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ORGANIZATIONAL SOCIALIZATION AND GENDER DIFFERENCES IN STUDENTS AT WORK

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INTRODUCTION

The focus of this research is adult organizational socialization. Organizational socialization has been broadly defined as "the process by which an Individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role" (Van Maanen and Schein 1979, p. 211).

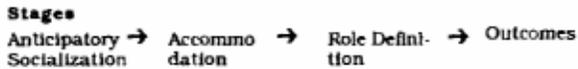
In 1976, Feldman proposed a model describing how Individuals are socialized into organizations. (Background on, and description of, the Feldman model is provided below.) We investigated whether the socialization model proposed by Feldman holds for undergraduate students engaged in internships. We also examined differences between the socialization process experienced by males versus females.

THE SOCIALIZATION MODEL

Feldman's model of organizational socialization is a three-stage model: anticipatory socialization, accommodation, and role management, with process variables at each stage indicating successful completion of events crucial to that stage. The model also includes four outcome variables. (See Figure 1.)

FIGURE 1

THE FELDMAN MODEL



Stage 1: Anticipatory Socialization The recruits, while still outsiders to the organization, anticipate the experiences they are about to encounter and begin to adapt themselves accordingly.

Stage 2: Accommodation. "Breaking In" This stage begins the encounter with the organization. Newcomers undergo initiation to their tasks and to their workgroups with goals of changing and reshaping inaccurate, unrealistic expectations.

Stage 3: Role Management. Feldman (1976b) posts that in this stage the recruit attempts to mediate two types of conflicts outside life conflicts and conflicting demands at work.

Outcomes. There are four outcomes in this model. General satisfaction: *Mutual influence* (the degree to which the recruit feels control over how work is carried out; internal work motivation; and job involvement, or commitment to work

GENDER AND WORK

Much of the literature on gender differences assumes that there are typical male and female behaviors, which is reflected, in part, in the highly sex-segregated nature of the North American work force (Gutek and Larwood 1987; Ehrhardt and Sandier 1987). However, evidence for a systematic relationship between gender and social behavior is sketchy and is more often anecdotal or ideological than rigorously scientific.

HYPOTHESES

Based on the above Issues, we examined two hypotheses.
H1: There will be gender differences between men and women interns in the socialization process.

H2: The socialization process model (Feldman 1976) will be supported by the intern experience.

METHODOLOGY

The sample consisted of 18 men and 32 women undergraduate students at a medium-sized private Midwestern college who were

currently working as Interns. Data were collected through a phone-administered, structured questionnaire. Feldman's (1976) questionnaire modified only slightly for telephone administration was used to assess the socialization process.

RESULTS

Description of the Sample. Half of the students found their Internships through the Career Center, including Internship postings, announcements, etc. Twenty-two percent of the students found their Internships with help from faculty members. Only 8% of the Interns found their internships through friends. More men than women found their jobs through the Career Center (92% of the men, compared to only 46% of the women). Fully 82% of the internships were not required for the students' majors.

The majority of the students were paid for their work (54%). Many of the students (46%) worked more than 20 hours a week and 40% worked between 10 and 20 hours per week. Two-thirds of the interns were women. Men worked longer hours than women; 72% of the men worked more than 20 hours a week, compared to only 31% of the women. However, proportionately more men than women were paid for their work (83% of the men, but only 37% of the women).

None of the students had prior experience at the company where they were interning. Most of the interns were business majors, and 90% were seniors.

Results of the Hypotheses. Both the socialization process model and the gender outcomes were assessed by path analysis. Separate analyses were run for men and women to determine if there were any differences in significant paths in the model for men and women.

The first hypothesis was supported. The model differed by gender. The model for men showed anticipatory socialization to have a significant effect on both accommodation and outcomes. However, accommodation did not affect outcomes. Anticipatory socialization, then, was the single most important stage in men's internship socialization process. When accommodation was deleted from the model for men and a single-variable model was used to predict outcomes, fully 77% of the variance was explained solely by anticipatory socialization.

The picture for women was quite different. The only stage significant in predicting outcomes was the accommodation stage. The model for women, using only accommodation, explained 22% of outcome variance. (A model for women using only anticipatory socialization accounted for only 9% of the variance.)

The second hypothesis was not supported. Feldman's socialization model (see Figure 1) did not hold for either the men or the women. That is, neither the men nor the women interns passed through the three stages of the Feldman model. Path analysis yielded the following result:

DISCUSSION



While this research study is based on a sample of only fifty interns, it suggests two important themes for future research:

1) Since the Feldman model does not appear to hold for interns, other models or adaptations of existing models should be investigated. 2) The effect of gender on the socialization process needs to be recognized and differences in the process for men versus women need to be explained.

References furnished on request.