Chapter Three

Attraction and Socialization

T he lifeblood of any social organization is people. For example, a university must have faculty, an auto manufacturer must have design engineers, and a professional baseball team must have players. Thus, to remain viable, all organizations must periodically go through the process of bringing in new employees and training them to become full-fledged organizational members. To begin this process, organizations must first attract potential employees and determine whether their qualifications match organizational needs. This process, however, is not unidirectional—that is, applicants are seeking out and evaluating organizations as potential employers. Once employees enter an organization, they must be trained not only to perform job-specific tasks, but also to learn the culture of the organization. This process is also bidirectional; that is, organizations do things to socialize new employees, and new employees seek out information to help them adjust to their new work environment. Taken together, this entire process can be viewed as attraction and socialization.

This chapter begins with an examination of the first stage of the attraction process, namely recruiting, from the perspective of both the organization and the applicant. As will be shown, organizations use a variety of methods to recruit potential employees, and a number of factors can impact the success of recruiting efforts. At the same time, applicants, or potential employees, evaluate the suitability of potential employers. In general, potential employees attempt to make some determination of the extent to which they fit with an organization.

The focus of the chapter then shifts to employee socialization. Once a recruit accepts employment he or she becomes an official member of an organization. In order to become a full-fledged organizational member, however, a process of socialization is needed. Organizational psychologists have examined the socialization process in an effort to understand the various tactics organizations use to socialize new employees, determine what employees learn as they are socialized, and describe the tactics new employees use to obtain information during the socialization process.

The chapter concludes with a discussion of the impact of diversity on employee

socialization. In contemporary organizations, it is quite common for new employees to enter organizations with demographic characteristics, experiences, and values that are far different from those of the majority of employees. Because of this, it may be especially difficult for such individuals to be fully socialized into an organization. Fortunately, there are steps an organization can take to deal with the impact of diversity on the socialization process.

THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS: AN ORGANIZATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The aim of recruiting is to generate a large pool of highly qualified applicants so that the organization can select those who stand the best chance of becoming successful and remaining with the organization for a long period of time. In college athletics, for example, coaches typically spend most of the off-season recruiting highly prized high school athletes. Although recruiting is usually not considered an *organizational* topic, it is covered briefly in this chapter because it is strongly related to socialization. Successful recruiting increases the chances that the new employees an organization selects will fit well into the culture of the organization and will be socialized more successfully.

Recruitment Planning

Organizations typically do not recruit new employees randomly. Rather, an organization's recruiting efforts are typically based on careful planning as to (1) the number of employees that will be needed in various jobs, (2) when these new employees will be needed, and (3) the present and future supply of potential employees in the labor market. An organization that understands these three elements of planning will be able to focus its recruiting efforts much more effectively. According to Cascio (1998), this crucial first step in the recruitment process is known as *recruitment planning*.

What type of information does an organization need to develop a sound recruitment plan? First and foremost, recruitment planning should coincide with an organization's *strategic planning*. A strategic plan can be thought of as an organization's plan for "where we're going" and "how we're going to get there." Strategic planning must be linked to recruitment planning because strategic plans often have clear implications for staffing needs. As an example, let's say the coach of a professional football team decides to replace an offensive system that relies heavily on running plays with one that relies primarily on passing. This change in strategy will require players with different skills and thus will have implications for recruiting. The coach would want to focus on obtaining a highly talented quarterback and corps of receivers, either through the college draft or by other means (e.g., trades, free-agent signings).

Another factor that should be considered in developing a recruitment plan is *succession planning*. Succession planning involves making projections as to the likelihood of turnover within various job categories. This is often done on the basis of projected retirements, but may be based on other factors as well (i.e., employees in limited-term jobs, employees returning to school). Based on these projections, an organization can often gear its recruiting efforts toward attracting individuals who have the skills necessary to perform the work of those who may be leaving the organization. As with any prediction, there is some degree of uncertainty in succession planning. For example, since there is no mandatory retirement age for most occupations, organizations are often uncertain as to the retirement plans of senior employees.

A third consideration in recruitment planning is the skills and abilities of current employees. Many organizations ask current employees to periodically complete what is known as a *skills inventory*. A skills inventory may ask employees to document their job experiences, continuing education (if any), and special skills and competencies. If current employees possess the skills and abilities needed by an organization, there is obviously less need to recruit from outside sources. This is important because filling positions internally has certain advantages (i.e., less adjustment for the employee and less cost for the organization) and may create positive incentives for employees.

A final piece of information that is useful for developing a recruitment plan is some assessment of the supply of labor for various job categories. This type of information can often be obtained relatively easily from government agencies, trade associations, and, in some cases, professional organizations. In the field of I/O psychology, for example, the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP) collects information about the supply of labor in the profession. The basic question an organization is seeking to answer is whether the supply of employees in different job categories is very plentiful or very scarce. For example, the supply of attorneys in the United States has grown to the point where they are quite plentiful in the labor market. In contrast, software developers and computer programmers are in relatively short supply.

Labor market information is useful because it will influence the approach an organization will take in its recruiting efforts, as well as the choice of specific recruiting sources. To fill jobs for which labor is in short supply, organizations may need to be highly aggressive in their recruiting efforts and perhaps offer other incentives (e.g., sign-on bonuses) to attract new employees. Such recruiting efforts may require the assistance of executive search firms and may be international in scope. This is often the case when organizations need to recruit high-level executives or highly skilled technical specialists. In contrast, when the supply of labor is plentiful, organizations may be able to devote fewer resources to recruiting efforts, and may adopt a much less aggressive and costly approach. For example, if many unskilled manual labor positions are open, organizations may rely on referrals from current employees or simply select from walk-in applicants.

Recruiting Methods

Assuming that an organization has developed a sound recruitment plan, the next step is to choose some methods of recruiting. A key decision for any organization that plans to recruit new employees is whether to invite applications from internal and external sources. The primary form of internal recruiting is advertising to current employees (i.e., through job postings). As stated earlier, recruiting internally has many advantages. Internal transfers and promotions are less expensive than bringing in new employees, may provide positive incentives for current employees, and may require less training for those employees who apply and are accepted. It has also been shown that employees recruited internally may be more likely to stay with an organization (Spector, 2006).

On the other hand, new employees recruited from the outside may bring a fresh perspective to the organization. Also, some organizations may be forced to hire outsiders because their current employees have not

acquired the skills necessary to perform a given job.

Compared to a current workforce, external recruiting sources are much more plentiful, as indicated in Table 3.1. Although a specific recruiting source may be required because of the nature of the job, some general comments can be made about recruiting sources. For example, the most frequently used recruiting source is some form of advertising—typically, in print or electronic media. Use of the Internet, in particular, has become the preferred method of recruiting for many organizations in the past 10 years (Chapman & Webster, 2003).

The recruiting sources listed in Table 3.1 indicate considerable variation in cost. The least costly recruiting sources are typically walk-ins and employee referrals. In addition to their low cost, employee referrals may be attractive because these applicants typically possess greater knowledge of the organization than other applicants do. This may explain why employees who are referred by organizational members tend to have lower levels of turnover, compared to others (Gannon, 1971; Reid, 1972). An obvious danger in reliance on employee referrals is that it may perpetuate nepotism, and the result may be an overly homogeneous workforce.

Internet advertising is also a relatively inexpensive way for organizations to advertise employment opportunities. According to a survey of human resource professionals conducted by Chapman and Webster (2003), a primary advantage of the Internet is that it allows an organization to develop a very large applicant pool due to its wide availability. It also allows an organization to screen applicants more efficiently through online application procedures, and provides a very visually appealing medium for describing the culture of an organization (Braddy, Meade, & Kroustalis, 2006).

Chapman and Webster (2003) also note some potential disadvantages associated with the use of Internet advertising. The biggest of these is that Internet advertising may generate *such* a large applicant pool that screening potential applicants becomes extremely labor intensive. Respondents in this study also noted that using the Internet resulted in somewhat of a "loss of personal" touch in the recruitment process.

The most costly recruiting methods used by organizations are the use of employment agencies and, to a lesser extent, on-campus recruiting. It should be emphasized, however, that the cost of a recruiting source should be weighed against other factors. For example, most organizations are willing to incur the cost of employment agencies or executive search firms when they must select high-level senior executives. Poor hiring decisions at this level may cost an organization millions of dollars. Campus recruiting is typically justified in cases in which organizations are seeking entry-level employees in fields where the supply of labor is relatively low (e.g., engineering, computer science, accounting). This method of recruitment also allows an organization to convey much more detailed information about its culture (Cable & Yu, 2006), which may help applicants make more informed decisions about whether or not they would fit in the organization. This could lead to greater retention in the future.

Other than cost, how else can organizations evaluate the potential usefulness of different recruiting sources? Two commonly used indexes are *yield ratios* and *time lapse data*. A yield ratio is simply the total number of candidates generated by a given recruiting source (Internet advertising, for example), relative to the number of qualified candidates. From an organization's perspective, an ideal recruiting source is one that delivers a large number of candidates who are well qualified for the position the company is attempting to fill. This allows the organization to be highly selective in making its hiring decisions.

Time lapse data represent estimates of the time it takes to go from one step to the next in the recruiting and hiring process. For example, organizations may estimate the time needed for each step that takes place between the initial contact with an applicant and the first day of employment with the organization. Time lapse data help an organization identify *bottlenecks* in the recruitment process that may cause applicants to lose interest (see Comment 3.1). When those bottlenecks are identified, an organization can sometimes take steps to speed up the process; however, this is not always possible. For example, recruitment for government jobs that require security clearance has to be quite lengthy to allow for background investigations.

THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS: THE APPLICANT'S PERSPECTIVE

From the organization's perspective, the recruitment process involves trying to "put our best foot forward" in order to attract potential employees. At the same time, we know that applicants are trying to determine which organizations are most attractive to them. In this section, we examine how, and on what basis, applicants make such judgments about organizations.

In a very general sense, when applicants evaluate potential employers, they are making some judgment as to whether they fit with these organizations. An applicant is really asking himself or herself: "Can I see myself doing this job in this organization?" This question can obviously be answered on

TABLE 3.1
Typical External Recruiting Sources Used by Organizations

1. Advertising: newspapers (classified and display), technical and professional journals, direct mail, television, the Internet, and (in some cases) outdoor advertising.
2. Employment agencies: federal and state agencies, private agencies, executive search firms, management consulting firms, and agencies specializing in temporary help.
3. Educational institutions: technical and trade schools, colleges and universities, coop work/study programs, and alumni placement offices.
4. Professional organizations: technical societies' meetings, conventions (regional and national), and placement services.
5. Military: out-processing centers and placement services administered by regional and national retired officers' associations.
6. Labor unions.
7. Career fairs.
8. Outplacement firms.
9. Walk-ins.
10. Write-ins.
11. Company retirees.
12. Employee referrals.

Source: W. F. Cascio. (1998). *Applied psychology in personnel management* (5th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, NJ.

COMMENT 3.1

RESEARCH ON RECRUITING

BECAUSE OF THE importance of recruiting, there has been considerable research on it over the years (see Rynes, 1991). One theme is very evident in recruiting research: The recruiter is not a key factor in whether an applicant decides to accept employment with an organization. Rather, the nature of the job and other conditions of employment (e.g., salary, benefits, promotion potential) appear to be much more important. The one thing about recruiters that does appear to be important, however, is their knowledge of the job that an applicant is seeking. This may be the reason that organizations often select technical specialists to recruit in their technical specialty.

Another very clear theme in the recruiting literature—the way organizations treat applicants during the recruiting process—is important. For example, if an organization treats applicants rudely, or is very lax about keeping them informed, this approach will turn off applicants and make them less likely to accept an offer of employment. Why is this the case? Most recruiting researchers contend that, during the recruiting process, applicants form an impression of a potential employer. Thus, when an applicant is not treated well during the recruiting process, negative *signals* tell the applicant what the organization would be like as an employer.

Most recently, research on recruiting has shown that the image organizations project to potential applicants is very important. In much the same way that consumers form perceptions of different brands of the same product (e.g., different brands of beer), job seekers form

perceptions of different employers. Research has also shown that these perceptions are an important determinant of whether or not job seekers pursue employment with a given organization. The practical implication of these recent findings is that organizations need to pay close attention to the image they portray in recruiting materials, company websites, and even advertising.

In summary, research has shown that, in comparison to many other factors, recruiting does not have a large impact on applicants' decision making. Nevertheless, the recruiting process is important, largely because, if not done well, it has the potential to turn off applicants. Organizations should strive to employ knowledgeable recruiters who treat applicants with respect. It is also imperative that organizations attempt to avoid lengthy time delays, and to maintain contact with applicants during the recruitment process. Organizations must also be aware of the image they project to potential applicants, as well as the general public.

Sources: S. L. Rynes. (1991). Recruitment, job choice, and post-hire consequences: A call for new research directions. In M. D. Dunnette and L. M. Hough (Eds.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (2nd ed., Vol. 2, pp. 399–444). Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists' Press; S. L. Rynes, R. D. Bretz, Jr., and B. Gerhart. (1991). The importance of recruitment in job choice: A different way of looking. *Personnel Psychology, 44*, 487–522; Lievens, F., & Highhouse, S. (2003). A relation of instrumental and symbolic attributes to a company's attractiveness as an employer. *Personnel Psychology, 56*, 75–102.

many levels; thus, some explanation is needed as to the bases on which applicants' assessments of fit are made. Perhaps the easiest dimension on which applicants can make an assessment of fit is whether their

skills and abilities must match the skills and abilities required to perform a given job (Kristof, 1996). For most faculty positions in universities, for example, a Ph.D. in one's specialty is required, and in many cases,

some teaching experience is desired. If a person does not have a Ph.D., he or she obviously would not fit in such a position.

Assuming that an applicant does possess the necessary job-relevant skills and abilities, what other bases does that applicant use to assess his or her fit with a particular organization? According to Schneider's (1987) *Attraction–Selection–Attrition* framework, applicants are attracted to and stay in organizations with cultures that are compatible with their personalities. Compared to judgments about skills, abilities, and credentials, making judgments about an organization's culture is far more difficult. Since applicants are not organizational members, they typically must rely on *secondhand* information sources such as company websites (Cober, Brown, Levy, Cober, & Keeping, 2003), company recruiting brochures (Cable & Yu, 2006), and experiences they have had with an organization as a consumer (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Despite the difficulty of making this type of assessment, research has generally supported the ASA framework; that is, members of organizations, and even work groups, tend to be rather homogeneous in terms of personality (George, 1990; Jordan, Herriot, & Chalmers, 1991; Schaubroeck, Ganster, & Jones, 1998; Schneider, Smith, Taylor, & Fleenor, 1998).

To simply say that applicants are attracted to organizations with cultures they perceive to be compatible with their personalities is a rather imprecise statement. Such a statement begs the question: What aspects of personality, and what aspects of organizational culture? To address this question, Judge and Cable (1997) investigated the relationship between the Big Five personality traits (neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) and job applicants' attraction to

organizations with different cultural profiles. Organizational culture can be thought of as the underlying values and basic assumptions that guide much of the behavior of organizational members. (See Chapter 14 for a more extensive examination of organizational culture.)

The results of this study showed that applicants were attracted to organizations with cultural profiles that were congruent with their personalities. As an example of how this works, consider the personality trait of *conscientiousness*. A person who is highly conscientious is dependable and achievement oriented, and plans well. Judge and Cable's (1997) study showed that those who are highly conscientious prefer organizations with cultures that can be described as highly detail oriented, and that place an emphasis on tangible outcomes. This may very well be due to the fact that highly conscientious individuals are meticulous about their work and are likely to produce tangible outcomes.

More recent research has supported Judge and Cable's (1997) findings, with one qualification. Specifically, there is evidence that applicants tend to make judgments about organizations in much the same way that consumers make judgments about different products (e.g., Cable & Turban, 2001). Furthermore, this information may be more salient than judgments about organizational culture when decisions are made whether to pursue employment with a particular organization. According to Lievens and Highhouse (2003), this has important practical implications for recruitment because organizations need to be aware of how they portray themselves in advertisements and other media such as organization websites.

Another way that applicants may judge their fit to a particular organization is on the

basis of commonality in perceived values. Values simply represent things that are important to people and organizations. Suppose that a person places a strong emphasis on the value of individual achievement. It is unlikely that this person would be attracted to an organization that places a strong emphasis on the value of teamwork and collective achievement. Several studies have in fact demonstrated that applicants are attracted to organizations that they perceive to have values similar to their own (Chatman, 1991; Dawis, 1990). The major implication is that an organization must be careful

to convey accurate information to applicants regarding its values. Obviously, though, applicants base their judgments of an organization's values on more than just recruiting materials. For example, applicants may base such judgments on information from others, encounters with the organization (e.g., as a customer), and the way the organization is portrayed in the media. A broader implication is that organizations must clarify their values and attempt to operate in a way that is consistent with those values. These findings suggest that value clarification is also a useful exercise for applicants (see Comment 3.2).

COMMENT 3.2

VALUE CLARIFICATION: WHAT WOULD YOU WALK THE I-BEAM FOR?

VALUES REPRESENT THINGS, ideas, or goals that are important to people. For one person, acquiring material wealth may be extremely important; for another, the most important thing might be to help other people. There is evidence that when people search for jobs, careers, and organizations, values play a very important role. That is, people want their work lives to be compatible with their values.

Despite the importance of values, many people never take the time to seriously clarify what their values are. However, value clarification occurs very quickly when people have to make choices. Many readers may recall when they were involved in the process of selecting a college to attend. For some, being able to maintain regular contact with family and friends is highly valued, and therefore their choice may be heavily influence by geographical location. For others, the prestige of the institution is most highly valued, and thus they may attend a highly prestigious college located far from home. Of course the most difficult situation is one in which all of one's choices possess highly valued attributes.

An example of a more dramatic way to look at value clarification was encountered by one of the authors while attending a training seminar several years ago. The person leading the seminar described a situation in which an I-beam approximately six inches wide was placed between the roofs of two skyscrapers that were about 50 feet apart. Needless to say, walking across this I-beam would be extremely dangerous. She then asked one of the seminar participants whether he would walk across this I-beam if $100,000 were waiting at the other end. When he quickly responded "No," she then asked whether he had any children. When he replied that he had two sons, ages 5 and 3, she asked whether he would walk this I-beam if his 5-year-old son were stranded on it. As you might guess, his response was now an unequivocal "Yes." (This man obviously didn't have teenagers yet!) Few situations in life require such dramatic value clarification. However, it is a good way to begin thinking about what one really values in life. So the next time you're unsure about your values, asking yourself "What would I walk the I-beam for?" might provide some useful answers.

In addition to personality and values, applicants may make other assessments of fit, based on a variety of other factors. For example, an applicant may have strong feelings about work-family issues, and thus be attracted to organizations that are very progressive regarding work-family initiatives (Cunningham, 2005). Some people seek membership in organizations for more ideological reasons. As an example, enlistment in the armed services is due at least partially to feelings of patriotism.

ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION

Assuming that an organization is able to attract a pool of highly qualified applicants, it will obviously utilize some selection procedures, make offers to applicants, and ultimately end up with new employees. When someone is hired, a process of socialization is required to transform the new *outsider* employee into a full-fledged organizational member. In this section, organizational socialization is defined, models of the organizational socialization process are reviewed, and tactics used by both organizations and newcomers during the socialization process are described. The concluding section examines the impact of diversity on organizational socialization efforts.

Defining Organizational Socialization

Organizational socialization represents the process by which an individual makes the transition from *outsider* to *organizational member*. What does a person have to learn in order to make this transition successfully? According to Van Maanen and Schein (1979), in the broadest sense, socialization involves learning the culture of an organiza-

tion. Thus, socialization is synonymous with the process of *acculturation* of new organizational members. Another important part of the socialization of new members is learning the task-related and social knowledge necessary to be successful members of an organization (Louis, 1990). Stated differently, socialization is about learning to do your job effectively and getting along with others in the organization.

One of the most comprehensive definitions of organizational socialization was provided by Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, and Gardner (1994). Their definition, which contains six dimensions, encompasses elements of task-related learning, knowledge of the social climate, and culture transmission. These six dimensions are presented in Table 3.2.

The first dimension proposed is *history*. As new employees become socialized into an organization, they gradually become familiar with an organization's history, which may include long-held customs and traditions. Many organizations provide newcomers with this information during their initial orientation. New employees at Walt Disney World, for example, learn a great deal about the life of Walt Disney and the traditions of the Disney Corporation in their initial training, which is called "Traditions 101" (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

TABLE 3.2

Six Dimensions of Organizational Socialization (Chao et al., 1994)

1. History.
2. Language.
3. Politics.
4. People.
5. Organizational goals and values.
6. Performance proficiency.

The second dimension of socialization is *language*. All organizations utilize some terminology and jargon that is more familiar to organizational members than to outsiders. Some of this language may reflect the dominant profession within an organization (e.g., a law firm), but in many cases it is also organization specific. Perhaps the best example of organization-specific terminology is in the military. Newcomers to military organizations quickly learn about the reliance on military-specific terminology and acronyms. For example, *presentations* are referred to as *briefings*, and *assignments* are referred to as *missions*. With respect to acronyms, some readers may recall a hilarious scene in the movie *Good Morning, Vietnam,* in which the actor Robin Williams manages to squeeze every possible military acronym into one sentence. Having worked as contractors for the U.S. Army in the past, both authors can personally attest to the reliance on acronyms in the military (see Comment 3.3).

A third aspect of socialization is *politics*. As newcomers become socialized into an organization, they gradually begin to understand the politics or *unwritten rules* that govern behavior within the organization. For example, this may involve learning how to get things done, how to obtain desirable work assignments, and who the most influential people in the organization are. Such things may appear to be obvious at first, but they may actually be more complex. In many organizations, newcomers often find that power and influence are only moderately related to hierarchical level. For example, clerical employees can sometimes become very influential because they control the flow of information and access to those at higher levels of the organizations.

The fourth dimension of socialization is *people*. Most organizational newcomers typically belong to some group or unit, so they must establish and maintain good working relationships with others. This may involve establishing relationships both within the work group and in the organization as a whole. Such relationships provide friendship to newcomers, but they also provide valuable information about the organization (Morrison, 2002). For example, they may help a newcomer to understand the history and politics of the organization, help them to master their job tasks, and help clarify their roles within their work groups (Morrison, 2002). In many universities, for example, this process is facilitated by pairing new faculty with senior faculty mentors. These mentoring relationships are important in helping newcomers to adjust to their new surroundings, make contacts within the university, and understand the history of the institution.

The fifth dimension is *organizational goals and values*. Although members of organizations do not become robots who blindly follow orders, they must learn the goals and values of the organization and, to some extent, assimilate them as their own. An employee working for McDonald's, for example, must learn to get at least somewhat *fired up* about the prospect of satisfying customers. As stated earlier, some of this learning is accomplished in the attraction stage because employees tend to be attracted to organizations that they identify with ideologically. However, applicants typically do not have a complete grasp of the goals and values of an organization until they become regular employees.

The final dimension of socialization, according to Chao et al. (1994), is *performance proficiency*. All organizational newcomers must learn to perform their jobs proficiently or they will not be able to maintain their membership for long. Building performance proficiency is a complex process that involves developing an understanding of one's job duties, as well as acquiring the specific skills necessary to perform them. As will be shown later in this chapter, a consistent theme in the organizational socialization literature is that this dimension is the top priority of new employees when they initially enter an organization. This is understandable; rewards and other future opportunities within the organization are often contingent on performance.

The Socialization Process: An Organizational Perspective

The process of organizational socialization can be viewed from two distinct perspectives: (1) the organization and (2) the newcomer. When viewed from an organizational perspective, the focus is on the stages newcomers pass through during the socialization process, and the socialization tactics used by organizations to get them through these stages. When viewed from the perspective of the newcomer, the focus is on the ways in which newcomers learn about and make sense of their new organizational environment. In this section, we examine socialization from an organizational perspective.

Stages of Socialization

Organizational psychologists have tended to view socialization largely in terms of stages that new employees pass through during the socialization process. Feldman (1976, 1981)

COMMENT 3.3

### ACRONYMS AND MILITARY CULTURE

ONE OF THE biggest shocks for civilians working for or with the military is the heavy reliance on acronyms in the military. For example, the person you are working most closely with is your POC (Point of Contact), and when someone goes to another location temporarily, he or she is TDY (Temporary Duty). Both authors have worked extensively with the U.S. Army, so we're both very familiar with military acronyms. Dr. Britt was an officer in the U.S. Army, so he no doubt was familiarized during basic training. Dr. Jex first encountered military acronyms during work on a year-long research contract for the United States Recruiting Command (USAREC, of course) in the early 1990s. Evidently, the people we were working with on this project were concerned about the contractors' lack of understanding of military acronyms; they provided a booklet explaining the meaning of all military acronyms—the booklet was about an inch thick! However, once everyone working on the project learned some of the more important acronyms, they actually became quite comfortable with this form of communication.

Why does the military make such extensive use of acronyms? Although there is no *official* explanation for this, most likely acronyms were adopted because they facilitate speed of communication, something that might be critical during an actual military operation. Acronyms also serve to distinguish the military from other types of organizations.

FIGURE 3.1
Feldman's (1981) Model of the Stages of Organizational Socialization
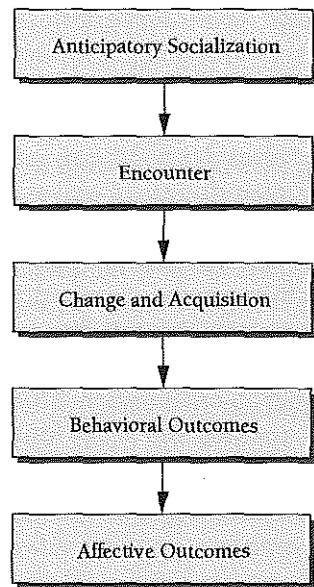
Source: D. C. Feldman. (1981). The multiple socialization of organization members. *Academy of Management Review*, 6, 309–318. Reprinted by permission of the Copyright Clearance Center.

proposed what has become the most influential stage model of organizational socialization. This model is presented in Figure 3.1.

The first stage in this model is *anticipatory socialization*, which refers to processes that occur before an individual joins an organization. This form of socialization typically occurs during the recruitment phase, when applicants gather information about the organization and make some assessment of whether they would fit within it. As stated earlier, applicants rely on a number of information sources to make this assessment (e.g., recruitment brochures, company representatives, company websites, past experiences as a consumer). Although all these information sources are helpful to applicants, they are obviously not *firsthand* so the accuracy of this assessment may vary.

In some cases, however, anticipatory socialization may actually occur much earlier than the recruitment phase. For example, people often have an opportunity to *try out* certain occupations through internships, summer jobs, or other related experiences. According to Feldman (1981), anticipatory socialization is most valuable when an applicant has a realistic picture of the organization and the job he or she will be performing. In fact, much research has been done on the value of realistic job previews (RJPs), which prepare new employees for the realities of the jobs they will be performing and the organizations they will be working in (e.g., Wanous, 1989). Related to this, it is also desirable if the applicant actually has the skills and abilities that are congruent with the job being sought, and has needs and values that are congruent with the organization.

As the newcomer moves into the organization and becomes an official member, the *encounter* stage begins. According to Feldman (1981), this stage represents the point at which the newcomer begins to see the job and organization as they really are. For a number of reasons, this period may require considerable adjustment. The newcomer may have to balance the demands placed on him or her by the organization with family demands. A new attorney in a large law firm, for example, may find that new associates are expected to work in excess of 80 hours per week if they want to eventually become partners. This is also the time when the new employee is learning the demands of his or her role within the organization. Often, this simply requires clarification of role responsibilities with one's supervisor, but it may also involve mediating conflicting role demands.

After new employees become acclimated to their new roles, they eventually reach the stage labeled by Feldman as *change and*

acquisition. At this point, the employee has become fairly comfortable with his or her new role both in terms of performing required job tasks and, perhaps more importantly, adjusting to the culture of the organization. At this point, an employee is *firing on all cylinders*, so to speak. For an attorney, this would be the point at which he or she is handling a number of cases and is comfortable doing so. During the change and acquisition phase, the new employee has also come to some resolution regarding role demands; that is, the employee has gained, from his or her supervisor and coworkers, a good understanding of what is and is not expected. At this point employees are also able to achieve some reasonable balance between their work and their personal lives.

To a large extent, when the change and acquisition stage is reached, the new employee has become *socialized*, at least according to the model. To assess the *extent* of socialization, Feldman included behavioral and affective outcomes within the model. At a behavioral level, the extent of socialization can be assessed by whether an employee is capable of carrying out his or her role-related assignments. For example, we would hardly consider the socialization process successful if an employee were unable to perform his or her job.

A second behavioral index of socialization is the extent to which an employee is spontaneously innovative in carrying out role responsibilities, and is cooperative with other employees. According to Van Maanen and Schein (1979), when an employee is socialized into a new role, this may take the form of *custodianship, content innovation*, or *role innovation*. A custodial approach requires simply performing a role exactly *as written*, with little or no deviation. Most readers have undoubtedly heard the phrase "It's not in my job description." Content innovation and role

innovation, on the other hand, imply that the new role occupant may introduce changes into the content or even into the nature of the role. An example of content innovation might be a physician informing patients directly about the results of lab tests rather than having nurses do this. An example of role innovation might be expanding the role of production workers to include not only product assembly, but also quality control and perhaps even communication with product end users. Feldman's model proposes that putting one's stamp on the new role being occupied is an aspect of socialization.

A third behavioral index of the extent of socialization is turnover. If an employee leaves an organization, one could certainly make the case that this represents a breakdown in the socialization process (Feldman, 1981). This is only partially true, however; turnover may occur because of plentiful job opportunities (Carsten & Spector, 1987), or because an employee has exceptional skills and thus may have opportunities in other organizations (Schwab, 1991). It is also possible for an employee to remain in an organization but resist being fully socialized (see Comment 3.4).

Affective outcomes associated with socialization refer to things such as attitudes toward work, level of motivation, and involvement in one's job. According to Feldman's model, when employees are successfully socialized, they tend to exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction, internal work motivation, and job involvement. As with turnover, these outcomes may also be impacted by many factors and are thus imperfect indicators of socialization.

Recently, researchers have proposed that the most immediate outcome of socialization is to increase an employee's sense of *embeddedness* within the organization. Embeddedness reflects the degree to which employees feel

COMMENT 3.4

ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION AND CONFORMITY

As NEWCOMERS BECOME socialized into an organization, they begin to understand the organization's culture. Furthermore, once they understand an organization's culture, they begin to assimilate that culture. Thus, it is assumed that one of the signs that an organization is not successful in socializing new employees is turnover. Those who do not conform to an organization's culture end up leaving that organization. This may be true in some cases but, in others, nonconformists end up staying in an organization.

Based on what we know about turnover, there may be situations in which an individual does not embrace the culture of an organization, yet has few other employment options. The nonconforming employee may simply learn ways to cope with working in such an organization. There may also be individuals who do not embrace the culture of an organization, yet may work there for a variety of reasons—compensation, geographical preferences, or simply because it's easier than looking for another job. Such employees may also find ways to cope with working for an organization that they do not fit into.

There may be cases, however, when an employee does not conform and the organization must adapt. If an employee is unusually talented, or possesses a very rare skill, an organization may in some cases be forced to put up with a great deal of nonconformity. A good example of this can be found in Jeffrey Pearlman's 2006 book *Love me, Hate me: Barry Bonds and the Making of an Antihero*. In this book Pearlman describes how the San Francisco Giants have essentially treated Barry Bonds like royalty, despite the fact that the star outfielder is often rude and condescending to fans, members of the media, and at times even his own teammates. If Bonds were unable to hit home runs, it is highly unlikely that the Giants would put up with such behavior. Employees in most organizations have far less freedom to deviate from conventional norms of conduct than Barry Bonds.

Source: Pearlman, J. (2006). *Love me, hate me: Barry Bonds and the making of an antihero*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc.

COMMENT 3.5

SOCIALIZATION INTO ACADEMIA

For MOST PROFESSORS, socialization begins during graduate training and continues into the first job out of graduate school. Traditionally, socialization into academia has been a rather informal process; newcomers essentially navigate their own way through. In many graduate programs, advanced students are assigned to teach courses without a great deal of guidance. In some departments, graduate student instructors are assigned a faculty mentor they can go to if they have questions, but they are pretty much on their own in teaching the courses. This same basic approach is often used when graduate students make the transition into faculty positions. Other than some very general guidelines, and occasional advice from a kind senior colleague, most new faculty are left alone to navigate their way through the first years of academia.

In recent years, there has been a trend in many universities to institute formal mentoring programs for new faculty, and for graduate students seeking to pursue academic careers (Perlman, McCann, & McFadden, 1999). In the case of graduate students, formal instruction is provided in teaching and in working

with students. New faculty mentoring programs typically involve assigning new faculty to a more senior faculty mentor. A mentor may provide advice on things such as teaching, beginning a research program, the tenure process, and even navigating university politics. Do formal mentoring programs produce better quality faculty? This is a difficult question to answer because few, if any, programs have been systematically evaluated. However, one would assume that most new faculty probably find such programs helpful. The only potential downside to formal mentoring is that if it is too formal, it may decrease the creativity and individuality of new faculty. Although there is a certain amount of comfort in having a senior colleague there to provide advice in difficult situations, navigating those difficult situations alone can result in a great deal of growth and development for new faculty.

Source: B. Perlman, L. I. McCann, and S. H. McFadden. (1999). How to land that first teaching job. In B. Perlman, L. I. McCann, and S. H. McFadden (Eds.), *Lessons learned: Practical advice for the teaching of psychology*. Washington, DC: The American Psychological Society.

connected to others in the organization, feel as though they fit in, and feel as though they would give something up by leaving (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Erez, 2001).

Socialization Tactics

Feldman's (1981) model, which describes the stages employees go through during the socialization process, has received empirical support (e.g., Feldman, 1976), but it does not describe the specific tactics organizations use to socialize newcomers. For example,

what exactly does a police department do to *break in* new recruits after they graduate from the training academy? What methods does a major league baseball team use to help talented minor league players make the difficult transition to playing at the major league level? How does a university help a new professor make the transition from graduate school to faculty status (see Comment 3.5)?

The most comprehensive description of socialization tactics was provided by Van Maanen and Schein (1979) in their review

of the organizational socialization literature. According to these authors, socialization tactics can be described according to the six dimensions that are presented in Table 3.3. Note that these are not specific tactics per se, but dimensions that form a very useful framework for understanding specific tactics. As can be seen, organizations may opt to socialize new organizational members collectively or individually. As an example of collective socialization, an organization might bring in a group of new recruits and put them through an extensive training

course together. In state police departments, for example, large groups of individuals are typically hired at the same time, and these

TABLE 3.3

Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) Six Dimensions of Organizational Socialization Tactics

Collective	Individual
Formal	Informal
Sequential	Random
Fixed	Variable
Serial	Disjunctive
Investiture	Divestiture

individuals subsequently attend a training academy as a group or cohort. Among the clear advantages of collective socialization include being more economical from the organization's perspective and providing opportunities for newcomers to develop a sense of cohesion and camaraderie among themselves. Allen (2006), for example, found that collective socialization was associated with stronger feelings of embeddedness among members of a financial services firm. According to Van Maanen and Schein, a potential danger of collective socialization is that it is most likely to produce only a custodial orientation among newcomers; that is, newcomers socialized in this manner may not be particularly innovative in performing their roles.

Examples of individual socialization would include skilled apprenticeship programs and, in a more general sense, mentoring. This form of socialization is typically used when the information a newcomer must learn is very complex, and when socialization takes place over a long period of time. Compared to group socialization, individual socialization allows an organization somewhat more control over the information passed on to the newcomer, and this is more likely to produce outcomes that are desired by the organization. For example, Van Maanen and Schein (1979) point out that those socialized individually are more likely to be innovative in the way they carry out their roles, as compared to those socialized collectively. It has also been shown that individual socialization may lead to greater role clarity (Jaskyte, 2005).

Despite the apparent value of individual socialization, there are some drawbacks. One obvious drawback is cost. For a senior manager to give one-on-one mentoring to a management trainee, or for a master plumber to work with a journeyman, is time consuming and expensive. Also, in certain occupations a custodial role orientation encouraged by collective socialization is desirable. For example, if a police officer does not follow proper procedures when making an arrest, the chances of obtaining a conviction may be very slim. Also, if soldiers do not adhere strictly to agreed-on rules of engagement during peacekeeping missions, their actions may result in violations of international law.

The second dimension depicted in Table 3.3 is formal versus informal. Police recruits' attendance at a residential training academy is an example of formal organizational socialization (e.g., Van Maanen, 1975). Note from the previous discussion that this is also collective socialization, although all forms of formal socialization need not be collective. For example, doctoral students are being socialized into their chosen professions in the context of a formal program of study. Within doctoral programs, however, much of the socialization takes place during informal interactions between students and their faculty mentors. The most common form of informal socialization is the very familiar on-the-job training. The new employee is not distinguished from more experienced colleagues, but his or her initial performance expectations are obviously lower.

According to Van Maanen and Schein (1979), formal socialization tends to be used in situations in which newcomers are expected to assume new ranks or achieve a certain status in an organization, when there is a large body of knowledge for newcomers to learn, or when errors on the part of a new employee may put others (including the newcomers themselves) at risk. This would certainly apply to law enforcement jobs, as well as many forms of professional training (e.g., law, medicine, dentistry). Informal socialization, on the other hand, is most typical when it is necessary for a newcomer to quickly learn new skills and work methods, or to develop highly specific practical skills. This would apply to a wide variety of workers, such as convenience store clerks, restaurant employees, and production employees in manufacturing.

Formal socialization assures the organization that all newcomers have a relatively standardized set of experiences during the socialization process. In professions such as law, medicine, and dentistry, the commonality in educational programs ensures that those entering these professions have a common base of knowledge. A potential drawback of formal socialization is that it may lead to a custodial approach to one's role. As stated earlier, this is desirable in some cases. In other cases, however, some innovation is desirable even if the role occupant has to acquire a fairly standard set of facts and knowledge. Medical training, for example, involves the formal acquisition of a great deal of information. This is obviously necessary in order to diagnose and treat many illnesses. At times, however, physicians may also need to deviate from doing things by the book in order to provide high-quality care for their patients. For example, a patient may have an illness that is a very rare condition and that requires an unconventional form of treatment. Informal socialization allows employees to develop their own unique perspective on their roles, and to introduce changes in those roles when they are able to perform independently.

Socialization tactics can also be viewed in terms of whether they are sequential versus random. For example, to become a physician, one is required to complete a clearly defined sequence of steps: undergraduate training, medical school, internship, and residency. In contrast, for many management positions in organizations, socialization is more random because there is no clear sequence of steps that one must follow. Rather, over time, one gradually acquires the skills and experiences necessary to assume progressively higher levels of managerial responsibility.

According to Van Maanen and Schein (1979), a sequential approach to socialization is typically used when employees are being socialized to move up through a clearly defined organizational hierarchy. In the Army, for example, an officer cannot assume the rank of colonel before passing through lower-level ranks such as captain, major, and lieutenant colonel. Because of these clearly defined steps, sequential socialization tends to produce more of a custodial than an innovative role orientation. In many organizations, for example, employees must *put in their time* at headquarters if they hope to obtain promotions in the future. When socialization is more random, however, new employees may be exposed to a greater variety of views and opinions regarding their roles. As a result, such individuals may be more innovative regarding their specific role responsibilities or perhaps even the way their roles fit into the organization.

Socialization efforts may also be distinguished in terms of being fixed versus variable. When socialization is fixed, a newcomer knows in advance when certain transition points will occur. In many entry-level management training programs, for example, new employees know in advance that they will be rotated through the organization for a specific period of time before being granted a permanent assignment. When socialization is variable, the organization does not tell the new employee when transitions will occur. Instead, the message often given is that a new assignment will be forthcoming "when we feel you're ready to handle it," and no specifics are

given as to how and when readiness will be determined.

Fixed socialization patterns are most typically associated with changes in an employee's hierarchical status. In academic institutions, for example, faculty rank is determined in this fashion. Typically, a fixed number of years must be invested before a faculty member can move from assistant to associate, and, finally, to full professor. An advantage of fixed socialization is that it gives an employee greater time to understand his or her role (Jaskyte, 2005), and tends to make an employee feel more a part of the organization (Allen, 2006). It is unlikely, though, that a fixed period of time can be specified before a newcomer in an organization is fully accepted and trusted by his or her coworkers.

According to Van Maanen and Schein (1979), fixed socialization is more likely than variable socialization to facilitate innovative role responses. Variable socialization tends to create anxiety among new employees, and such anxiety acts as a strong motivator toward conformity. Variable socialization also keeps new employees *off balance* and at the mercy of socializing agents within the organization. At first glance, this may appear ideal from the organization's perspective, but it can backfire. If an organization is very arbitrary or vague about the speed of a new employee's career progression, highly talented employees may simply leave for better jobs.

Socialization efforts may also be distinguished as being serial or disjunctive. When socialization occurs in a serial fashion, experienced members groom newcomers to assume similar types of positions in the organization. In most police departments, for example, recruits fresh from academy training are paired with veteran police officers who help them to *learn the ropes*. In addition to fulfilling a training function, serial social-

ization serves to pass on the culture of the organization from one generation to the next. For example, during the socialization process, experienced employees often pass on the history and folklore of the organization to newcomers. Disjunctive socialization, in contrast, occurs when new recruits do not follow in the footsteps of their predecessors, or where no role models are available. This would occur when a new employee occupies a newly created position, or one that has been vacant for some time.

According to Van Maanen and Schein (1979), serial socialization is more likely than disjunctive socialization to facilitate social acceptance into an organization, which is closely related to the previously described term *embeddedness* (Mitchell et al., 2001). In many organizations, it is often necessary to *come up through the ranks* in order to be truly accepted by others. Serial socialization is also useful in situations where moving up in the organizational hierarchy requires some continuity in skills, values, and attitudes. In the military, for example, a person coming from the civilian world might have the necessary managerial and technical skills to assume a high-level rank. However, such a person would likely have difficulty due to a lack of the understanding of military culture and traditions that is needed for such a position. This is also true in academic departments when new graduate students enter each year (Slaughter & Zickar, 2006).

Serial and disjunctive socialization also differ in that serial socialization is more likely than disjunctive socialization to be associated with a custodial role orientation. Disjunctive socialization, on the other hand, is more likely to facilitate innovation. Both approaches to socialization, however, carry certain inherent risks. The custodial role orientation facilitated by serial socialization

is desirable if the experienced member of the organization—the person doing the socializing—does his or her job well and projects the correct image of the organization. If this is not the case, a serial approach to socialization may perpetuate a *culture of mediocrity* within the organization. This process can be seen when professional sports teams are unsuccessful year after year. In many cases, veteran players on such teams pass on a culture of losing to newcomers.

An advantage of disjunctive socialization is that it may allow a newcomer to define his or her role in a very innovative and original manner. This, however, requires considerable personal initiative on the part of the employee. An employee who is not highly motivated, or who perhaps lacks confidence, may flounder if socialized in this manner (Gruman, Saks, and Zweig, 2006). Newcomers socialized in this manner may also become influenced by persons in the organization who do not have particularly desirable work habits. If disjunctive socialization is used, organizations may have to do considerable screening during the hiring process, and carefully monitor those who participate in the socialization process.

The final dimension of organizational socialization tactics depicted in Table 3.3 is the distinction between an investiture versus a divestiture approach. When investiture socialization is used, the organization capitalizes on the unique skills, values, and attitudes the newcomer brings to the organization. The organization is telling the newcomer: "Be yourself" because becoming a member of the organization does not require one to change substantially. Many organizations attempt to communicate this message during orientation programs and in a variety of other ways (e.g., giving employees discretion over how they do their jobs). Perhaps the most powerful way to communicate this

message is simply via the way the newcomer is treated in day-to-day interactions. If a newcomer is punished for displaying his or her individuality, this suggests that the organization does not want to capitalize on that employee's unique characteristics.

When divestiture socialization is used, an organization seeks to fundamentally change the new employee. An organization may wish to make the new employee forget old ways of doing things, and perhaps even old attitudes or values. Put differently, the organization is not building on what the new employee brings to the job; instead, it seeks a more global transformation. The first year of many forms of professional training involves a good deal of divestiture socialization. During the first year of doctoral training in many fields (including psychology), for example, students are taught to view problems from a scientific perspective and to base their judgments on empirical data. For many students, this is a form of divestiture socialization (albeit a mild one) because they typically have not thought this way prior to entering graduate training. More dramatic examples of divestiture socialization are used in organizations such as religious cults, radical political groups, and organized crime families. In these cases, new members may be required to abandon all forms of personal identity and give their complete loyalty to the organization.

According to Van Maanen and Schein (1979), divestiture socialization tends to be used when recruits first enter an organization, or when they are striving to gain social acceptance. For example, a new law-school graduate may dramatically change many of his or her attitudes and assumptions during the first transition to practicing law. Changes in lifestyle and spending habits may also be necessary in order to gain social acceptance among other attorneys in a law firm. Failure to make such changes may lead to social

isolation and perhaps to disillusionment with one's chosen profession.

Perhaps not surprisingly, research has show that newcomers in organizations tend to react much more favorably to investiture socialization, both in terms of job attitudes and retention (Allen, 2006; Cable & Parsons, 2001). According to Allen, use of investiture socialization tends to make new employees feel embedded within an organization, which makes them more likely to stay. While there may be some extreme cases when divestiture socialization must be used (e.g., intelligence agencies), most organizations are probably much better off using an investiture approach to socialization.

Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) model has proven to be quite useful in facilitating an understanding of the organizational socialization process. Importantly, the authors cite considerable empirical support for many of the propositions in the model. Furthermore, in recent years more empirical reseach has emerged linking specific socialization tactics to a number of socialization outcomes (e.g., Allen, 2006).

Despite its enduring value, a number of things about this model must be kept in mind. First, although the tactics represented by each of the models are described as though they are discreet forms of socialization, in reality they represent opposite ends of a continuum. As an example, most socialization efforts are neither completely formal nor completely informal—they fall somewhere in between. Also, many of the socialization tactics described in this section occur in combination. An organization may socialize new recruits individually, using an informal, serial approach. This highlights the complexity of the organizational socialization process and suggests a possible reason why it is often difficult to predict the outcomes of socialization.

Finally, despite the complexity of organizational socialization tactics, making them explicit is quite useful for organizations. If managers are aware of the tactics that are available for socializing new recruits, the socialization process can be managed more effectively. Organizations can choose those methods of socialization that are likely to provide the most desirable outcomes to both the organization and the new recruit.

## The Socialization Process: A Newcomer Perspective

Despite the value of early theory and research on organizational socialization (Feldman, 1976, 1978; Van Maanen, 1975; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), this literature had a major gap. Specifically, socialization was viewed almost exclusively from an organizational point of view, or as something the organization *does to* the newcomer. Thus, very little research focused on how newcomers make sense of the complex maze of technical and interpersonal information facing them during the socialization process. There was also very little work investigating how newcomers actively seek out information during the socialization process despite the fact that we know that new employees do this. To fill this void, the focus of more recent work on organizational socialization has shifted quite dramatically to the organizational newcomer. More specifically, organizational psychologists have become quite interested in how newcomers gather information about their new organizations and how they make sense out of this information.

Information-Seeking Tactics

According to Miller and Jablin (1991), newcomers actively seek information during organizational socialization, and they do so

FIGURE 3.2
Miller and Jablin's (1991) Model of Newcomer Information-Seeking Behavior
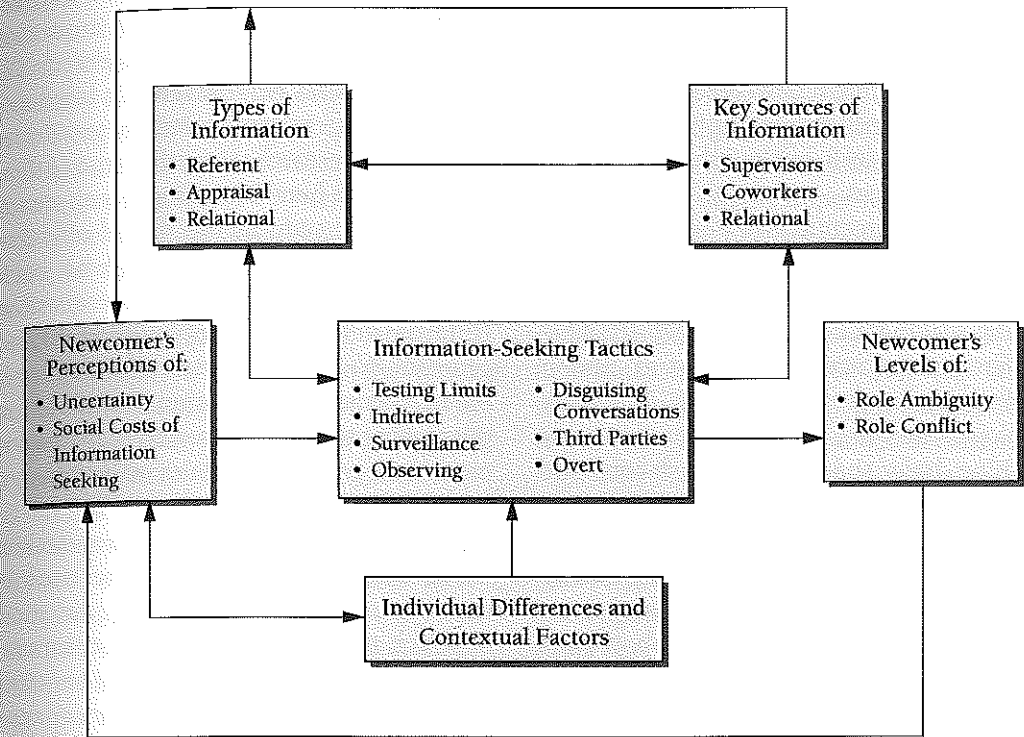
Source: V. D. Miller and F. M. Jablin. (1991). Information seeking during organizational entry: Influences, tactics, and a model of the process. *Academy of Management Review, 16,* 92–120. Reprinted by permission of the Copyright Clearance Center.

in a number of ways. Figure 3.2 presents a model developed by Miller and Jablin to describe the complex process of newcomers' information-seeking processes. As can be seen in the first step in this model, one factor that initially determines information seeking is the newcomer's perceptions of uncertainty. Generally speaking, newcomers put more effort into information seeking when they perceive a great deal of uncertainty in the environment. Newcomers' perceptions of uncertainty depend on a multitude of factors such as the nature of the information one is seeking, individual differences and contextual factors, availability of information sources, and, ultimately, the level of role conflict and ambiguity one experiences. In

actual organizations, the degree of uncertainty varies considerably.

A second factor influencing the choice of newcomers' information-seeking tactics is the social costs associated with these tactics. Social costs really center on the image newcomers want to project to others in the organization, such as supervisors and coworkers. Most readers have probably had the experience of beginning a new job and having coworkers say, "If you have any questions, just ask," or "There's no such thing as a stupid question." Although experienced employees may be completely sincere in making these statements, newcomers may still feel uncomfortable when they must repeatedly ask questions of supervisors or

coworkers. In doing so, one incurs an obvious social cost: appearing incompetent in the eyes of one's supervisor and/or coworkers. When the social costs of information seeking are high, newcomers tend to use less overt information-seeking tactics and are more likely to seek out nonthreatening information sources.

Based on perceptions of uncertainty, and on the social costs of information seeking, newcomers choose from a variety of information-seeking tactics. The most straightforward tactic newcomers use to obtain information is *overt questioning*. If a new employee does not know how to use a copy machine, he or she can simply ask someone how to use it. Of all the possible information-seeking tactics, overt questioning is clearly the most efficient. It is also the most likely to yield useful information and may even help the newcomer to develop rapport with others. Despite these advantages, newcomers may incur considerable social costs by using overt questioning because they run the risk of appearing incompetent and may be viewed as an annoyance by some coworkers. Such costs obviously depend on the number of times the same question is repeated and, to some extent, the manner in which the questions are asked. If an employee continues to ask coworkers how to use a copy machine after 6 months on the job, or rudely demands such assistance, he or she would likely be seen as an annoyance.

Another information-seeking tactic newcomers may use is *indirect questioning*: not asking someone to provide the exact information that is needed, but asking a question that gets at it indirectly instead. For example, a new employee hired for a sales position may eventually want to move into a position in the organization's human resources department. As a new employee, this person may feel uncomfortable directly asking his

or her supervisor about the possibility of obtaining a transfer. As an alternative, the new employee may casually ask a question this way: "I have a friend who works for XYZ Corporation and he was initially hired as a purchasing agent but eventually transferred into market research. Does that type of thing happen much here?" By using this approach, the employee reduces the risk of offending his or her supervisor by asking what could be perceived as an inappropriate question. Unfortunately, this type of question may not generate the most accurate information. In the newcomer's organization, transfers from purchasing to market research may be common, but going from sales to human resources is very rare.

A somewhat riskier information-seeking tactic, *testing limits*, may also be used by newcomers. This involves creating situations in which information targets must respond. For example, if a new employee is uncertain about whether attendance at staff meetings is mandatory, he or she may deliberately skip a meeting one week and await the supervisor's reaction. If there is no negative reaction, the employee may presume that attendance is not mandatory. On the other hand, if his or her supervisor reprimands the employee, this signals that attendance is important and should be viewed as mandatory. Assuming that the employee attends subsequent meetings, this one infraction is unlikely to have a negative impact.

Another technique newcomers may use to seek information is through *disguised conversations*. This involves initiating a conversation with someone for a hidden purpose. A new employee may be uncertain about whether employees in the organization are expected to bring work home on the weekends, but is uncomfortable asking about this directly. To obtain the information, the newcomer may strike up a conversation with a

fellow employee about what he or she did during the weekend. If the fellow employee states that he or she spent time on a work-related project, this suggests to the newcomer that the organization expects employees to bring work home.

Disguised conversations can be useful because they save the newcomer from having to ask potentially embarrassing questions of others. In the previous example, the newcomer may worry that he or she will be seen as a *slacker* by fellow employees if bringing work home on the weekend is the norm. On the other hand, if this is not the norm, the newcomer may worry that he or she will be perceived as trying to make others look bad (i.e., a *rate buster*) if this question is asked directly. The major disadvantage of disguised conversations is that the newcomer has little control over the response. That is, the fellow employee in the previous example may be very vague and not divulge whether he or she spent any time working.

One of the major nonverbal information-seeking tactics used by newcomers is *observation*. For example, organizational newcomers typically become keenly aware of the behaviors that are rewarded and punished in the organization. Although newcomers will typically utilize observation to obtain many types of information, they will rely most heavily on this tactic when the social costs of asking the information source directly are high. A new employee may be uncomfortable directly asking his or her supervisor what is considered to be outstanding performance. Observing others may be the safest route to acquiring this information.

Closely related to observation is the use of *surveillance* to gather information. The primary distinction between surveillance and observation is that surveillance is more dependent on retrospective sense mak-

ing, and is more unobtrusive than observation. A newcomer may use surveillance to try to understand organizational norms with regard to the length of the workday. To do this, he or she may pay close attention to the behavior of fellow employees near the end of the day. The use of surveillance allows the newcomer to obtain important information while avoiding the social costs of asking what may be an embarrassing question (e.g., "What hours do we work?"). Unfortunately, this is somewhat risky because the newcomer has no control over the target under surveillance. Thus, newcomers tend to use surveillance in situations of extremely high uncertainty. Newcomers will also tend to use surveillance to a greater degree to obtain information from coworkers rather than supervisors. Newcomers typically have less opportunity to obtain information from supervisors in this manner, and the behavior of coworkers has more information value than supervisory behavior.

A final information-seeking tactic contained in Miller and Jablin's (1991) model is the use of *third parties*, or seeking information from those other than the primary source of information. The use of third parties actually encompasses several of the information-seeking tactics described previously. For example, an employee who is unsure whether a supervisor is pleased with his or her performance may directly or indirectly ask coworkers whether they think the supervisor is pleased. Like other indirect tactics, acquiring information in this way spares an employee potential embarrassment. In the previous example, if the employee's supervisor has not been pleased with his or her performance, asking the supervisor about this directly would obviously be uncomfortable. As with all indirect information-seeking tactics, however, new employees may receive inaccurate information by not going directly

to the most relevant information source. In the authors' experience, bitter conflicts in organizations are often started because people do not go to each other directly to obtain information. As anyone who has played the game "Telephone" knows, secondhand information may be highly distorted.

Outcomes of Information-Seeking Tactics and Socialization

Having described the major information-seeking tactics used by newcomers, the next issue addressed in Miller and Jablin's (1991) model is the various outcomes associated with information-seeking tactics. At a general level, different information-seeking tactics provide newcomers with information that varies in both quantity and quality. According to Miller and Jablin, the quality of information is reflected primarily in newcomers' levels of role ambiguity and role conflict. Role ambiguity simply means that an employee is uncertain about his or her role responsibilities. For example, role ambiguity may result if a supervisor is very unclear about performance standards.

Role conflict, on the other hand, occurs when information obtained from different sources is inconsistent. This might occur, for example, if a newcomer receives mixed messages from a supervisor and coworkers regarding performance standards. Levels of role ambiguity and conflict are typically highest when newcomers rely on indirect or covert tactics to acquire information. Because these tactics are far removed from the most relevant information source, they provide newcomers with the least opportunity to verify the accuracy of the information they obtain. Given that both role ambiguity and role conflict are associated with negative outcomes (e.g., Jackson & Schuler, 1985), organizations need to create an environment

in which newcomers feel comfortable using direct information-seeking tactics, such as overt questioning.

Since Miller and Jablin's (1991) review, there has been considerable research on the many aspects of newcomers' information seeking. Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992), for example, examined the relationship between the types of information acquired during socialization, and the use of different information sources. These authors proposed that newcomers use different information sources to acquire different types of information. To acquire task-related information, it was expected that testing (e.g., proposing different approaches to one's supervisor) or experimentation (e.g., performing one's job tasks in different ways and evaluating the effects) would be relied on most heavily. To obtain information about group processes, however, it was expected that coworkers would be the most useful information source. The most important source of information about roles was expected to be observation of the behavior of others.

This study also examined a number of outcomes of the socialization process, as well as changes in the socialization process over time. New employees who considered themselves more knowledgeable about their job-related tasks, role demands, group-level dynamics, and the organization as a whole were expected to be more satisfied with their jobs; be committed to and feel more adjusted to their organization; experience fewer stress-related symptoms; and report lower levels of turnover intent. Over time, knowledge in all areas was expected to increase. The authors proposed that knowledge of the group would initially be greatest but knowledge of the task would equal it over time. Knowledge of the organization as a whole was expected to be the slowest to develop.

Based on data collected at two points in time from 219 individuals who had been business and engineering majors in college, most predictions in this study were supported. For example, observing the behavior of others, which was used most for acquiring knowledge, was followed by interpersonal sources (coworkers and supervisors), experimentation, and objective referents (e.g., consulting written manuals). Also, as predicted, different information sources were used, depending on the type of information respondents were trying to acquire. For information about the role being performed, respondents relied more heavily on supervisors than on coworkers, but tended to rely more on coworkers for information about the internal dynamics of their work group. To obtain information about the task, experimentation was used to a greater extent than interpersonal sources such as supervisors or coworkers.

In terms of knowledge of different domains, at Time 1 respondents reported that knowledge about the group was greater than knowledge of the task, role, and organization. This pattern had changed somewhat at Time 2. At this point, knowledge of the task had surpassed knowledge of the role and group, and knowledge of the organization remained the lowest. There was only one area in which knowledge changed from Time 1 to Time 2: Respondents reported becoming more knowledgeable about the task.

When relationships among information acquisition, knowledge, and outcomes were examined, a number of trends emerged. At both points in time, acquiring knowledge from one's supervisor was associated with higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment, and lower levels of turnover intent. Interestingly, acquiring knowledge from coworkers was associated with high levels of satisfaction and commitment, and low

levels of stress and turnover at Time 1, but these relations were not supported at Time 2. This finding suggests that supervisors are a constant source of information, whereas coworkers may initially be very influential but their influence wanes over time. Acquiring information from observing others and through experimentation was positively related to stress-related symptoms. This may be due to the fact that observing others may provide unclear information and thus may result in role ambiguity. Acquiring information through experimentation may be stressful because it may often result in failure, at least when job tasks are first being learned.

Respondents who believed they possessed more knowledge about all of the domains reported higher levels of satisfaction, commitment, and adjustment. However, the two that stood out as most strongly related to these outcomes were knowledge of task and role domains. It was also found that correlations were stronger between level of knowledge and outcomes than they were between sources of information and outcomes. The implication is that, for newcomers to feel adjusted, it is important that they feel knowledgeable about both their job-related tasks and their work-group role. Where this information is acquired is less important than the fact that it is acquired.

When changes in the relationship among information sources, knowledge, and outcomes were examined, it was found that newcomers who increased the information obtained from supervisors over time also experienced positive changes in satisfaction, commitment, and adjustment. This further reinforces the importance of the supervisor as an information source during the socialization process. It was also found that positive changes in task knowledge were associated with positive changes in both commitment

and adjustment and effected a reduction in stress. This finding reinforces the importance of task proficiency to the adjustment of the newcomer.

Ostroff and Kozlowski's (1992) study has a number of important implications. Consistent with Miller and Jablin's (1991) model, the results suggest that newcomers use different methods to acquire different types of information. The results also clearly show that supervisors are important information sources for employees, although newcomers may initially rely just as much on coworkers. Perhaps the most important lesson from this study is that acquiring task knowledge is of paramount importance to the adjustment of new employees. Thus, organizations need to make sure that new employees receive proper training and, in some cases, on-the-job coaching in order to increase their task knowledge over time. A related implication is that organizations should not overload new employees with ancillary duties.

In another longitudinal study of the socialization process, Morrison (1993) collected data, at three points in time, from 135 new staff accountants. In this study, it was proposed that newcomers acquire a number of types of information, most of which were comparable to those in Ostroff and Kozlowski's (1992) study. For example, Morrison proposed that newcomers acquire information on how to perform their job-related tasks. Newcomers also acquire what Morrison described as *referent information*, or information about one's role. Newcomers also must acquire information about how they are performing their jobs (labeled *Performance Feedback*). In many cases, newcomers need to acquire what may be described as *normative information*, or information about the norms within the organization. Finally, newcomers need to acquire *social information*, or information about their level of social integration into their primary work group.

In addition to describing the types of information acquired, this study proposed that there are multiple ways of acquiring each type of information. Consistent with past socialization research, it was proposed that information could be acquired from one's supervisor or from an experienced peer; through monitoring others' behavior; by responses to direct inquiries; or from available written sources. Consistent with Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992), the dimensions of socialization examined were task mastery, role clarification, acculturation, and social integration.

Newcomers seeking greater amounts of technical information and performance feedback were expected to exhibit higher levels of task mastery than newcomers seeking lesser amounts of this information. It was also expected that newcomers seeking greater referent information and performance feedback would report experiencing higher levels of role clarity. With respect to acculturation, it was expected that this would be associated with seeking greater amounts of normative information and social feedback from others. Finally, social integration was also expected to be highest among those seeking greater amounts of normative information and social feedback.

The results of this study partially supported the hypotheses. For example, it was found that technical information (from both supervisors and peers) and written feedback were statistically significant predictors of task mastery. Interestingly, though, the direction of the relation between technical information from peers and task mastery was negative. This may be due to the fact that peers may not always have an adequate mastery of the technical information that is sought by newcomers.

It was also found that to facilitate role clarification, newcomers tended to make use of referent information, performance feedback (through inquiries), and consultants' written feedback. For example, a person new to a work group may pay attention to cues from group members as to whether his or her role performance is satisfactory; informally solicit feedback from the supervisor; and take advantage of written feedback from the initial performance review. Using these information sources makes sense because they are most likely to be relevant to employees' role-related activities.

Social integration was related primarily to the use of normative inquiries and monitoring activities. This finding suggests that new employees may feel uncomfortable asking for direct feedback from either peers or supervisors, in their efforts to determine their level of social integration. Indeed, it is unlikely that most people would feel comfortable asking fellow employees directly about the degree to which they are liked and whether they *fit in* with the work groups. Written sources of feedback would not provide this type of information either.

Finally, for the acculturation dimension, the only significant predictor was monitoring. To some extent, this finding mirrors the findings with regard to social integration. To learn about the culture of the organization, a new employee must primarily observe others in the organization and how things are done. This is likely due to the complexity of culture, but may also be due to the potential social costs associated with more direct forms of information seeking. Because culture is generally taken for granted or internalized (e.g., Schein, 1990), newcomers may run the risk of embarrassment by asking directly about things many experienced organizational members consider to be obvious or mundane. Overall, Morrison's (1993) study,

like that of Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992), suggests that newcomers use a variety of information-seeking tactics, and they use different tactics for acquiring different types of information.

Unfortunately, neither of the studies just described examined whether information seeking during the socialization process has an impact on the success of newcomers. It is clear, for example, that newcomers seek and acquire information, and that they use different information sources to acquire different types of information. What is less clear, however, is whether employees who increase their knowledge over time are ultimately more successful than employees who acquire less information.

Chao et al. (1994) addressed these issues in a longitudinal study of 182 engineers, managers, and professionals, conducted over a 3-year period. Career success in this study was measured by respondents' levels of personal income and career involvement. With respect to personal income, the only socialization dimension that was predictive was knowledge about the politics of the organization. Employees who developed the greatest knowledge of organizational politics tended to have the highest incomes. This may be due to the fact that those who become very knowledgeable about the politics of the organization may be most likely to make the contacts and form the alliances needed to reach levels in the organizational hierarchy that are associated with high levels of income.

In terms of career involvement, the only socialization dimension that was predictive was knowledge of the goals and values of the organization. Specifically, those who indicated having a greater deal of knowledge of the goals and values of the organization reported higher levels of career involvement than those with less knowledge. Looking at this another way, it is difficult for new

employees to become highly involved in their careers if they are unsure of what their employers are trying to accomplish. Taken together, these findings suggest that certain aspects of socialization may contribute to affective outcomes (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992), and other aspects may be more important in determining success.

Another interesting finding from this study was that changes in the socialization dimensions were related to changes in both measures of career success. Thus, for employees to sustain a high level of success over time, they must continually increase their knowledge in crucial areas of socialization. This finding suggests that, to sustain a high level of success over time, one must never stop learning. Thus, organizations should provide learning opportunities for employees and, when possible, design work in a way that allows employees to learn (Parker & Wall, 1998).

Given the shift in focus of recent socialization research to newcomer information-seeking strategies (e.g., Miller & Jablin, 1991), the influence of other socializing agents and methods has been de-emphasized (e.g., Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). As a result, much less is known about the combined effect of newcomers' information-seeking strategies and the behavior of others (e.g., peers and supervisors) in explaining the socialization of organizational newcomers. Bauer and Green (1998) examined this issue in a very ambitious longitudinal study of 205 newcomers, 364 of their coworkers, and 112 of their managers. Like past socialization research, this study examined newcomer information seeking, several dimensions of socialization (feelings of task proficiency, role clarity, and feelings of being accepted by one's manager), and socialization outcomes such as performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

What makes the study unique, however, is that the behaviors of managers designed to facilitate socialization were also examined. Thus, this study addresses the need for a dual perspective.

As with the research previously discussed, it was expected that the type of information sought by newcomers and provided by managers would match socialization outcomes. For example, it was predicted that task-oriented information seeking and managers' clarifying behaviors would be related to feelings of task proficiency and role clarity. For feelings of acceptance by one's manager, it was expected that the best predicators would be social information sought by the newcomer, as well as managers' supporting behaviors. For outcomes, it was expected that feelings of task proficiency would predict performance, and feelings of acceptance by one's manager would be predictive of both job satisfaction and organizational commitment. A final prediction examined in this study was that the effects of both information-seeking tactics and managerial behavior on socialization outcomes would be mediated by newcomers' perceived level of socialization.

The results of this study showed that only managerial clarifying behavior at Time 2 predicted role clarity at Time 3. This same result occurred for predicting performance efficacy at Time 3. These findings are interesting because they seem to contradict recent socialization research that has placed such a strong emphasis on the information-seeking tactics of newcomers. Rather, these findings suggest that the behaviors of managers are the most important factor, at least for these outcomes. With respect to feelings of acceptance by one's manager at Time 3, the only variable that was predictive was managers' supportive behaviors at Time 2. Again, employees' information seeking had

no impact on this measure. With respect to the mediational hypotheses, no support was found for the mediating role of socialization on the relation between newcomers' information seeking and outcomes. There was, however, evidence that feelings of task proficiency and role clarity fully mediated the relationship between managerial behavior and performance. Role clarity and feelings of acceptance partially mediated the relation between managerial behaviors and organizational commitment. These findings suggest that behaviors of managers, such as providing clarification and support, have a positive impact on things such as newcomers' performance and affective outcomes, but only to the extent that they facilitate the socialization process.

The broader implication of Bauer and Green's (1998) study is that the behavior of individual managers toward new employees is a critical factor in employee socialization. As stated earlier, this study is also noteworthy because the recent organizational socialization literature has focused so heavily on information-seeking tactics and knowledge acquisition of newcomers. Earlier work on organizational socialization focused heavily on the organizational attempts to socialize newcomers. This suggests that a more balanced view of organizational socialization is needed—that is, socialization is the result of a complex interaction between socialization tactics used by organizations and the information-seeking and sense-making processes of newcomers. Ignoring either the organizational or the newcomer perspective provides a limited picture of the organizational socialization process.

A final issue regarding the newcomer perspective is the expectations that newcomers bring to the socialization process. As Feldman's (1981) model showed, there is a period of anticipatory socialization prior

to newcomers' formal entry into the organization. One way that prior expectations have been examined is through the study of realistic job previews (RJPs) (Wanous, 1989; Wanous, Poland, Premack, & Davis, 1992). As was stated in the earlier section on recruiting, the basic idea behind realistic job previews is that, prior to organizational entry, the newcomer is given a realistic preview of what the job will entail, even if some of this information is negative. Despite the intuitive appeal of RJPs, meta-analyses have shown that they have a very small impact on turnover (McEvoy & Cascio, 1985; Reilly, Brown, Blood, & Malatesta, 1981).

Another approach to dealing with newcomers' expectations is to focus information at a more general level. For example, Buckley, Fedor, Veres, Weise, and Carraher (1998) conducted a field experiment that evaluated the effect of what they described as an expectation lowering procedure (ELP) among a sample of 140 employees recently hired by a manufacturing plant. The ELP consisted of lecturing the new employees on the importance of realistic expectations, and how inflated expectations can lead to a number of negative outcomes. This study also included one condition in which employees were provided with a RJP. This allowed the researchers to test the impact of an RJP against the more general ELP.

The results of this study indicated that both the RJP and ELP had positive effects. For example, employees in those two conditions initially had lower expectations than those who received neither intervention, although there was no difference after 6 months. Most importantly, lower levels of turnover and higher levels of job satisfaction were found in the RJP and ELP conditions, compared to those receiving neither intervention. It was also found that expectations mediated this effect; that is, both RJP and

ELP interventions lowered turnover because they first lowered employees' expectations.

An important implication of this study is that organizations may not have to develop job-specific realistic previews for newcomers in order to facilitate realistic expectations. Rather, the expectations of newcomers can be changed to be more realistic by more general interventions of the type conducted by Buckley et al. (1998). From a practical point of view, this is encouraging because developing RJPs is more time-consuming than more general interventions such as ELP. RJPs must be job-specific; thus, many RJPs must be developed, depending on the number of jobs in an organization. The more general point to be gleaned from this study is that newcomers do much better when they come into a new organization with realistic expectations of both their jobs and their future lives within the organization. Thus, it's always a good idea to have as much information as possible before choosing a job or career (see Comment 3.6).

COMMENT 3.6

HOW TO DEVELOP REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

THERE IS CONSIDERABLE research evidence to support the value of having a realistic picture of the job one will be performing, as well as life in the organization in which one will be working. Despite the value of realistic expectations, many readers might be wondering how to gain this type of information while still in college. Many students do so through internships, participation in cooperative education programs, and summer employment. Many university placement offices post (and keep records of) these types of jobs at local, national, and international levels. Recent research has also shown that college students, and job seekers in general, make considerable use of company websites (Braddy, Meade, & Kroustalis, 2006), as well as their experiences with an organization as a consumer (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003).

A somewhat less conventional way to obtain information is to set up an informational interview with a member of the profession you wish to pursue, or an employee of the organization you would like to work for. This involves simply contacting such an individual and asking for about 30 minutes of his or her time. Before the meeting, it's a good idea to prepare a list of questions about the profession or the organization. Although time may not always permit an informational interview, professional people are often very willing to talk about their profession to an eager college student.

What, then, is the best way to develop realistic expectations? In this author's opinion, direct experience with a member of an organization is most likely to provide the most accurate and timely information. Despite the accessibility of company websites, one must remember that organizations control the information on these sites, and therefore they may provide an overly optimistic picture. It has also been shown that users of company websites form impressions of an organization based not only on the actual content of the website, but also by it's design (e.g., how easy it is to use, how visually appealing it is; Cober, Brown, Levy, Cober, & Keeping, 2003). Relying on one's experiences as a consumer may also lead to inaccurate information about a job and particular organizations. For example, many organizations are highly customer focused so they often may treat consumers much better than they do their employees.

The Socialization Process: An Interactionist Perspective

As previously stated, early research on employee socialization was focused primarily on the tactics organizations use to socialize newcomers. The focus then shifted somewhat; that is, researchers became interested in understanding the manner in which newcomers acquire and use information during the socialization. While both types of research continue, the most recent trend in socialization research has been to understand the interaction between organizational tactics and the methods newcomers use to acquire information. This is an exciting development in socialization research because it represents the most realistic view of what actually happens when employees first enter an organization. In this section we briefly review research that has been guided by this interactionist perspective to socialization.

One issue that researchers have recently examined is whether the impact of organizational socialization tactics differs depending on the degree to which newcomers seek information. Gruman et al. (2006), for example, found in a study of 140 university students that organizational socialization tactics were more strongly related to socialization outcomes among newcomers who exhibited less feedback-seeking and information-seeking behaviors. Kim, Cable, and Kim (2005) found similar results in a study of 279 employee-supervisor pairs from seven organizations located in South Korea. These researchers also found that socialization tactics had little effect on employees who proactively developed strong relationships with their supervisors.

Taken together, both of these studies suggest that organizational socialization tactics may in fact not be needed in many cases. When newcomers are highly proactive about seeking information and feedback, and when they develop strong working relationships with their immediate supervisors, organizations may simply not need to do a great deal to socialize them.

Another issue that has been examined in recent socialization research is the manner in which employees are socialized into work teams. Given the prevalence of teams in organizations (Kozlowski & Bell, 2003), and the fact that an employee's ties to his or her work group are often stronger than they are to the organization as a whole (Meyer & Allen, 1997), this is clearly an important issue. As an example of this research, Chen G. (2005) examined the socialization process in 104 project teams from three high-technology organizations. The most important findings of this study were that employee empowerment and the expectations of team members were both positively related to newcomer performance. More specifically, new employees performed the best when they felt empowered and when their teams expected them to perform well.

It has also been shown that the manner in which team members are socialized into the organization as a whole may have an impact on the overall effectiveness of teams. For example, Oh, Chung, and Labianca (2004) conducted a study of 77 work teams from 11 organizations in Korea and found that teams whose members had more social relationships with members of other teams were more effective than teams whose members had fewer such relationships. While this finding may be somewhat specific to the Korean context, it suggests that employees should not only be socialized into a team but also to the organization as a whole.

In summary, this section provided a small sampling of recent socialization research examining the dynamic interaction between organizational socialization tactics

and newcomer information seeking. While more research clearly needs to be done, this research has already contributed to a greater understanding of employee socialization than examining organizational socialization tactics or newcomer information seeking in isolation. Future organizational socialization research will likely follow this interactionist framework.

THE IMPACT OF DIVERSITY ON ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION

Given increasing levels of diversity in the workplace, organizations are understandably concerned about how this may impact the socialization process. Research has in fact shown that women and ethnic minorities are more strongly attracted to organizations they perceive as managing diversity more effectively (Ng & Burke, 2005) and providing more opportunities to minorities (Perkins, Thomas, & Taylor, 2000). Thus, such concerns are well founded.

Jackson, Stone, and Alvarez (1992) reviewed the literature on the impact of diversity on socialization into groups and came up with a number of propositions, many of which are relevant to the broader issue of organizational socialization. According to these authors, the primary dilemma posed by diversity is that many individuals who are perceived as *different* must still be socialized and assimilated into organizations. This would be the case, for example, if a female executive were promoted to an all-male top-management group. Not only does such an individual tend to stand out, but it may also be difficult for such individuals to become accepted and seen as "part of the team." According to Jackson et al., this occurs simply because people tend to like, and feel more comfortable around, persons

perceived to be similar to themselves (e.g., Byrne, 1971).

Because people are attracted to, and feel more comfortable with, those who are similar to themselves, those perceived as *different* are often at a disadvantage during the socialization process. According to Jackson et al. (1992), newcomers who are dissimilar are often less likely to form the social ties and receive, from experienced organizational members, the feedback necessary to assimilate well into organizations. Experienced organizational members may not deliberately exclude those who are demographically different, but there is a subtle tendency to shy away from such individuals. This often puts women and racial minorities at a disadvantage because, in many organizations, the most influential members are white males.

How can organizations facilitate the socialization of a demographically diverse workforce? Jackson et al. (1992) suggested a number of strategies that might help to facilitate the socialization process. For example, they recommended that when several minority employees enter an organization at the same time, collective socialization processes should be used, if possible. Recall from Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) description of organizational socialization tactics that collective socialization has the benefit of generating communication and support among those socialized in the same cohort. This type of socialization may help women, racial minorities, and perhaps older employees feel less isolated, and may facilitate the development of social support networks within the organization. In professional baseball, for example, the socialization of players from Latin American countries is greatly enhanced by the formation of these types of social support networks (see Comment 3.7).

Another recommendation of Jackson et al. (1992) is for organizations to develop

COMMENT 3.7

"THE CHAIN"

IMAGINE BEING 17 years old and living on your own in a foreign country where you don't speak the language and have little familiarity with the culture. Worse yet, you are under tremendous pressure on your job—in fact, if you don't perform well you will be sent back to your native country and more than likely live in poverty. Sounds like a pretty far-fetched scenario, right? Actually it's a pretty common experience for many talented young baseball players who come to the United States from Latin American countries such as the Dominican Republic, Panama, Venezuela, and Puerto Rico with the dream of becoming major league stars.

How do Latin players cope with their difficult circumstances? Actually, many do

not adjust well and end up returning to their native countries. For those who do survive, an important coping mechanism is support from each other. As Omar Vizquel of the San Francisco Giants explains, "Latin players tend to band together in the States and help each other. Some people call it *La Cadena*—Spanish for *The Chain*. It's nothing formal; just a feeling of obligation the older players have toward the younger ones." Examples of this might be helping a younger player secure housing, or simply explaining to them how to order a meal in English.

Source: Vizquel, O. (with Bob Dyer). (2002). *Omar! My life on and off the field.* Cleveland, OH; Gray & Company Publishers.

training programs aimed at both newcomers and established organizational members. For newcomers, such training programs might be aimed at increasing awareness of some of the problems they may face in the socialization process, and further helping them to develop coping strategies. For established organizational members, such training may help to increase awareness of some of the challenges women and racial minorities face when they are being assimilated into the organization. As Jackson et al. point out, however, such *diversity training* programs may have the unintended consequence of highlighting the differences rather than the similarities between people. It is also possible that if such programs are forced on employees, they may create less favorable attitudes toward diversity.

A third recommended strategy is the use of valid procedures in the selection of female

and minority employees. Assimilating any newcomer into an organization will be much easier if the individual has the skills and abilities needed to do the job (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Although socialization of female and minority employees may initially be difficult, organizations are typically pragmatic enough to accept those who are capable of performing their jobs well and making a positive contribution. This also suggests that no one benefits when organizations hire and promote unqualified individuals on the basis of gender or racial preferences. This became very obvious to one of the authors several years ago when teaching a course composed primarily of African Americans, many of whom worked in professional positions in the auto industry. When the issue of racial quotas was discussed during class, the vast majority of these African American students were strongly opposed to this method

of addressing past racial discrimination. Most expressed a strong desire to be seen as having *made it* on the basis of their own talents, and not because of a government-mandated program.

Finally, performance appraisal and reward systems can go a long way toward assimilating female and racial minority employees into organizations. For example, managers in organizations should be evaluated, at least to some degree, on the extent to which they develop all of their subordinates. If female and minority employee subordinates continually have a difficult time adjusting, this should reflect poorly on the evaluation of a manager. If an organization rewards on the basis of the performance of work groups, it is in a group's best interest to maximize the talents of all group members, regardless of gender, race, or age. This may explain the relative success of the military, at least in comparison to civilian organizations, in providing opportunities for racial minorities (Powell, 1995). *Mission accomplishment* is the highest priority in military organizations, and those who contribute positively to the mission are likely to be rewarded and accepted, regardless of race.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter, we examined the ways that organizations attract new organizational members, and the process by which they are socialized. Organizations utilize a variety of methods to recruit potential newcomers; the choice of method is dependent on a number of factors such as the nature of the job, cost, relative quality of candidates generated, and time considerations. Regardless of the method chosen, recruiting research suggests that organizations are best served by providing recruits with accurate information, and treating them with respect and courtesy.

Recruiting obviously is not a one-sided process. Job seekers, who are the targets of organizational recruiting efforts, evaluate the messages put out by organizations and make some judgment as to the attractiveness of the organization. Research suggests that judgments of organizational attractiveness are made primarily on the basis of job seekers' judgments of *fit* with the organization. That is, job seekers make some judgment as to whether several aspects of the organization fit with their abilities, values, and personality. It has also been shown more recently that job seekers evaluate organizations in much the same way that consumers evaluate different products. The major implication for organizations is that it is in their best interest to provide an accurate portrayal of their culture to potential employees.

Once an individual is hired, the process of organizational socialization begins. Although many definitions of socialization have been provided, most see it as the extent to which a new employee is able to do his or her job, get along with members of the work group, and develop some understanding of the culture of the organization. Organizations may use a variety of tactics to socialize organizational newcomers. The choice of tactics depends, to a large extent, on the nature of the job a newcomer will assume in the organization and the ultimate goals of the socialization process.

Like recruiting, socialization is a two-way process. Organizational newcomers actively seek information about the organization and may use a variety of tactics in order to obtain information. The choice of tactics depends largely on the level of uncertainty, the nature of the information being sought, and the perceived social costs of obtaining it. A consistent finding in recent socialization research is that newcomers initially put their efforts into obtaining information that will help them to

DEREK CHAPMAN AND THE MECHANISMS UNDERLYING RECRUITMENT
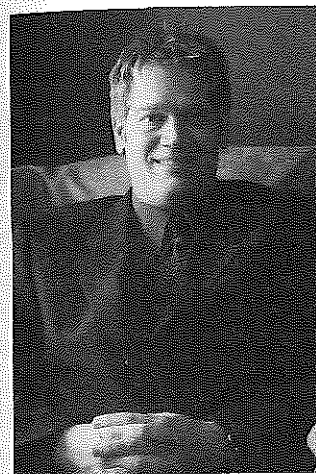
I think one of the main things that attracted me to doing research on recruiting was how it seemed to be relevant for just about everyone and yet we knew very little about it. We all look for jobs at some point in our lives and have to make hard choices about what to do and where to work. Furthermore, every company has to worry about finding and competing for good employees so the broad appeal of recruiting was compelling to me. Despite this fact, the area seemed to be nearly wide open for investigation, and I found the opportunity to explore the unexplored to be very interesting. For me, the route to conducting recruiting research was somewhat indirect.

In the mid 90's I was doing my Ph.D. in I/O Psychology under the supervision of Pat Rowe at the University of Waterloo. Pat had been doing interview research since the mid 1950's and quickly interested me in looking at the dynamic interpersonal processes in employment interviews. In the course of doing interview research with Pat I noticed that many applicants did not like the rigorous and highly valid structured interview formats that most academics recommend. I became more and more interested in how applicants reacted to

those interviews as well as how they reacted to various interview media (telephone, videoconference etc.). I was also curious about how those reactions affected their impressions of organizations. This ultimately led me to spend more and more time thinking about recruiting and job choice. This interest led me to sign up for a session with Sara Rynes in the late 1990's at a doctoral consortium with a small group of Ph.D. students interested in recruiting research. Rynes pointed out that the recruiting field was still in its infancy, and I was immediately struck by the large number of unexplored areas that really needed attention. She recommended a recruiting book by Allison Barber that had just been published. The combination of Rynes' encouragement and Barber's book motivated me to focus more on my recruiting research stream.

I think I have learned a lot about recruiting from conducting research, speaking with professional recruiters, and from talking to people who are going through the job choice process. One of the things that has intrigued me the most has been the role that recruiters play in our job choice decisions. For a long time the collective wisdom of researchers had been that recruiters didn't matter much—it was all about pay and location. Some of my work has refuted this premise by taking a look at the mechanisms by which recruiters influence our thinking. Rather than having direct effects on our decisions, recruiters appear to play a role in influencing our perceptions of job and organizational attributes as well as providing us with signals about what it might be like to work for their organization. We also found that recruiters had the most influence on the best candidates—those who had to choose among multiple job offers. Now, with my students at the University of Calgary, I am looking at integrating the persuasion literature with the recruiting literature. I believe there is considerable overlap in

these areas that could help us understand what employers can do to improve recruiting.

I now live and work in Calgary, Canada, a beautiful city near the Canadian Rockies that is home to a booming oil and gas industry. Unemployment here is approaching zero and finding skilled tradespeople in this city of 1 million people is extremely difficult. With billions of dollars in oil and gas projects depending on finding qualified people to do the work, I get a great deal of satisfaction seeing how the fundamental research in recruiting can be used to help real companies develop scientifically based strategies to compete in one of the tightest labor markets in North America.

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perform their job tasks competently, and that will enable them to get along with members of their immediate work group. Once they are able to perform their job tasks competently, the focus of information seeking shifts to broader issues such as the culture of the organization. Recent research has begun to examine the interaction between organizational socialization tactics and newcomer information seeking.

A final issue examined was the impact of diversity on the socialization of organizational newcomers. Those perceived as *different* by established organizational members may face a number of unique challenges in the socialization process. In the extreme, such individuals run the risk of being marginalized and never really fitting in. Organizations can, however, take steps to facilitate the socialization of older employees, females, and racial minorities. Through facilitating the development of support networks, providing training programs, using valid selection procedures, and placing an emphasis on performance and employee development, organizations can make sure that these individuals are accepted and their talents are fully utilized.

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