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Socialization practices and their consequences:
The case of an innovative organization

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Abstract

As a result of socialization experiences, newcomers to any organization will learn what behaviors, attitudes, work styles, norms, career paths, etc., that organization considers acceptable. The critical period of socialization begins with the initial contact between an individual and an organization and continues until some time after the individual actually enters the organization. Different socialization practices will elicit different responses in individuals experiencing the socialization. The purpose of this study is to apply a theory which relates socialization practices to their outcomes in one organization. The theory of concern in this study is that of Van Maanen and Schein (1978; 1979), who present seven dimensions of socialization strategy. Each dimension reflects a pair of polar tactics which may be practiced by an organization. At a given passage into or within an organization, each tactic (strategy) either elicits or retards innovative behavior. Thus, links between tactic and outcome can be hypothesized for a passage in an organization.

The data were gathered through interviews of supervisors in an innovative organization, the main engineering group of a computer firm. Supervisors were selected to represent the population on the basis of age, gender, years in the organization, years as a supervisor, and education level (n=13). Prior to the interview, each supervisor received an outline of topics to be covered. The topics range from recruiting and entry into the firm, to career planning and movement within the firm, to job assignments and evaluations. The data for each topic were content analyzed and then classified according to the seven theoretical dimensions.

The data reveal that the organization seeks individuals who will fit into the organization on the basis of personality traits: newcomers are to be individualistic and creative. Hence, selection for fit results in a high degree of homogeneity, as is present in the data.

The empirical test of the hypothesized links between socialization practices and outcomes confirms most of Van Maanen's and Schein's theory: the data confirm six of the seven hypothesized links. The one disconfirmed hypothesis is in the fixed/variable dimension. The theory is broadened by a discussion of situationally specific factors which result in this theoretical surprise. In particular, an innovative organization in a high growth and high technology environment need not prescribe fixed timetables for movement. The lack of fixed timetables does not necessarily result in the anxiety and consequent non-innovative responses theorized by Van Maanen and Schein.

I Introduction

In any organization, new employees (newcomers) through their socialization experiences will learn what behaviors, attitudes, work styles, norms, career paths, etc., that organization considers acceptable. The critical period of socialization begins with the initial contact between an individual and an organization (often a recruiting interview) and continues until some time after the individual actually enters the organization. In the course of the first contact, the organization presents to the potential employee an overview of itself and possibly the specifics of a position. After entry into the organization, the words and actions of those around the newcomer expose him or her to additional information, both implicit and explicit, pertaining both to the organization and to working in the organization. Thus, the individual picks up cues regarding appropriate attitudes and behaviors, the norms and values of the organization, and what people with a given job title actually do. These early socialization experiences expose the newcomer to what goes on and to what is acceptable within the organization of which he or she is becoming a member.

As will be discussed, different socialization practices elicit different responses in individuals experiencing the socialization. The purpose of this study is to test, in an innovative organization, a theory (Van Maanen, 1978; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) which relates socialization practices to their outcomes. The time frame or passage of concern is entry into the organization. Thus, all socialization practices will be measured for this passage.

The socialization agents whose views and practices will be described are individuals on the first rung of a management career ladder (supervisors). The organization whose socialization practices are considered is the main engineering organization of a computer firm. In this paper, the engineering organzation will be referred to as LINC.

II   Socialization theory

Organizational socialization is the process by which a newcomer learns to function in an organization by an internalization of its norms, values, appropriate behaviors, and attitudes in order to make sense of the new environment (Moore, 1969; Marcson, 1960; Van Maanen, 1976; Schein, 1971; Feldman, 1980). Brim (1966) describes socialization as the means by which an individual acquires the culture of his or her group both by understanding status positions and by learning role prescriptions and role behaviors. Van Maanen (1976) and Feldman (1980) discuss the continuous nature of the socialization process: Van Maanen (1976: 68) describes the process as a "matching and melding of individual and organizational pursuits" and Feldman (1980) refers to the need for continuous acqusition of new behaviors and attitudes as ongoing socialization. Socialization can be formal or informal, its results intended or unintended (LeVine, 1969). When successful, organizational socialization results in "individuals becom[ing] members and continu[ing] as members of an organization" (Van Maanen, 1977: 15) and in the individual's developing an identity with the organization (Feldman, 1980). Studies have considered socialization of individuals into a variety of occupations.[1] This paper focuses on socialization of computer scientists/engineers in one organization.

Organizational socialization begins with the initial contact between an individual and an organization. During the period of pre-entry or anticipatory socialization,[2] the individual begins to

develop expectations regarding working in the organization. In addition, behaviors, values, and attitudes of those in the organization may begin to be picked up and integrated by the individual.

With actual entry into the organization, the breaking in period begins. The newcomer searches for meaning in the patterns he or she observes: the clues perceived by the individual may be conflicting or hidden (Van Maanen, 1977). This search for meaning is the first step in interpreting and understanding the new environment (Van Maanen, 1976; 1977; Feldman, 1976). Part of the socialization of a newcomer is the "unfreezing" of old ways. In the course of "unfreezing," assumptions held by the newcomer may be challenged or disconfirmed by experiences in the new organization (Schein, 1968). After entry, the newcomer may also learn the relevant career timetables operating in the organization: with this knowledge, a sense of progress relative to organizational norms can be measured.

Socialization outcomes and innovation

Schein (1964) describes three possible outcomes of socialization: rebellion, creative individualism, and conformity. Each reflects the degree of acceptance by the newcomer of an organization's norms and values. One who rebels is totally rejecting the organizations norms and values. At the other extreme is the conformist who accepts all the norms and values of the organization. In between is the response of creative individualism which implies an acceptance only of the organization's pivotal norms and values—those norms and values that are absolutely necessary to the organization. Thus the response of creative individualism allows the newcomer to maintain some of his or her own values and norms and still function in the organization.

These three outcomes can be summarized along a continuum from innovative to non-innovative responses. Clearly, with an outcome of creative individualism, the individual is not constrained and is thus able to create -- to innovate. Rebellion and conformity each tend toward non-innovative responses, because the individual is either accepting the existing means of functioning, or is so busy fighting the system through rebellion and rejection of its norms and values that creativity or innovation becomes an impossible response.

The innovative non-innovative continuum raises some interesting issues. For instance, if, in an organization, outcomes somewhere along this continuum are desired, what can be said about how newcomers should be socialized? Van Maanen and Schein (Van Maanen, 1978; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979: 7-8) present a theory of "interrelated theoretical propositions about the structure and outcome of organizational socialization processes." They present seven dimensions of socialization strategies. Each dimension reflects a pair of strategies that may be practiced in an organization.[3] At a given passage into or within an organization, each strategy elicits a response which falls somewhere along the innovative non-innovative continuum. The seven dimensions or pairs of strategies are:

1. Formal/informal
2. Individual/collective
3. Fixed/variable
4. Tournament/contest
5. Sequential/random
6. Serial/disjunctive
7. Investiture/divestiture

Because no socialization strategy is practiced independently of the
others, what emerges for an organization is a patterning of socialization
practices along the seven dimensions.[4]

Anxiety and socialization outcomes

Any transition or passage, a crossing of an organizational
boundary,[5] is a potential anxiety producing situation, which, in order
to reduce the anxiety to a comfortable level for an individual, requires
that the individual learn to understand or to make sense of the new
situation (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Louis, 1980). The notion of
anxiety used here is similar to Pelz' (1960) and Pelz & Andrews' (1976)
concept of creative tension which refers to a situation in which some
level of ambiguity/uncertainty, coupled with a fairly high level of
security exists. In such a situation, an individual -- a scientist or
engineer in Pelz & Andrews' work -- is enabled to take some risks and
thereby to respond creatively. Thus, a certain level of tension
(anxiety) is required for innovation. The level of anxiety experienced
may be viewed as a function of the degree to which an individual "buys
into" the norms and values of an organization. Therefore, anxiety is a
key factor in determining outcomes along the innovative to non-innovative
continuum.

To relate Pelz & Andrews' concept of creative tension (anxiety) to
socialization practices and outcomes, I propose the following. The level
of anxiety associated with a transition can be affected by the form of
socialization practiced at the time of the transition; a socialization
strategy can either create or reduce anxiety. The effect of socialization

on anxiety is a function of both the completeness of the information
regarding the new role transmitted to the individual and the individual's
ability to meet the expectations and requirements of the new role.[6]
With too much or too little anxiety, an individual will be less able to
innovate. Thus, a non-innovative outcome to the socialization strategy
would result. With a moderate level of anxiety, innovation is possible
and the associated socialization strategy, in this situation, would lead
to innovative outcomes. What is a moderate level of anxiety will differ
from individual to individual.

This view of anxiety, as it relates to socialization practices, can
be linked to the three outcomes of socialization described by Schein
(1964): rebellion, creative individualism, and conformity. The links
between level of anxiety, Schein's outcomes, and innovation are depicted
below.

	Outcome	
	Innovative	Non-innovative
Response (Schein)	Creative individualism	Rebellion or conformity
Level of Anxiety	Moderate	Extreme: none or high

Using the level of experienced anxiety as a critical factor in the
determinantion of responses to socialization, the following section
presents each of the seven socialization dimensions which may be used in
an organization to socialize newcomers or individuals who are crossing or
have crossed an organizational boundary. These seven dimensions will
later be used with espoused agent socialization practices at LINC to test
Van Maanen's and Schein's theoretical link between socialization
practices and outcomes.

Description of socialization dimensions

1. <u>Setting: formal/informal</u>   This socialization dimension considers the degree of formality in the learning of new roles. An informal strategy prepares the newcomer for a new role, whereas a formal stratgey prepares the newcomer for a new status.

a.   In the <u>informal</u> strategy, newcomers are left to their own devices to learn their new roles: it's a sink or swim approach. This strategy emphasizes the development of actions appropriate to the new role. The role may be learned through loosely defined "on-the-job-training" assignments. According to the theory, the informal strategy has the "potential for more extreme responses" (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979: 49). The results of an informal strategy, dependent on the socialization agent(s), will tend to be either innovative or non-innovative. With innovative socialization agents, i.e. an innovative organization, outcomes are expected to be innovative. Similarly, when socialization agents are non-innovative, i.e. the organization has a primarily non-innovative orientation, outcomes are expected to be non-innovative. In this way outcomes of an informal strategy are situationally determined.

b.   A <u>formal</u> socialization strategy segregates or isolates newcomers from the regular members of the organization in order to provide the newcomers with a specific and common set of experiences. The emphasis is on developing appropriate attitudes and learning what one may or may not do in the new role. Because of the clear prescriptions to the newcomers, little anxiety is experienced. Hence, formal socialization is "most likely to produce custodial [non-innovative]" outcomes (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979: 48).

2. <u>Group context: individual/collective</u> This dimension refers to how newcomers are socialized: alone or in groups.

a.   <u>Individual</u> socialization is similar to an apprentice situation: newcomers are socialized singly. Thus, outcomes are not homogeneous. Instead, outcomes will reflect the unique situation of each newcomer. However, if the agents of socialization are a homogeneous group, those experiencing the socialization will also become a homogeneous group. It is likely, because of the great influence of the socialization agent, the uniqueness of the newcomers' experiences, and the consequent lack of clues for interpretation that some degree of anxiety will result. Hence, an individual strategy results in either innovative or non-innovative outcomes, determined, as is the case in informal socialization, by the situation, i.e. by the orientation of the socialization agents.

b.   <u>Collective</u> socialization results in a consensual definition of the situation, with all newcomers "in the same boat" and sharing the same experiences. The newcomers will react as a group, because they are treated as a group. The separation of newcomers from existing organization members may result in greater resistance by the group of newcomers to the organization because the newcomers are likely to develop a sense of group identity and solidarity.[7] Collective socialization, because of the consensual definition, the shared experiences, and the absence of anxiety, will most likely result in non-innovative responses. The group nature of collective socialization is too constraining to allow for innovative responses.

3. Time frames: fixed/variable

This dimension is concerned with the knowledge of timetables for movement through career stages in an organization. As implied by the labels, in a fixed socialization strategy, both timetables and career stages are clear and known. In a variable socialization strategy, the timetables are not clearly set or they are not clearly known.

a.   When the expected time to be spent in a stage or the time until the next passage is known, as in the case when a fixed socialization strategy is practiced, anxiety is unlikely to develop. As a consequence of the clarity of movement timetables, an individual who spends too much or too little time in a given stage is perceived as a deviant within the framework of the organization. Deviants are those who are "off-schedule". Deviants are often considered failures and as such, they are isolated from those who are "on-schedule." The theory states that responses are most likely innovative. In the case of deviants, outcomes of socialization are not specified in the theory.

b.   In variable socialization, timetables for transitions do not exist or are not known. In some instances, the minimum time to be spent in a position may be known, but the actual time to the next passage remains unspecified. Hence, rumors and past history may play an important role in setting expectations of progress. Nevertheless, according to the theory, in such a situation, the expectations are often ambiguous, resulting in frustration, anxiety, and confusion for the individual. Administrators and others who have the ability (both authority and power) to promote or to hold an individual back are powerful. As a result of high anxiety and the consequent tendency to conform as a means of

decreasing experienced anxiety, variable socialization should result in non-innovative responses.

4. Tracking: tournament/contest[8]

In this dimension, a career is viewed as a series of competitions, each of which has implications for an individual's future career options. In a tournament socialization process, one mistake turns a person into a loser forever: the person is not likely to progress and may even move down in the organization. Contest socialization avoids making distinctions among individuals. In each competition, assuming similar levels of performance, each individual has the same opportunity for career growth.

a. A tournament strategy causes individuals to be tracked, on the basis of presumed differences, as either winners or losers. The tracking typically occurs quite early in the individual's tenure with the organization. In an extreme tournament strategy an individual can not afford even one failure. Thus, to avoid failure, conformity to known rules and roles will be the 'safe' approach, little risk-taking is expected, employees will tend to a homogenous group, and responses are likely to be non-innovative.

b. The contest socialization strategy is accommodating: everyone begins equal and has the same opportunities. Performance is the key criterion for advancement within the organization. These features are likely to result in the acceptance of individual differences, risk-taking, and high levels of participation and cooperation among organization members. Hence, high mobility is likely. Individuals are

encouraged to perform and <u>not</u> to conform. Thus, responses are likely to be innovative.

5. <u>Stages: sequential/random</u>

This socialization dimension is concerned with the degree of knowledge regarding career stages along the path to a specific role in the organization. This role is viewed by the socialization targets as their career goal in that organization. When random socialization is practiced, knowledge of explicit stages on the path to the target role is unknown, whereas, in sequential socialization these stages are identifiable and known by members of the organization.

a. <u>Sequential</u> socialization refers to the existence of discrete, identifiable stages, along the path to a career goal, a specific role. The socialization targets, both newcomers and current organization members, learn what is necessary for advancement. One stage may build on preceding stages and any required training is assumed to be available. This socialization strategy assumes that people who have passed through a given stage (or set of stages) are available to newcomers as resources. Because knowledge of stages is known, anxiety will be minimal and conformity will be expected in order to progress. Thus, sequential socialization should result in non-innovative responses.

b. <u>Random</u> socialization refers to a lack of knowledge of clearly discernible and distinct stages leading to a career goal. There may be no consensus on what the target roles are, let alone how to reach those roles. Because individuals are not concerned with being in step or being on the path to some defined career goal, they are able to focus on their

work. For this reason and because the ambiguity may result in some

anxiety, responses to a random strategy should be innovative.[9]

6. Role models: serial/disjunctive

The existence or lack of existence of role models is key to this

dimension. Role models serve to perpetuate the current operating

practices in an organization and their lack leads to or results from

changes in the organization's mode of functioning. In a serial

socialization strategy, role models exist and in a disjunctive strategy

they do not exist.

a.   Serial socialization requires the existence of role models in

prescribed roles, who groom their successors. This allows an individual

to predict and to plan his or her future by simply following role models

or "following [in] the footsteps of immediate or recent predecessors" in

a role (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979: 61). Minorities of any type are

perceived as deviants. There are likely to be few changes in the

organization over time: the organization will be stable. A risk of this

strategy is stagnation. Because of the lack of ambiguity and consequent

lack of anxiety, responses are likely to be non-innovative.

b.   Disjunctive socialization refers to a situation in which either no

clear role models exist to introduce the newcomer to the new role or no

clear role exists. Disjunctive socialization incorporates the idea that

individuals will learn by ordeal: by being tested and exposed to the

"reality" of working. It is practiced when continuity in the

organization is not important or is not possible. Thus, the "old way" of

doing things is de-emphasized. This strategy may result in confusion.

Hence, anxiety may be experienced. As a result of the lack of
constraints on individuals, new perspectives are sought and encouraged,
and responses are likely to be innovative.

7. Identity: investiture/divestiture

This strategy serves to "confirm or disconfirm the entering
identity" (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979: 64). An organization's
socialization practice along the investiture/divestiture dimension
serves, by accepting or changing individual identity, to reinforce the
other socialization practices. Thus, this dimension may be viewed as an
indicator or overview of the other socialization practices for an
organization.

a.   An investiture strategy allows an individual to maintain his or her
identity. Time is provided for the newcomer to adjust: it is a sort of
honeymoon period in which no unreasonable demands are made. There is a
concern with the fit or match of an individual with the organization.
Each person is important, individual approaches are tolerated and new
ideas are considered: idiosyncracies may be more tolerated. As a result
of the emphasis on maintaining individual identity and, due to the lack
of constraints on individuals, responses are likely to be innovative.

b.   A divestiture strategy changes an individual's identity in order to
develop similarities among employees. Thus strong ties among colleagues
will develop. The experience of divestiture is likely to occur any time
an individual experiences a transition, because there will be some degree
of change in the work and, possibly, a sense of being uprooted. Due to
the experienced changes and disruptions, high levels of anxiety are

likely. Thus, responses are likely to be non-innovative.

To summarize Van Maanen's and Schein's theory of socialization processes, I return to the level of anxiety as a determining factor of responses. With unambiguous knowledge of demands on a newcomer, little anxiety will be experienced, resulting in conformity or non-innovative responses. If ambiguity regarding new roles is great, non-innovative responses will also result due to the high levels of experienced anxiety. In between, with moderate levels of ambiguity, which result in some anxiety, responses will be either innovative or non-innovative, depending on both the individual and the situation. For the seven socialization strategies described here, the links between socialization practice, anxiety, and outcomes are depicted in the table below.

RESPONSE TO SOCIALIZATION PROCESS BY LEVEL OF ANXIETY

Socialization practice	Little to no anxiety	Moderate anxiety	High anxiety
Formal	non-innovative		
Informal		either	
Collective	non-innovative		
Individual		either	
Fixed		either	
Variable			non-innovative
Tournament	non-innovative		
Contest		innovative	
Sequential	non-innovative		
Random		innovative	
Serial	non-innovative		
Disjunctive		innovative	
Investiture		innovative	
Divestiture			non-innovative

The socialization practices described here will be referred to later as data are used to test hypotheses linking outcomes to socialization practices in an organization. But first, the choice of organization and data collection (measurement of socialization practices) will be discussed.

III a) Choice of organization

To test the socialization theory which links socialization practices with outcomes (Van Maanen, 1978; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), one must consider organizational attributes which can affect the forms of socialization practiced within that organization. These socialization practices may be chosen explicitly or they may arise naturally, reflecting the norms and values of the dominant members of the organization.

For an empirical test of Van Maanen and Schein's theory, one must know first if an organization is innovative or non-innovative in its orientation, and, second be able to assess an organization's actual socialization practices. If the theory is valid, an organization's socialization practices will, through their outcomes, reinforce the orientation of the organization.

For example, in an organization in which there are few changes over time, new ideas are frowned upon, and members are expected to conform to existing practices, the socialization practices should reflect the non-innovative orientation of members of the organization. Formal, collective, variable, tournament, sequential, serial, and divestiture socialization practices, which tend to reflect the non-innovative nature of the organization, are most likely to be the actual socialization strategies practiced. A similar argument can be made for a highly innovative organization.

Description of LINC

To test the seven hypotheses implicit in the socialization theory, an innovative organization, LINC, was chosen. The socialization practices expected in an innovative organization are informal, individual, fixed, contest, random, disjunctive, and investiture. LINC is the main engineering organization of a computer firm and operates in a high technology, high growth industry. The firm of which LINC is a part was founded about 30 years ago and has experienced growth of over 20% annually for the past six years (1976-1982). LINC uses a matrix structure and a dual ladder of career paths (management/technical). LINC's dual ladder is depicted below. The percentages in parentheses reflect the percentages of individuals at each of the job levels.

Dual ladder at LINC

Managerial ladder	Technical ladder
Sr. Group Manager/VP (.3%)-	
Group Manager (2%)-	-Sr. Fellow
Sr. Manager (3%)-	-Fellow (.2%)
Manager (7%)-	-Consultant Engineer (4%)
Supervisor (9%)-	-Principal Engineer (20%)
Sr. Engineer (27%)	
Engineer II (22%)	
Engineer I (6%)	

As shown in the table below, for each job level, suggested education and/or experience requirements exist. Under the heading of "degree required"

is an indication of the level of education sought in LINC newcomers with no prior work experience. The final column, labeled "alternate experience," describes the desired experience sought in an individual who has worked, at LINC or elsewhere.

Position	Degree required	Alternate experience
Engineer I	Bachelors	Associate degree & experience
Engineer II	Masters	Eng. I & 2-3 years experience
Sr. Engineer	Masters	Eng. II & 2-3 yrs experience
Principal Eng.	Masters	Sr. Eng & 2-3 yrs experience

LINC as an innovative organization

In an internal company document, based on a presentation by LINC employees to the IEEE, LINC's climate is described as innovative. In particular, differences in management style, a norm against standardization, and taking responsibility and initiative are noted as important features of LINC's climate which function to reinforce the orientations of its employees and thereby reinforce the innovative nature of the organization as a whole. Jacobson (1977) found that TMR[10] is a recognized leader in its technical field, is a successful company, and that TMR empahsizes high quality work. These two examples, one internal and the other based on an outside observer's assessment, both refer to LINC as an organization in which innovation by employees is critical. LINC is in an industry well known for its rapidly changing technologies and innovations. LINC's mode of operating is consistent with its industry's, i.e. in an innovative industry, LINC is an organization which prides itself on its innovative climate.

III b) Measurement of socialization practices

Socialization agents or targets?

To test hypotheses relating socialization practices in an organization to their outcomes, it is necessary to measure the socialization practices empirically. These practices can be assessed either from the perspective of socialization agents or socialization targets. In either case, biases exist. Because this research is concerned with the intent of socialization as opposed to its results, agents are the more appropriate group to query.[11]

Method for measurement

Having chosen to assess agent views of socialization practices, a method for assessment is required. In this research, structured interviewing of socialization agents is the method employed. Open ended questions in face-to-face interviews provide the data in which LINC supervisors, in their roles as socialization agents,[12] introduce and communicate to newcomers LINC's mode of operating. A variety of topics covering the period from the intitial recruiting interviews, through first and subsequent job assignments, performance and salary reviews, and into later career planning and movement issues, allowed for an assessment of views of socialization across time.

Choice of supervisors as key socialization agents

For a number of reasons, it seemed wise to begin collecting information from individuals on the managerial ladder. First, as a

group, those on the managerial ladder are more likely to be involved in recruiting new employees. Second, this group is more likely to have an espoused theory of enacting the socialization: knowing what newcomers need to learn about LINC in order to work in the organization.[13] And third, because the managerial ladder may tend to reflect the views of those at the top of the organization, managers -- who are likely to be more closely linked to the top of the organization and its policies than non-managers -- may be aware of the "LINC theory" of socialization, the company line.

The following assumptions led to the choice of supervisors (first rung of the managerial ladder) as the most appropriate socialization agents with whom to begin this research.

1. As part of the management structure, supervisors will have theories, either LINC's or their own, of how to socialize newcomers and people moving up the ladders.

2. Supervisors are closest to the level of the engineers and as such are likely to be able to provide a good sense of what procedures and policies exist and how information on procedures and levels within LINC is transferred to these new and advancing engineers and technical people.

3. The matrix structure provides an employee with two individuals, each of whom is responsible for different areas: a supervisor who is responsible for administrative details, including evaluations of performance, career management, and salary determinations, and a project leader who oversees the individual's technical work.

Therefore, supervisors are the initial socialization agents. They both present LINC to potential recruits during interviews when LINC, the work group, and possibly a particular position are described, and they are responsible for introducing newcomers to the organization at the time of entry. This introduction takes the form of "meet[ing] the person at the

door ... I don't want somebody, on their first day, left wondering where their office is, wondering what to do ..." (LL13)*. The newcomer is also directed to individuals able to answer questions that arise. Supervisors are very likely to have been project leaders in their previous role, either Senior Engineers or Principal Engineers. Hence, at LINC, supervisors are in a unique position as socialization agents: they are most responsible for introducing newcomers to both administrative and technical aspects of the organization.

This view of supervisors as the most appropriate choice for studying socialization agent practices is supported by Jacobson's (1977) study of TMR (the firm of which LINC is a part). He writes:

> The supervisor is perhaps the most central figure in the new hire's organizational life. The supervisor sets the climate of the work group, allocates work to the employees, evaluates their success, and determines in large measure promotion and salary increase. (p.31)

Socialization agents, in this case LINC supervisors, will have both espoused and actual theories of socialization. In this study, I am asking supervisors to describe how they bring newcomers into the organization. This enables an assessment of espoused practices. To assess actual practices would require a comparison of supervisor views with newcomers' perceptions of the socialization experiences. Although such an assessment is beyond the scope of this paper, comparing a limited set of newcomer perceptions (Jacobson, 1977) with the findings in this study shows many similarities.

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* LL13 is one of the supervisors in this study.

III c)   Data collection

Selection of subjects

Supervisors having been determined to be the most appropriate
socialization agents from whom to gather information on early
socialization practices at LINC, I developed a representative sample of
supervisors to interview from an anonymous list of about 200 LINC
supervisors: I was provided a list of employees numbers, not names. The
steps in this process were as follows.

1. Consider only those supervisors with at least one year of
    supervisory experience. It was assumed that those with less
    experience at this level might still be learning the ropes of
    the job and thus provide less useful information than an
    individual with more experience.

    This step created a population of roughly one third of the
    supervisors.

2. Break this population down by education, type of work
    (hardware/software), and age group (21-30, 31-40, 41-50).

Percent of population in age group by education and
hardware/software distinction

		Education			Hardware/Software		
Age	no degree	Assoc.	BA/BS	MA/MS	Hardware	Software	Total
21-30			11%	8%	10%	4%	7%
31-40	53%		57%	72%	52%	74%	61%
41-50	47%	100%	32%	20%	38%	22%	32%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Women comprise 7% of the total population: 20% of the 21-30 age
group, 9% of the 31-40 age group, and none in the 41-50 age group.

3. Within each age group, choose individuals representative of the
    spread in each age group on the basis of education, years at
    LINC, years as a supervisor, gender, hardware/software
    orientation, and those who came to LINC as their first job.

This resulted in the sample of 15 people described below. Thirteen of the fifteen supervisors were interviewed. One was skipped for lack of time (age 41-50, no degree) and another due to geographic distance (age 41-50, Associate degree).

Age	Degree	New to LINC[1]	LINC oldtimer[1]	Longtime supervisor[2]	hard.	soft.	sex	"name"[3]
21-30	BA/BS	X				X	F	GG7
	MA/MS		X	X	X			MM12
31-40	none		X	X		X		KK10
	none		X	X	X			FF6
	BA/BS	X				X	F	AA1
	BA/BS		X	X		X[4]		NN13
	BA/BS	X				X[4]		HH8
	MA/MS		X	X		X		EE5
	MA/MS					X[4]		JJ9
	MA/MS		X	X	X			BB2
41-50	none				X			–
	Assoc.				X			–
	BA/BS[5]					X		DD4
	BA/BS		X		X			CC3
	MA/MS				X			LL11
		(n=3)	(n=7)	(n=6)	(n=7)	(n=8)	(n=2)	

Notes:

(1) The distinction between an oldtimer, and someone new to LINC is made on the basis of tenure with the organization.

New to LINC: supervisor less than 2 years, and at LINC for not much longer

Oldtimer: At LINC for at least five years, often ten or more years.

Blank: all others.

(2) A longtime supervisor has been a supervisor for more than two years.

(3) For anonomymity, supervisors are all referred to as he and by the symbols defined here under "name".

(4) Three supervisors (HH8, JJ9, NN13) were listed as having hardware backgrounds. In fact, as I learned during the interviews, their work is in software.

(5) DD4 completed a Master's degree prior to the interview.

Data Collection

The method of data collection was face-to-face interviews, using a list of general questions sent to respondents in advance of the interviews. Supervisors were chosen as key socialization agents because of their proximity to the initial socialization practice -- they are knowledgable sources. Supervisors were asked to describe the presentation of LINC to potential LINC employees. All of those interviewed were informed of the confidential nature of the interviews by which only members of the research team would have access to the tape recordings and written interview summaries. Most of the interviews were taped, with the permission of the supervisor. Three supervisors preferred not to be taped: their requests were honored.

The interviews lasted an average of one hour, with extremes of 45 minutes and one and a half hours. Interviews included supervisors at five geographically distinct LINC facilities. With one exception*, all interviews were conducted in the supervisor's office (n=5) or a nearby conference room (n=7) chosen by the supervisor. All interviews were conducted and analyzed by the author.

The list of the questions, as sent to LINC supervisors, is included here. For the purpose of this paper, I am focusing on responses to topics 1 and 2. The remaining responses provide a general background and means of interpreting responses.

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*This interview was conducted in the facility's cafeteria.

The following is a list of guideline questions that I will be using. I
would like to have your answers from three, possibly different
perspectives.

> A.   Your perceptions of LINC's theory
> B.   How you, as a supervisor work.
> C.   How your own career fits into what you have described.

The information gathered during the course of the interview will remain
confidential: only members of the research team will have access to it.

1.   Recruiting/entry into the company

> -what do you tell people or want them to know about LINC
> -what do you tell them about how things are done at LINC
> -how formal is this process, how standardized
> -describe the early experiences of new employees

2.   Movement

> -describe the stages/levels and criteria for movement .
> -what do you tell employees about career movement
> -is there any formal career planning
> -what are employees told about technical and managerial
> opportunities available to them
> -how are job descriptions used, if at all
> -are any individuals identified as special and moved along more
> quickly

3.   Job assignment and evaluation

> -how does the performance appraisal system work
> -how are job assignments made and by whom
> -what criteria are used for salary determination

4.   Miscellaneous

> -is there much attrition, at what levels
> -are there any differences in career by product line or machine
> architecture (faster or slower career growth)
> -dual ladder issues/choice and transmission of knowledge
> -what is good (best) about LINC
> -what makes LINC different from other companies
> -what changes have there been during the time that you have been at LINC

Thank you for your help. I would appreciate that you not discuss the issues
mentioned here--I would like to collect as many different and uniquely
personal perceptions as possible.

IV Findings: Socialization at LINC

This section classifies empirical data gathered from LINC supervisors[14] using seven dimensions of socialization practices (Van Maanen, 1978; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Rosenbaum, 1979). The classification of the data reflects inferences made by the author from interviews with thirteen LINC supervisors. For each dimension, a hypothesis is presented followed by data which note the number of supervisors who discuss the topic as well the number who support the statement. Representative quotes and/or summaries are presented for each topic. The data are then classified and used to test the hypothesis.

The nature of the data collection, interviews consisting of open ended questions, is reflected in the presentation of the findings. Each supervisor discussed what he or she believed to be important, hence, data depicting a variety of views on a particular issue do not necessarily exist. In fact, the lack of opposing data can be taken as support for a homogeneous view held by LINC supervisors.

(1) Setting: formal/informal

a. Hypothesis: An informal strategy results in either innovative or
non-innovative responses, depending on the situation. When
socialization agents tend to innovative orientations, as is the case in
an innovative organization such as LINC, outcomes are expected to be
innovative. When socialization agents have non-innovative orientations,
outcomes are most likely to be non-innovative.
LINC is expected to practice an informal socialization strategy that
will result in innovative outcomes.

b.   Data

The climate is unstructured: sink or swim, you are on your own

Discussed by: 12
Supported by: 12 (AA1, BB2, CC3, DD4, EE5, GG7, HH8, JJ9, KK10, LL11,
    MM12, NN13)

"LINC is known for allowing people to do their own thing ... It's a very
unstructured company" (NN13). It is the lack of structure which
distinguishes LINC from other organizations (AA1). The "non-rigid" or
"freeflowing environment" (the "LINC culture") is used to entice
applicants to LINC: "You are supposed to ferret out your own things"
(EE5). "... it's a very free atmosphere, it's very loose in the sense
that your success at LINC is a function of your aggressiveness, your
willingness, and your ability to learn ..." (BB2). People can "make
[their] own rules" (CC3).

"I think ... that it's almost like ... a sink or swim situation" (HH8).

Learning the ropes "by osmosis."[15]

Discussed by: 12
Supported by: 10 (AA1, CC3, EE5, GG7, HH8, JJ9, KK10, LL11, MM12, NN13)
Two supervisors (DD4, FF6) tell newcomers about levels and career
options.

Both newcomers and current LINC employees find out about levels and
career options "by osmosis" (n=5) or if they ask someone (n=5). This
information is not explicitly provided to newcomers.

It is assumed that the "college hires" (recent graduates) will somehow
"find things out" about how LINC functions (MM12).

There are no formal guidelines for working

Discussed by: 3
Supported by: 3 (CC3, EE5, GG7)

It is what gets done, not how or when.

c.   Classification of data: The "sink or swim" approach of an informal
strategy is an integral part of LINC's unstructured, hands off policy.
Newcomers are expected to pick things up on their own. In some cases, an
"official mentor"[16] is assigned to help with the technical work and to
answer more general questions about the work group and about LINC. The

tangible nature of the work may overcome some of the anxiety typical of informal socialization. As was noted earlier, although an informal strategy tends toward either innovative or non-innovative outcomes, in an innovative organization such as LINC, outcomes will be innovative.

d.   Conclusion: LINC has been determined to practice informal socialization. The hypothesis is accepted.

(2) Group context: individual/collective

a.   Hypothesis: An individual strategy results in either innovative or non-innovative responses, depending on the situation. When socialization agents tend to innovative orientations, as is the case in an innovative organization such as LINC, outcomes are expected to be innovative. When socialization agents have non-innovative orientations, outcomes are most likely to be non-innovative.

LINC is expected to practice an individual socialization strategy which will result in innovative outcomes.

b.   Data

LINC views individuals as important.

Discussed by: 9
Supported by: 9 (CC3, DD4, EE5, FF6, GG7, HH8, JJ9, KK10, MM12, NN13)

Individuals are expected to schedule their own time, monitor their progress, and set their own work hours (DD4, EE5, GG7, HH8, JJ9). People can "make [their] own rules" (CC3). LINC's culture gives individuals responsibility and freedom (MM12). "We give them [the newcomers] anything and everything they want to do" (FF6). "I describe the organization as an organization where individuals have a lot of say. Where individuals are expected to take initiative ..." (JJ9).

Guidance and training are provided on an individual basis.

Discussed by: 11
Supported by: 11 (AA1, DD4, EE5, FF6, GG7, HH8, JJ9, KK10, LL11, MM12, NN13)

The "mentor" assignment of a more senior person to a newcomer is made to guide the newcomer through the technical work.

In some cases, "handholding" by the senior person is required, especially for those straight out of school (MM12).

Discussed by: 7
Supported by: 7 (CC3, DD4, EE5, FF6, HH8, KK10, NN13)

Training is set up as required, on an individual basis, to fill in gaps in knowledge and experience.

Two career paths exist to meet individual needs

Discussed by: 7
Supported by: 7 (BB2, DD4, EE5, GG7, HH8, LL11, MM12)

"In LINC we have a standard line about the two paths that anybody" can take (EE5). "I think its very important to encourage people not to think that the managerial path is the only way to get ahead. There's a lot of status in taking the technical path" (GG7).

c.   Classification of data: At present, newcomers join LINC singly -- they are hired by and into a specific work group. Thus, the socialization is necessarily individual. LINC's use of "official mentors" who act as guides to learning about working at LINC is similar to an apprentice situation. In this organization, individuals are very important. Each person is treated as a new case: no general prescriptions exist. In addition, the dual ladder structure enables an individual to find the career path most suitable to her or him.

d.   Conclusion: LINC has been determined to practice individual socialization. The hypothesis is accpeted.

(3) Time frames: fixed/variable

a.   Hypothesis: LINC is expected to practice a fixed socialization

      strategy which will result in innovative outcomes.

b.   Data

      There are no organizationally set timetables for career growth.

      Discussed by: 8
      Supported by: 8   (AA1, BB2, CC3, EE5, GG7, HH8, MM12, NN13)

      "It's ... your decision as to what you want to do and where you
      want to go. We'll help you get there, but we don't have any grand
      scheme laid out" (HH8). But, newcomers especially are not concerned
      with what they are "going to do five years from now," they are only
      concerned with the next project (AA1). "Your success is a function
      of your aggressiveness" (BB2).

      "The company is growing so fast ... it probably doesn't matter"
      what career planning exists, or what information is available to
      individuals (BB2).

      If a person does a good job, a promotion will ensue. Thus, there
      is no need for concern with career stages (MM12).

      There are great variations is project time frames across groups

      Discussed by: 11
      Supported by: 11 (AA1, BB2, CC3, DD4, GG7, HH8, JJ9, KK10, LL11,
            MM12, NN13)

      Because time frames for projects vary from three months to five
      years, it becomes difficult to determine manpower needs for any
      given time.

      No consensus of the use of job descriptions

      Discussed by: 8
      Supported by: 8   (AA1, BB2, DD4, GG7, JJ9, KK10, MM12, NN13)

      LINC job descriptions of the stages (levels) are generally not
      used. Instead, many groups have developed their own descriptions
      to meet the group's requirements (n=5) or use no job descriptions
      (n=1). For two supervisors it is unclear whose job descriptions
      are used, those of the group or LINC's. Because individuals may
      move through groups as they progress in their careers, this lack of
      consensus affects the organization-wide clarity of timetables and
      stages.

Discussed by : 12
Supported by: 10 (AA1, CC3, EE5, GG7, HH8, JJ9, KK10, LL11, MM12,
        NN13)
Two supervisors tell their subordinates (DD4, FF6)

The variable nature of the socialization is reinforced through the
learning of career options and stages primarily "by osmosis."

Performance measures are few

Discussed by: 1
Supported by: 1 (AA1)

There are few measures of performance, a function of the lack of
structure in the environment.

c.   Classification of data: LINC's high growth rate has resulted in a

constant need for additional people at all levels and great variance in

project time frames, thereby tending to disallow the practice of a fixed

socialization strategy. Although fixed timetables for movement are not

possible, the majority of supervisors do schedule evaluations (salary and

performance) in accord with the frequency requested by LINC.[17] The

regularity of the evaluations may provide LINC employees with some sense

of structure. For, even if movement timetables do not exist, salaries

will be reviewed, and most likely increased, on an annual basis.

d.   Conclusion: As this dimension refers primarily to career movement

timetables, LINC has been determined not to practice fixed

socialization. Thus, the hypothesis is rejected.

(4) Tracking: tournament/contest

a.   Hypothesis: LINC is expected to practice a contest socialization

      strategy which will result in innovative outcomes.

b.   Data

Individuality is encouraged, labeling is not

Discussed by: 11
Supported by: 11 (AA1, CC3, DD4, EE5, FF6, GG7, HH8, JJ9, LL11,
       MM12, NN13)

Because individuals are included in the making of job assignments,
there is no one individual who is judging or tracking
omnipotently. Four supervisors claim sole resposnsibility for
making job assignments. Seven supervisors include the employee in
the making of job assignments. Of these eleven supervisors, five
stress the need to meet the needs of the individual and four to
meet the needs of the group.

Discussed by: 10
Supported by: 10 (AA1, CC2, DD4, EE5, GG7, HH8, JJ9, LL11, MM12,
       NN13)

LINC provides individuals with responsibility and freedom.
Individuals must push themselves.

Finding one's spot

Discussed by: 8
Supported by: 8 (BB2, EE5, FF6, GG7, HH8, KK10, LL11, MM12)

The option of mobility within LINC functions as a means of allowing
each individual to find his or her own slot -- no one is viewed as
a loser, it is just that he or she is in the wrong spot (n=8). It
is acceptable to shift between the two ladders (n=3: EE5, HH8,
LL11).

Performance is key

Discussed by: 5
Supported by: 5 (CC3, EE5, FF6, GG7, MM12)

It is the work that counts and not how or when it gets done (CC3,
EE5, GG7).

If a person is not willing to "be a performer," it will not go over
well (FF6). Performance creates opportunities (MM12).

No fast track

Discussed by: 11
Supported by: 11 (AA1, BB2, DD4, EE5, FF6, GG7, HH8, JJ9, LL11,
       MM12, NN13)

LINC has a policy of paying for performance: "One thing that LINC
really does, I think, is pay ... and promote on performance"

(AA1). "Individual contributors" count -- one is promoted for doing well (DD4). "People get what they earn" (GG7).

Success and failure

Discussed by: 3
Supported by: 3 (HH8, KK10, NN13)

"They allow you to be creative, to be successful and they go out of their way to help you [to] be successful" (NN13).

Good people do not flounder, even in LINC's "sink or swim" environment (HH8).

NN13 notes that people are rarely fired. This is viewed as a direct result of LINC's ability to select carefully.

It is assumed that the initial selection is so successful that a person could never fail. Consider a quote made by a GEM employee on career employment at GEM. "When you hire someone ... it's really a major commitment ... You're pretty damn careful about what you're going to do because we look at it as a long term issue" (Dyer, 1982: 16). Dyer adds that "rather than being fired, prodigal sons are given the opportunity to find another job in a different part of the company" (p.16).

"I think we have a lot of people fail and it's our fault" -- more supervision might help (KK10). There is no further elaboration on this point.

c.   Classification of data: LINC practices a socialization strategy

which reflects the emphasis placed on individuality. At LINC, each

person is considered unique. No form of tracking could incorporate this

view: tracking would lump people together, thereby negating the

importance of the individual. As is typical of contest socialization,

LINC uses performance as the key criterion for advancement within the

organization; individuals are expected to perform rather than conform.

The quality of the work is most important; how the work gets done, both

in terms of hours worked and methods used is of far less importance.

With LINC's emphasis on selection of "good" people, it is expected that

losers will not be hired. In fact, an individual who does poorly is

assumed to be in an inappropriate spot -- mobility within LINC allows for finding the right spot for each person.

d.   Conclusion: LINC has been determined to practice contest socialization. The observation that "a lot of people fail," made by only one supervisor (KK10), is insufficient to support a practice of tournament socialization at LINC. The hypothesis is accepted.

(5) Stages: sequential/random

a.   Hypothesis: LINC is expected to practice a random socialization strategy which will result in innovative outcomes.

b.   Data

Availability of information on careers and hierarchical levels at LINC.

Discussed by: 12
Supported by: 10 (AA1, CC3, EE5, GG7, HH8, JJ9, KK10, LL11, MM12, NN13)
Two supervisors explicitly tell subordinates (DD4, FF6)

As noted earlier, "osmosis" is the primary means of transmitting the information on levels within LINC. This information may exist, though it is not always readily available.

Career planning issues.

Discussed by: 3
Supported by: 3 (BB2, GG7, HH8)

"We are not hiring for a particular position ... the type of person we want to hire is a versatile person." An individual is not slotted for a given spot and may be pushed into an area not sought by that person because the staffing needs of the group take precedence (GG7).

LINC encourages individual choice: "we don't have any grand scheme laid out [that says] this year you'll do this, next year you'll do that" (HH8).

"The company is growing so fast ... that it probably doesn't matter ... [whether you] become a principal engineer or [an] engineering supervisor ... we have a need for just about everybody." Also, with rapid growth, career stages will necessarily change as the organization structure is forced to accommodate to the growth (BB2).

Variable project time frames impact on careers

Discussed by: 4
Supported by: 4 (EE5, FF6, GG7, MM12)

As project time frames and priorities change, an individual's career might be affected when an individual is moved onto a project with higher priority or off a project which has been cancelled.

c.   Classification of data: LINC is an organization that prides itself on selecting newcomers for their individuality and creativity. A result of the emphasis on individuality is that career goals (target roles) are not commonly shared. The lack of consensus on career goals is reinforced by the loose nature of the transmittal of career/movement information. Thus, LINC practices a form of socialization in which individuals focus more on their work than on career planning issues.

d.   Conclusion: LINC has been determined to practice a random socialization strategy. The hypothesis is accepted.

(6) Role models: serial/disjunctive

a.   Hypothesis: LINC is expected to practice a disjunctive socialization strategy which will result in innovative outcomes.

b.   Data

Lack of norms and rapid growth at LINC.

Discussed by: 9
Supported by: 9 (AA1, DD4, EE5, GG7, HH8, JJ9, LL11, MM12, NN13)

The group is growing now (n=5). Growth is projected (n=2). In two groups, no growth is planned.

Discussed by: 11
Supported by: 11 (AA1, BB2, CC3, DD4, GG7, HH8, JJ9, KK10, LL11,
     MM12, NN13)

Project time frames overlap and the project priorities change.
Thus, career planning by stages is not inherently predictable.

Discussed by: 8
Supported by: 8 (AA1, BB2, DD4, GG7, JJ9, KK10, MM12, NN13)

No norms exist for the dissemination of career option and level
information. Each group does it differently. In fact, many groups
(n=5) develop their own job descriptions.

Discussed by: 12
Supported by: 10 (AA1, CC3, EE5, GG7, HH8, JJ9, KK10, LL11, MM12,
     NN13)
Two supervisors tell their subordinates (DD4, FF6)

Much of the information regarding levels within LINC is learned "by
osmosis" and not from specific role models or predecessors,
although some individuals will look around to see who is doing what
and at what level that person is (GG7).

Individuals are responsible for their own career planning and
progress.

Discussed by: 12
Supported by: 12 (AA1, BB2, CC3, DD4, EE5, FF6, GG7, HH8, JJ9,
     LL11, MM12, NN13)

Individuals must be responsible for themselves, they must work
toward realizing their own goals. Individuals' interests are
incorporated into the making of job assignments.

"It's your decision as to what you want to do and where you want to
go" (HH8).

It is the work that counts, not how or when it actually gets done
(CC3, EE5, GG7).

Confusion and gaps in the structure.

Discussed by: 4
Supported by: 4 (BB2, EE5, FF6, NN13)

The matrix structure has gaps and vagueness and LINC has developed
more rules to govern work.

NN13 related a story of someone who had reported to work on his
first day and the person who had hired him was no longer at LINC.
The newcomer felt totally abandoned. This happens, "though maybe

> not as often as it used to happen ... people have been, tend
> to be, very shocked, because they are just sort of left
> (abandoned)."

Role models

Although there is no explicit evidence for the existence of role
models at LINC, "mentors," whose primary role is to provide
technical guidance might be viewed as role models (see (2)
collective/individual: discussed by eleven supervisors).

c.   Classification of data: A lack of internal role models, typical of

disjunctive socialization is reflected in LINC's rapid growth which

effectively forces people's careers to move quickly and in a variety of

directions. No clear norms for movement can exist and the socialization

agents are likely to be relative newcomers to the organization, with

insufficient time to have learned from role models, should they exist.

One consequence is that the organization will be in a state of transition

with too few role models to socialize the newcomers. In addition to the

lack of role models, LINC, as a result of its emphasis on individuality,

does not take any initiative for career planning. Individuals must learn

what is necessary and look after themselves.

d.   Conclusion: LINC has been determined to practice a disjunctive

socialization strategy. The hypothesis is accepted.

(7) Identity: investiture/divestiture[18]

a.   Hypothesis: LINC is expected to practice an investiture

socialization strategy which will result in innovative outcomes.

b.   Data

At LINC, screening for an initial fit of personality is very
important: The type of individual who will function well at LINC
is actively sought.

Discussed by: 11
Supported by: 11   (AA1, BB2, CC3, DD4, EE5, FF6, GG7, HH8, JJ9,
      LL11, NN13)

Fit into LINC's environment is actively sought and encouraged.
"Fit" refers to selection on the basis of individuality and
creativity. The assumption is that once it is determined that a
person "fits," everything else will fall into place and the
newcomer will become an able member of the organization.

LINC attracts similar types of people. "I suspect that a lot of
people who come into LINC sort of already are part of the culture.
They say 'Yeah, those people are like me'" (JJ9). One "can always
tell a LINC person on an airplane" -- LINC's selection yields
similar types (LL11).

LINC is very concerned with its employees.

Discussed by: 9
Supported by: 9   (CC3, EE5, GG7, HH8, JJ9, KK10, LL11, MM12, NN13)

Individuals should not be constrained. They should be treated
fairly and equally.

Discussed by: 3
Supported by: 3   (DD4, HH8, JJ9)

Feedback and communication up and down are encouraged. HH8 and JJ9
noted that each individual has a say in what happens.

Discussed by: 7
Supported by: 7   (BB2, DD4, EE5, GG7, HH8, LL11, MM12)

The existence of the dual ladder at LINC allows an individual to
choose a path that, in theory, is consistent with that individual's
desires, values, skills, etc. (EE5, HH8, LL11).

Opportunities within LINC exist for individuals to move within LINC
to find a situation which "fits" them.

Discussed by: 8
Supported by: 8   (BB2, EE5, FF6, GG7, HH8, KK10, LL11, MM12)

Mobility is an important feature at LINC--one can move within the
company, even to another geographic location, rather than being
'forced' to move outside. At LINC, one can "transfer within ... if
you don't like your job now or you don't like your management now,"
it can be change or be changed (BB2).

"We receive a lot of people that have had problems in other
companies, because the companies have been so structured ...
[Here], you can transfer within" (BB2).

Individuality is encouraged and expected.

Discussed by: 10
Supported by: 10 (AA1, BB2, DD4, EE5, GG7, HH8, JJ9, LL11, MM12, NN13)

The supervisors view their role as supportive or as helping to develop existing skills and abilities and not as that of molding the newcomer. Individual choice is encouraged (HH8).

That the company for which one works will be special in some way for each individual recognizes and accepts differences among individuals (GG7).

Individuals are responsible for themselves

Discussed by: 9
Supported by: 9 (AA1, BB2, CC3, EE5, GG7, HH8, KK10, MM12, NN13)

Individuals have freedom and flexibility to pursue their goals. "You are supposed to ferret out your own things" (MM12) and manage your own time (GG7). "I think basically that people had -- have -- a lot of freedom:" the guidelines are fairly loose and the environment ecourages creativity (KK10).

Mobility and low attrition

Discussed by: 12
Supported by: 12 (AA1, BB2, CC3, DD4, FF6, GG7, HH8, JJ9, KK10, LL11, MM12, NN13)

As a result of the mobility within LINC (n=5; AA1, BB2. FF6, LL11, NN13), attrition to outside the company is low (AA1, BB2, CC3, DD4, FF6, GG7, HH8, JJ9, KK10, LL11, MM12).

There is time to acclimate to LINC

Discussed by: 8
Supported by: 8 (AA1, CC3, DD4, FF6, JJ9, LL11, MM12, NN13)

Newcomers are placed on smaller projects, not "on the critical path, under a lot a pressure" (MM12). "There is a certain period of time that people need to become acclimated to LINC" (NN13).

Creativity at LINC

Discussed by: 1
Supported by: 1 (NN13)

"All in all, I think LINC is a good place to work if you want to be creative." "They allow you to be creative, to be successful and they go out of their way to help you [to] be successful."

c.   Classification of data: LINC practices a socialization strategy in which individuals are <u>not</u> molded into a common form ("clones"). LINC's concern for its employees and for the maintenance of their individuality is typical of an investiture strategy. By its practice, LINC reinforces the importance of fit: both in terms of selection and the criterion for selection (individuality).

d.   Conclusion: LINC has been determined to practice an investiture socialization strategy. The hypothesis is accepted.

To summarize this section, six of the seven hypotheses have been accepted. With one exception, LINC's socialization practices, as determined by the data, are as expected. The next section considers the implication of this finding.

V Analysis

This research set out to validate a theory by testing hypotheses linking socialization practices to predetermined outcomes in an innovative organization. With one exception, as depicted in the table below, the hypotheses have been accepted. The one exception, in the fixed/variable dimension, can be explained in terms of situational or organizationally specific factors. In fact, two of the six other hypotheses are also situationally determined in that responses to both informal and individual socialization strategies are expected to be extreme and, in the case of an innovative organization such as LINC, we expect the innovative response. An innovative organization is most likely to socialize for innovative responses, because its members will tend to have innovative orientations and, as socialization agents, their orientations will be transmitted to the newcomers.

Summary table of LINC's socialization practices

Dimension	Hypothesized Practice at LINC	Actual Practice	Accept/reject Hypothesis
formal/informal	informal	informal	accept
individual/collective	individual	individual	accept
variable/fixed	fixed	variable	*reject
tournament/contest	contest	contest	accept
random/sequential	random	random	accept
serial/disjunctive	disjunctive	disjunctive	accept
investiture/divestiture	investiture	investiture	accept

Variable socialization: What happens to the theory?

It is possible, under some conditions, for variable socialization to result in innovative responses. An innovative outcome to a variable

socialization practice is due to two factors. First, for an organization in a rapid growth industry it is difficult, if not impossible, to adhere to organizationally set timetables. And second, for a highly technical organization whose technologies are rapidly changing, career moves will necessarily reflect the technological changes because technical obsolescence may occur quickly. Elaborating on these two factors requires a return to the descriptions of each strategy fixed and variable.

According to the theory, in a fixed socialization strategy an individual is considered deviant if "off schedule." At LINC, the norms for movement are dictated by the larger environment and not by the organization: what might be considered deviant in another environment may well be normal for LINC's high growth and high technology environment. LINC's growth rate, over 20% annually for the past six years (1976-1982), allows for rapid career progress and makes it difficult to maintain organizationally set timetables for movement if they were to exist. In addition, the dominance of technical work results in tangible measures of individual achievement. Each of these reasons tends to negate a need for an organizationally imposed structure. Thus, because the rapid growth and evolving technology force frequent moves, the practice of a fixed socialization strategy is not possible at LINC.

Although LINC's environment forces the practice of variable socialization, the consequent ambiguity affects everyone and the anxiety and frustration typical of variable socialization need not be experienced. Therefore, LINC's practice of variable socialization reflects the organization's situation, its environment, and it need not result in non-innovative responses typical of variable socialization.

The concept of fit

By considering the seven-dimensional pattern of socialization practices that can be used to characterize an organization and to distinguish among organizations (Schein, personal communication, 1982), one might ask how such a pattern arises.[19] This study has shown that the innovative nature of an organization affects socialization practices, but is there something more? Is there a feature of an organization's culture or climate that links together the seven socialization strategies practiced? Considering LINC from this perspective, the theme of "fit" stands out as critical in forming the basis of the socialization practices at LINC.

Fit refers to the toughness of the selection process, during which individuals are sought whose personalities mesh with attributes of those already in the organization.[20] (Screening for technical ability is also a factor in selection, but this is a more objective criterion than is fit.) Fit assumes that by hiring the "right" people at the start, you will not have problems later. This aspect of fit is found in LINC's practice of investiture socialization which allows individuals who are selected for their individuality to be left alone to do "their stuff." People who fit at LINC are those with creativity and individuality, both of which are required in an industry with a rapidly changing technology.[21] LINC employees are expected to be proactive—to take responsibility for themselves, for their work, and to push their own ideas. Even in LINC's sink or swim environment, people do not sink. If an individual is having difficulty, it is attributed to the situation (the work group) rather than to the individual or to LINC's having

selected an individual who does not fit.[22]

A few quotes are included as examples of the theme of fit at LINC.

> "The environment decides a lot of our applicants ... we try to show
> them our environment. Some people don't fit. And one of the
> things we want is to develop a sense of whether they're going to
> fit or not. Whether they're going to be comfortable with the way
> our group works, and just the general atmosphere." A good person
> is hired for future potential, even if the person is overqualified
> for the present opening (GG7).

> "... all that is sort of a preselection kind of thing, trying to
> get people to decide whether they want to be in this group, so that
> they don't find out after they take the job" (JJ9).

> "All in all, I think LINC is a good place to work if you want to be
> creative" (NN13).

> "Individuals are expected to make contributions as individuals,
> they're expected to take initiative and ... they're not expected to
> take the direction of management at face value" (JJ9).

Fit and organizational culture

In his analysis of GEM's organizational culture, Dyer (1982)
presents three underlying assumptions of the GEM culture, two of which
are relevant to this analysis of LINC.[23] GEM's cultural assumptions
are related to LINC's theme of fit. GEM considers itself as one family
and believes that people are capable of governing themselves. From these
assumptions follow practices and expectations of behavior and attitudes.

Considering GEM as a family has a number of implications. Among
these are that ties to one another and to the organization will be
strong. For example, once hired, an individual becomes a member of the
GEM family and is virtually ensured "career employment" and "decisions
affecting the GEM family must be made in concert with others to avoid
offending other family members" (Dyer, 1982: 24). Second, similarities
are emphasized, status differences are minimized, both of which serve to

unify the organization: "status differences interfere with establishing a feeling of community" (Dyer, 1982: 18). Selection on the basis of fit also emphasizes similarity of personalities. And, according to Holland (1973), in an organization in which there are similar personalities, individuals will tend to respond to problems in similar ways. Thus, the theme of fit and the assumption that GEM is one family both serve to reinforce similarities and consequently unity within the organization, be it LINC or the whole of GEM.

The assumption that people are capable of governing themselves reflects the belief that "humans are assumed to be innately good and are seen as being proactive, enterprising, and willing to take responsibility for their own actions ... people have the ability to govern themselves" (Dyer, 1982: 27). By allowing and encouraging self-government, newcomers are left alone. It is believed that creativity and initiative will be encouraged by not dictating specific rules that might result in additional red tape, a loss of freedom, or GEM's becoming more like a big company. This assumption too reflects the theme of fit (creativity and individuality). Thus, Dyer's findings of GEM's cultural assumptions support the theme of fit at the firm (GEM) level and consequently the choice of LINC as an innovative organization.

Fit and socialization practices

Clearly, LINC's socialization practices reflect the concept of fit as an operating theme at LINC. Fit supports the innovative nature of the work at LINC: individuality arises from the selection process, it is not

a result of the socialization. The socialization strategies practiced

are those which both result in innovative outcomes and least constrain

individuals, thereby reinforcing the innovative nature of members of the

organization and the selection criteria. Examples of fit as an

underlying theme of the socialization practices at LINC are included

below.

Example	Socialization Practice
Selection of good people; those who can do the work and whose personalities match with those of existing LINC employees	investiture
No constraints are needed when newcomers are chosen on the basis of fit	informal & variable
The dual ladder option allows individuals to find their own niche within LINC	random & individual
There are no pre-set career stages that would shape employees	random
Mobility within LINC allows each individual to find an appropriate spot	individual, investiture, & contest

To summarize, six of the seven hypotheses have been confirmed. The

one disconfirmed hypothesis (fixed/variable) is shown to be determined by

situational factors. Thus, on the whole, the theory presented by Van

Maanen and Schein holds through this empirical test: an innovative

organization will practice socialization strategies that support the

organization's innovative nature. In addition, the patterning of

socialization strategies may reflect something more: in this case the

theme of fit, which is itself a reflection of the organization's cultural

assumptions.

VI Future Issues

As LINC continues its dramatic growth, it may become less possible to successfuly select new employees on the basis of "fit": there may not exist enough individuals with personalities matching LINC's concept of its employees. Hence, there may be a weakening in the homogenous personality at LINC (in terms of high levels of creativity and individuality) and, therefore, a consequent change in the level of innovation and possibly changes in the socialization practices as well.

As LINC has grown, some supervisors, "old-timers" who have been at LINC for over five years, recognize the beginnings of an increase in structure (formalization) at LINC.[24] Dyer (1982: 30-31) learned that

> Oldtimers frequently express the fear that GEM will become
> more bureaucratic and accumulate more 'red tape' as it
> continues to grow ... some oldtimers have left GEM because
> they felt that the company was becoming more rule oriented,
> and as a result, they felt that they were losing some of the
> freedom that they once enjoyed.

This view is supported by LL11 who sees no reason to leave LINC as it is today, but he fears the changes that may occur as LINC grows. As more people come to work at LINC, it may not be possible to maintain LINC's current philosophy.

With formalization and growth, GEM's cultural assumptions may become less pervasive, resulting in a shift away from socialization practices with innovative outcomes toward the non-innovative end of the continuum. For instance, with increased hiring, LINC may be forced to resort to more formal or more collective socialization practices. It may become necessary to standardize career paths, resulting in a shift from

variable and random socialization practices toward more fixed and more sequential socialization practices. These changes, results of continuing growth and lessened homogeneity (an inability to select on the basis of fit, coupled with an increase in formalization), would surface in socialization practices, in selection criteria, and in outcomes to socialization practices. The overall result may be less innovation by LINC employees, and consequently, a less innovative organization.

Conclusion

At LINC, the theme of "fit" serves as a supportive structure for both the socialization practices and the innovative nature of individuals in the organization. Fit asks that individuals be selected using the criterion of individuality. That selection and its criterion results in individuals whose innovative and individualistic qualities are supported by the organization's socialization practices. This differs from the case in which individuals are socialized to be innovative. In effect, LINC's socialization practices are "hands off," allowing newcomers to use the quality for which they were selected -- their individuality. So, LINC's socialization practices aid in reinforcing the selection feature of "fit" as well as the overall innovative nature of the organization.

By testing hypothesized links between socialization practices and outcomes in an innovative organization, I have been able to confirm most of Van Maanen and Schein's theory. In addition, the theory has beeb broadened by a discussion of some situationally specific factors which

result in surprises to the theory. In particular, an innovative organization in a high growth and high technology environment need not prescribe fixed timetables for movement. The lack of fixed timetables does not necessarily result in the anxiety and consequent non-innovative responses theorized by Van Maanen and Schein. This theory may continue to be tested in other types of organizations with other exceptions to be found. The theory can be further enhanced through validation such as that demonstrated in this paper.

This analysis has presented empirical data on agent socialization practices as described by LINC supervisors. What remains an empirical question is whether or not individuals on the technical ladder and those at other levels on the management ladder hold the same views as have been described in this paper.

Notes

(1)   Marquis (1965) studied engineering and science students and Miller & Wager (1971) studied scientists and engineers in an aerospace company, and Becker & Carper (1956A; 1956B) describe the occupational choice and socialization for three groups of graduate students: physiologists, engineers, and philosophers.

(2)   The term "anticipatory socialization," originated by Merton (1957), is described by Van Maanen & Schein (1977: 59) as "the degree to which an individual is prepared, prior to entry, for an occupational or organizational position."

(3)   Each pair of socialization strategies represents a continuum. The practice of a particular strategy refers to a practice which is nearer to one end of the continuum than to the other. In fact, on a particular dimension, an organization's socialization practice may fall directly in the middle of the continuum, implying a neutral or ambiguous practice.

(4)   The pattern will reflect the dominant response among the seven strategies practiced in an organization. Responses range from innovative to non-innovative.

(5)   The boundary may be a change of function, a change of hierarchical level or a shift relative to the core of the organization: a change in inclusionary status (Schein, 1978).

(6)   There are two distinct results of the four combinations of ability and knowledge: innovation or non-innovation First, an individual who knows exactly what is expected and has the ability to do just that will experience no ambiguity and consequently no anxiety. This person is not likely to be innovative. Second, an individual who does not know what is expected and yet has the ability to meet the expectations will experience some ambiguity and hence some anxiety. This person will be able to be innovative. Third, an individual may know what is expected and also know that he or she is unable to do what is expected. This individual will experience a great deal of anxiety and thus be unable to be innovative. Finally, we have an individual who would be unable to do what is expected, even if he or she knew what that was. This person may or may not experience ambiguity or anxiety. In either case, innovation is unlikely.

(7)   According to Brim & Wheeler (1966), the level of dissent will be inversely related to the individual's degree of commitment to the organization.

(8)   This dimension is based on work by Rosenbaum (1979) on mobility patterns in organizations. The theory for this dimension is fairly vague, a function of a general lack of empirical evidence.

(9)   Van Maanen & Schein (1979) refer to an innovative outcome to a random socialization process. I would argue that responses could go either way -- dependent upon the level of anxiety experienced.

(10) LINC is part of a larger computer firm that has been studied by others and given a variety of pseudonyms. In particular, the firm has been referred to as TMR (Jacobsen, 1977) and GEM (Dyer, 1982).

(11) Because targets are new to the organization or new to a position within the organization, they lack the clues necessary to accurately interpret socialization processes. In fact, their views will be biased by their prior experiences both in and out of the organization. Socialization agents are more directly involved in the presentation of "the way things are done" in their organization. Though direct, their involvement may be implicit as well as explicit. Thus the difference between espoused and actual practice.

(12) There are differences between espoused theory and practice. It is difficult within the framework of this research to fully assess such differences.

(13) Wheeler (Brim & Wheeler, 1966) notes that a socialization agent may be unaware of his role. Thus, a supervisor at LINC may have an espoused theory -- which is what this research hopes to learn -- as well as more implicit socialization practices which are beyond the scope of this research. Implicit practices would have to be assessed from the socialization targets. Jacobson (1977) has done this for TMR. His results compare favorably with the findings in this paper.

(14) All findings should be read and interpreted with the understanding that since supervisors are on the managerial path, their views should reflect the perceptions of those on the managerial ladder.

(15) "By osmosis" means that a person will pick something up just by virtue of being at LINC and interacting with others who are there -- in the natural course of working. Osmosis does not imply the conscious choice to which Van Maanen & Schein (1979: 46) refer when they comment that informal socialization places "recruits in the position where they must select their own socialization agents."

(16) At LINC, an "official mentor" is often assigned to a newcomer. This individual is typically one or more levels above the newcomer and is responsible for guidance, primarily with regard to the technical work. For newcomers to LINC who have work experience, the level of guidance and supervision tends to be lower than for newcomers right out of college.

(17) All thirteen supervisors schedule annual salary reviews for their subordinates, and nine of the thirteen schedule semi-annual performance reviews, the frequencies required by LINC. The remaining four supervisors schedule performance reviews as follows:

Supervisor	Frequency of review	Knows should be semi-annual
FF6	every 3 months	yes
BB2	every 12 months	yes
LL11	unclear—less than semi-annual	yes
JJ9	never: provides feedback as deemed necessary	no—believes annual

(18) Though, in highly technical organizations, divestiture may be practiced as one moves into management, this analysis is only concerned with the time of entry into the organization, at which time investiture is the strategy practiced. The shift to management incurs a change of emphasis (technical work to planning and administrating) and a change in one's peer group. For technically-trained individuals, such as LINC's engineers, the move into management may imply the relinquishing of their training and values for those of the new domain—management.

According to LINC supervisors, the pros of the management ladder are less tangible than the pros of the technical ladder, with which the individual will already be familiar. Thus, a move to managment may be viewed as a move from the known into the unknown (a "twilight zone" in which the rules are new and less explicit).

(19) This multi-dimensional pattern may reflect underlying assumptions or themes by which the organization operates (Dyer, personal communication, 1982).

(20) As support for selection on the basis of fit, I will recount a personal experience. In the course of my interviews at LINC, five or six of the thirteen supervisors offered me a job at LINC. In all but the last case, I am unsure of the seriousness of the offers. The one supervisor I pushed in this matter said that the offer was genuine. My interpretation of this is that I was perceived as "fitting" at LINC. I know my way around computers, have programmed off and on for many years: I know the jargon of computers and programming. In addition, through my initial background interviews at LINC and through subsequent interviews of supervisors, I learned the 'LINC language.' I appeared to fit, both in terms of the work and also in terms of the organization. Whether the criterion of fit is applied and works in all cases remains an empirical question.

(21) LINC's underlying theme of fit may refer to the same notion as Schein's (1968) socialization outcome of creative individualism. LINC's investiture socialization practice can be shown to support an outcome of creative individualism which is in line with the innovative responses of LINC's other socialization practices. Investiture, together with selection for individuality (fit), will result in creative individualism because individuals who are recruited by LINC are preselected for their agreement with the pivotal norms (fit) and then are not forced to accept the other norms (investiture). In this way, outcomes of rebellion and conformity are ruled out.

(22)   There may be some "misfits" who, even given the mobility option
within LINC, cannot find an appropriate place and will leave LINC. It is
assumed that these individuals will be few in number.

(23)   Dyer's third assumption, that truth is discovered through conflict
is not an issue in this analysis.

(24)   LINC is perceived as having become somewhat more structured over
time. The results of this "formalization" are reflected the comments of
a number of supervisors whose views are included below.

> There is less individual influence (n=3), more standardization
> (n=1), more red tape (n=1), more redundancy (n=1), it takes longer
> to get things done (n=3), the atmosphere is less relaxed (n=2),
> less easygoing (n=1), it is more professional (n=2).

> NN13, a LINC oldtimer, captures all these comments in his
> reflection that "LINC's a big company now."

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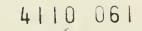
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