career and are concerned with internal status and career advancement. These assumptions implicitly lump together many diverse occupations and organizations and implicitly ignore examples that deviate widely from the modal type.

Research focusing on occupations can provide a rich complement to research on organizations. By targeting specific occupations, and drawing comparisons between occupations, research can generate novel and provocative insights for socialization theory (cf. Coffey & Atkinson, 1994; Ulmer, 1992). As organizations continue to downsize and revise the psychological contract, as individuals continue to change jobs more often, and as the proportion of individuals in the so-called contingency workforce continues to grow, the locus of commitment and identification appears to be shifting from the organization to the occupation and work group (Handy, 1994; Stroh, Brett, & Reilly,

1994). The stereotypical career path of vertical mobility within a single organization is giving way to a multitude of alternatives. Thus, occupations and work groups are likely to become even more central to the socialization of individuals.

Event-centered research. On a more speculative note, perhaps research should focus less on individual-centered variables, like job satisfaction and role clarity, and more on experienced events, like the first invitation to lunch from co-workers or the completion of a challenging project. The variable-based approach common to most studies effectively atomizes the individual (and the groups to which he or she belongs) into abstract proxies of adjustment. The situation is usually assumed to present a more or less stable set of forces that push and pull on these proxies. However, the reality and totality of organizational life is not experienced as disaggregated variables, but as an ongoing series of episodes—of varying novelty, complexity, and ambiguity— embedded in rich contexts. For example, Gundry and Rousseau (1994) describe how newcomers came to understand their organization's culture by decoding certain ''critical incidents.'' Similarly, Bullis and Bach's (1989) concept of ''socialization turning points'' and Denzin's (1989) discussion of ''epiphanies'' allude to the sense-making that attends subjectively important events.

The meaning and impact of a given event is inherently ambiguous and can vary radically across individuals and groups and over time for a given individual or group. Sharp criticism from one's superior during the first week of employment may be construed as an indictment of one's ability and be experienced as devastating, whereas such criticism 6 months later may be construed as helpful feedback from a gruff source. Formal socialization and training programs can be seen as arenas where newcomers are exposed to certain structured events and organizationally sanctioned meanings.

Expanding the Notion of Role Transitions

Socialization research can be greatly enriched by expanding the focus beyond newcomers. Consistent with the default assumptions above, management scholars have tended to focus their socialization research on the organizational newcomer who voluntarily enters what is intended to be a more or less long-term relationship. However, socialization is an ongoing process that is important for established organizational members (Chao et al., 1994) and is relevant whenever an individual crosses a boundary (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). ''Resocialization'' is likely to become more frequent as individuals undergo job and organization changes throughout their careers. In this respect, there are a number of areas in need of research.

First, given that socialization is an ongoing process, research needs to consider how it applies to veteran workers and how veterans are resocialized following organizational change. Research in this area might also examine

the extent to which experienced organizational members strive for closure and resist continuous learning and resocialization.

Second, research might focus on how the socialization of individuals entering the organization differ from that of individuals who are promoted or transferred into new positions or departments within the organization (Kramer, 1994). Research along these lines could examine those factors that facilitate and impair a smooth transition and the potential for ''compounding effects'' caused by multiple role transitions. This is especially important in light of recent findings that individuals who changed jobs and organizations show a greater disruption in socialization content than people who changed jobs but stayed with their organization (Chao et al., 1994).

Third, research is needed on socialization in an international context and how it differs from socialization in domestic organizations (Feldman, 1997). Feldman and Tompson (1992) found that graduates in international business face not only the entry shock of the school-to-work transition, but the culture shock of working in foreign countries. Thus, there are likely to be many additional difficulties, complexities, and challenges involved in managing the socialization process within an international context but almost no research exists on the socialization of expatriates (Chao, 1997; Feldman, 1997). One exception is Black's (1992) study on socialization tactics which was discussed earlier in the paper. Given the increasing number of expatriate and repatriate job assignments in recent years, this is an area that is in desperate need of theory development and research (Chao, 1997; Feldman, 1997).

Fourth, socialization research also needs to begin to examine the socialization process for temporary roles, such as contract work, task forces, summer jobs, and relief assignments. For example, Henson's (1996) research on temporary workers suggests that many simply create a ''temporary identity'' in order to function in a specific role and workplace without placing their core sense of self at risk, and Wertsch (1992) found that children raised on military bases coped with their parents' frequent transfers by developing chameleon-like skills for quickly adapting without really vesting their emotions in a particular locale. Given this suspension of self and the increasing numbers of temporary workers in the workforce, research needs to investigate how the socialization process can be used to involve individuals in temporary but critical roles.

Finally, the focus on role entry raises the complementary issue of role exit. In this respect, research is needed on how socialization into a new role is facilitated and constrained by ties to previous roles (Louis, 1980). For example, it would be worthwhile to examine the extent to which one is indelibly affected by prior roles and socialization experiences (Hess, 1973) and the conditions where a ''clean break'' with one's past is more desirable than a gradual transition.

Multiplex socialization. In focusing on the individual–organization interface, socialization research has tended to view individuals as relatively undif-

ferentiated and the organization as relatively monolithic. In telecommunication terms, the relationship is regarded as ''simplex'' (one direction of transmission): a single collective socializes a modal individual. In reality, however, the relationship is better characterized as ''multiplex'' (multiple simultaneous transmissions): a diverse array of groups from work groups to committees, and friendship groups to unions, socializes a diverse array of individuals, and the individuals simultaneously influence the groups.

The notion of multiplex socialization raises a host of research issues. At the individuals' end of the relationship, research might consider the extent to which different kinds of people are amenable to a given socialization practice and message, and how organizations can encourage diversity, capitalize on its potential benefits (e.g., creativity), and at the same time impart an overarching set of values, norms, and beliefs. Another worthwhile issue concerns how insiders can be trained to facilitate the socialization of diverse newcomers (Major et al., 1995; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). At the groups' end, research might examine the ways that socialization processes and content are similar and different across nested groups (i.e., work group, department, division, and organization). Another issue is the extent to which there is an ''institutional stamp'' that influences all socialization processes within an organization. Our understanding of work relationships would be advanced by research on the extent to which groups in an adversarial relationship (e.g., staff–line, production–sales, and union–management) base their socialization content on intergroup differentiation or ''disidentification'' (Aronson, Blanton, & Cooper, 1995) and on defining themselves as what the other group is not.

CONCLUSION

Over 10 years ago, Fisher (1986) concluded that the process of organizational socialization was poorly understood. To a large extent, this is no longer true. In the past 5 years, socialization research has substantially contributed to our knowledge and understanding of the process, and a great deal has been learned about the role of both newcomers and organizations. The experience of socialization and resocialization is likely to become an increasingly frequent occurrence for individuals, groups, and organizations as the nature of work and careers continues to evolve. Thus, research on organizational socialization can be expected to become more important than ever in the years ahead. Making sense of the past and present can provide a solid foundation for the future.

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