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**Research Article**

# Behavioral Event Interview Through Lego Toy Models: Explaining the Socialization Process in A Public Company

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## **Abstract:**

This article discusses the use of behavioral event interviews and Lego® toy models in the socialization process of a Brazilian public company. The primary goal of socialization is to help new employees understand the company's values, objectives, and expectations. Successful socialization can increase job satisfaction, productivity, and team unity. By combining these two methods, this article benefits students, interviewers, academics, managers, and other professionals, stimulating the consideration of interpretive and naturalistic approaches and enhancing our understanding of in-depth interviews.

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**Keywords:** Socialization process; behavioral event interviews; toy models; Brazil; Public company

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## **I. Introduction**

This article is part of the doctoral thesis from the leading author (Aylmer, 2019). Learning new things and bringing individuals and social groups together in various contexts is the definition of socializing (Saks & Ashforth, 1997).

As a new person or member joins a group, they must be accepted as part of the socialization process. This process often entails comprehending society's standards and expectations for conduct, contributing to the group, and adjusting to the norms and values of the group. (De Vos et al., 2003; Myers and Sadaghiani, Levine, 2001; 2010; Wang et al., 2015; Aylmer, 2019; Black & Ashford, 1995).

Socialization is receiving more attention from academics due to two widely accepted ideas. A well-designed socialization process maximizes the return on investment for the funds spent on hiring and onboarding new employees. The second reason is that it uses the most knowledgeable and experienced workers, increasing the company's competitive advantage (Batistič, 2017; Dias & Aylmer, 2019, 2018, 2018a). David McLelland developed the behavioral event interview (BEI) as an extension of John C. Flanagan's Critical Incident Technique (CIT), first used to test pilots' aptitude for air combat missions during World War II. BEI uses real case scenarios to identify similarities, differences, and patterns, preserving a similar qualitative research structure (Delorme, 2007; McLelland, 1961, 1973; Dailey, 1971; Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Flanagan, 1954).

In the mid-90s, LEGO CEO Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen sought an innovative approach to address competition from electronic toys. Supported by professors Bart Victor and Johan Roos from the Institute for Management Development, they emphasized people as the key to company success and strategy. The goal was to generate more engagement, imagination, and playfulness in staff meetings, initially aimed at corporate sectors (Roos & Victor, 1998; Rasmussen, 2006; Kristiansen et al., 2009).

## **II. Methods and Materials**

This research is cross-sectional, constructionist, interpretative, inductive, and qualitative. The present study employed various methods to understand the complex phenomenon of newcomers' socialization in a Brazilian public sector company. These methods included qualitative in-depth interviews and Behavioral Event Interviews (BEI), which were reinforced by toy-based research, specifically LEGO® Serious Play® (LSP). In LSP, participants construct symbolic and metaphorical models and present them to a third party—in this case, the researcher. The decision to use the BEI technique with LSP assistance was strategic. It was made after a series of tests on interviews, which revealed that significant aspects of the events—both good and negative—under examination could have faded or been obscured over time once the events occurred many years prior to the interviews. This combination proved effective in preserving the authenticity of interviewees' experiences. The approach taken in this study was meticulous, gradually developing a conceptual model from an evolutionary standpoint. This method illuminated the facts in a vivid and sometimes poignant manner, underscoring the thoroughness of the research process. According to the BEI technique, the LSP and toy models representing the two opposing perspectives immigrants encountered in their first year of life improved the interviewees' interpretation of their experiences and gave them a new perspective. Thus, BEI, bolstered by the LSP visual and kinaesthetic assistance, reinforced the naturalistic inquiry by concentrating on how individuals behave about their experiences in natural environments (Frey et al., 1999).

### III. Behavioral Event Interview

The behavioral event interview (BEI) was developed by David McLelland (1917-1998) as an advancement upon John C. Flanagan's (1906-1996) Critical Incident Technique (CIT) (Flanagan, 1954). In World War II, Flanagan first used CIT to test pilots' aptitude for air combat missions. The technique provided a consistent approach that involved some real case scenario experiences, pointing similarities, differences, and/or patterns emerging from the Critical Incident Technique interview, thus helping to understand motivations that could lead a person to engage in that situation (Hughes, 2012). The BEI, rooted in the CIT, conserves a similar qualitative research structure (Delorme, 2007; McLelland, 1961, 1973; Spencer & Spencer, 1993).

The BEI was chosen as the primary data collection method once the research objective can be approached via a critical incident associated with a turning point, a crisis, or an exceptional fact, a significant contribution, either positively or negatively, to the general aim of the activity. It should be capable of being critiqued or analyzed" (Flanagan, 1954, p.338). The main difference is if CIT is focused on the incident or event, the BEI regards the person involved in the event, which will be the focus of the interviews. The BEI brings some advantages over other qualitative methods, as, for instance, the method is less influenced by racial, gender, and cultural bias, and its data is useful for further assessments, training, and career development (Spencer & Spencer, 1993, pp. 98-99). These benefits of the BEI method reassure the audience about the validity and reliability of the research findings.

Therefore, considering the nature of the social interactions under investigation, the BEI was chosen as the main avenue to explore newcomers and old-timers' interactions, perceptions regarding values and expectations, and the impacts of these elements in the construction of a long-term relationship, as seen in the SOC. Spencer and Spencer (1993) wisely advert that some expertise is required to run the interviews (pp. 98-99). The interviewer, an experienced medical doctor and psychotherapist, with more than 30 years of field experience in interviewing, brings a high level of skill and understanding to the process. These skills were important to enhance empathy and the communication flow, as the secrecy linked to the medical profession helped to build trust and assure secrecy regarding sensitive information. The secrecy is specifically important in the public sector, once political implications are very threatening in long tenure jobs.

To enhance the BEI experience and help remember events that happened years before, we opt for adding the toy models or LEGO Serious Play techniques as a visual and kinesthetic aid (Bürge & Roos, 2003), creating powerful metaphors to help elucidate complex phenomena via analogical reasoning (Jacobs & Heracleous, 2006). This approach concurs with Miles and Huberman (1994), who posited that metaphors can be used as analytical tools. According to the authors, metaphors can serve as a) data-reducing devices, b) pattern-making devices, c) decentering devices, and d) can connect findings to theory. As a) data-reducing devices, metaphors take several elements in a single concept; as an example, Miles and Huberman (1994) mention a well-known metaphor, the "scapegoat" that "pulls together into one package facts about group norms treatment of deviants, social rituals, and social rationalizations" (p.252). Metaphors as b) pattern-making devices when they represent a broader context like "an oasis" means more than the place or person itself; it infers that the surrounding context is harsh, like a desert, and so on (Miles et al., 2014). Metaphors as c) decentering devices that pull the researcher to a further step; as posited by Miles et al. (2014), "...metaphors will not let you simply describe or denote a phenomenon, you have to move up a notch to a more inferential or analytical level" (p.252), and finally metaphors as d) a mean of connecting findings to theory, creating a dynamic understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny, as observed by Miles et al. (2014). The metaphor is halfway from the empirical facts to the conceptual significance of those facts; "it gets you up and over the particulars in route to the basic social processes that give meaning to those particulars" and "in doing that, you are shifting from facts to processes, and those processes are likely to account for the phenomena being studied at the most inferential level." (Miles et al., 2014, p.252)

#### Toy models research approach

The toy model methodology was previously known and largely used by the researcher to handle complex organizational situations, in leadership training and top management conflict mediation sessions, however, both of us, the interviewee and interviewer, were stroked by the vividness of the narrative and how it helped to bring back the original scene and emotions when explaining the LEGO model. Originally, LEGO® Serious Play® (LSP) "is a facilitated workshop, where participants are asked different questions in relation to an ongoing project, task or strategy. The participants answer these questions by building symbolic and metaphorical models of their insights in LEGO bricks and present these to each other" (Kristiansen, Hansen, & Nielsen, 2009, p. 78). Its techniques draw heavily on story and the use of metaphor through representing one thing in the form of another (James, 2013) very helpful to tell a story or enlighten a complex situation. For the objective of the research, two adaptations were made, with no impairment of the premises. The first one regards the fact that research interviews were held individually and under the umbrella of secrecy, so there was no "peer discussion" as recommended in the original method, but a presentation to the interviewer, creating a more intimate atmosphere that enhanced openness. The second one regards the time when events happen. The LSP original method focus aims "ongoing project, task, or strategy" but the focus of the present research is upon events that happened in the first year of admission, that represented, for most of the interviewees, more than 10 years before the interview. LSP started in the mid-90's when the LEGO company was facing a rough competition from electronic toys. Kjeld Kirk Kristiansen, LEGO's CEO and owner, was looking for a way to bring an innovative approach to deal with this complex situation (Rasmussen, 2006; Kristiansen, Hansen &

Nielsen, 2009). He was supported by Bart Victor and Johan Roos, professors at the Institute for Management Development (IMD), that shared the same premise: “people as the key to company success and strategy as something you live, rather than something stored away in a document” (Rasmussen, 2006 p.57). The objective was to create an innovative approach for investigating complex issues. Initially directed to the corporate sectors, the purpose was to generate “more engagement, imagination and playfulness in staff meetings” (Roos & Victor, 1998). However, according to Alison James, “LSP offers flexibility, portability and transferability in terms of learning development; its techniques can be used anywhere, at any time” and “the ethos is playful, exploratory and creative, with freedom for participants to experiment and test out ideas without fear of failure or being wrong” (James, 2013). LSP has been adopted by numerous organizations, with different purposes and uses, including exploratory purposes, as explained by the LSP, which “offers a sophisticated means for a group to share ideas, assumptions and understandings; to engage in rich dialogue and discussion; and to work out meaningful solutions to real problems” (Lego Serious Play, 2010, p. 10). Some Lego action figures are shown in Figure 1, as follows:

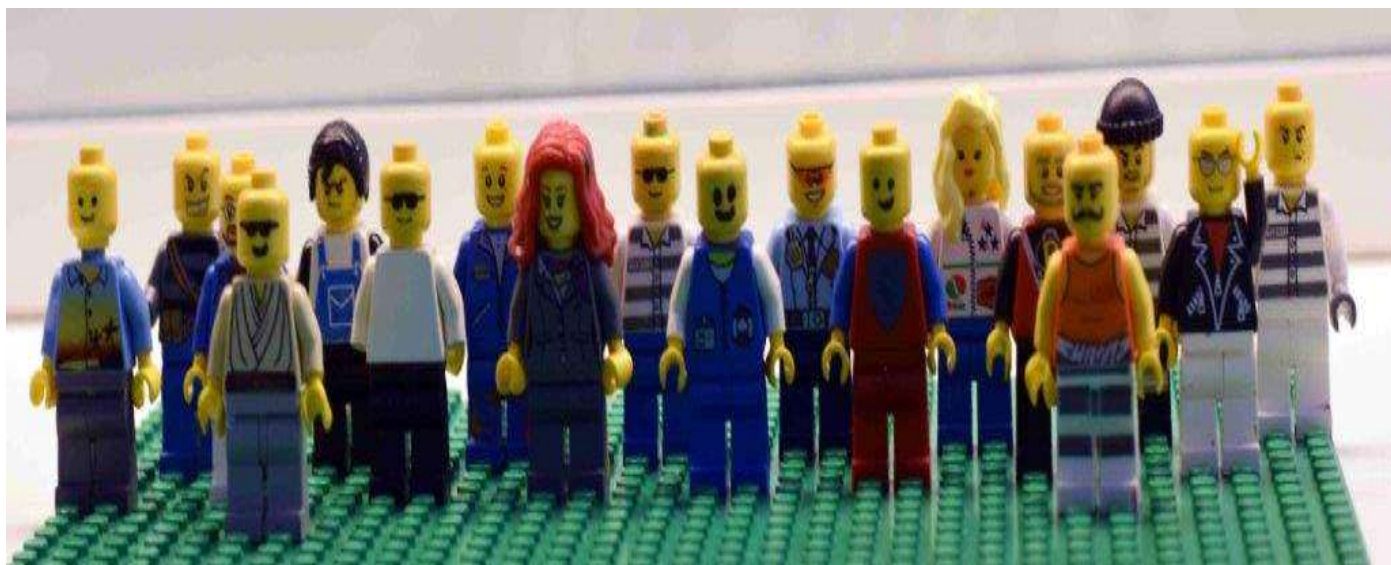


Figura 1 LEGO's action figures. Source: Aylmer (2019). Reprinted under permission

The theoretical basis of LSP is grounded in four key theories (Frick et al., 2013, p.8). The first is the importance of “play” as a path to learning through exploring ideas, mainly based on storytelling and metaphors. Rasmussen states, “In organizations, stories contribute to the production, reproduction, transformation, and deconstruction of organizational values and beliefs” (Rasmussen Consulting, 2012, p. 3). Frick et al. (2013) quoted Schon (1971):

through stories members have the power of challenging their organizations. In this perspective, metaphors are an important means for storytelling, which can generate new ways of understanding things, thus playing an active, constructive and creative role in human cognition. (p.8)

The second theoretical pillar is constructionism, based on Piaget's constructivist theory revisited by Seymour Papert (1986). According to Papert's theory, learning occurs when individuals construct a product, an artifact, something external and concrete (LEGO et al., 2002). Rasmussen (2012) mentioned Papert's (1986) quote: "When someone constructs something external to him, he also constructs theories and meanings in his mind, which allow him to construct something even more elaborate, and generates even more learning, in a virtuous cycle of learning and construction" (Rasmussen Consulting, 2012, p. 5).

The third pillar is the connection between the hands and the mind as a path to creative and expressive thinking. According to Frick et al. (2013), LSP techniques explore the deep connection between the hands and the mind. The authors remember that neuroscientists have discovered that a significant part of the brain is focused on hand control and quote Gauntlett:

This profound interconnection between the brain and the hands means that the hands are not simply a valuable place to get information 'from' or to manipulate objects 'with.' However, also that thinking with the hands can have meaning in itself (...) This connection may mean that the hands are not only a tool for collecting information from the world or for manipulating objects, but that "thinking" with the hands can be a way of thinking on its own." (Gauntlett, 2007, p. 130 cited by Frick et al., 2013, p.9)

James (2013) advocates that the kinesthetic and three-dimensional nature of building with LEGO is an additional essential element once based on a neuroscientific premise; it allows physical touching and moving around the models, which could help to bring to memory of the episode to be described (Frick et al., 2013). The models also help to surface latent insights and fuzzier thoughts once the events happened years before, but rebuilt with the LEGO parts and characters, bring back the selected episode, and here is the connection with the fourth pillar: imagination.

Imagination has a vital role in LSP methodology and is tackled via three interfaces: (a) descriptive imagination, (b) creative imagination, and (c) challenging imagination. The (a) descriptive imagination is the one that generates images that describe the

complexity of the world. It "evokes images that describe a complex and confusing world 'out there'" and enables one to understand it and see new possibilities and opportunities (LEGO et al., 2002, p. 14). It is essential for our research objective because we aim to re-create specific situations in more detail. The (b) creative imagination explains the meanings of the model and its metaphors, making sense of what they lived once. The creative imagination allows one to see what is not there, i.e., to create something new. For the sake of the research, this ability is essential to help interviewees get new perspectives when describing the events and "fill the gaps" in their own stories. The third aspect is (c) challenging imagination, which raises questions regarding the model that "negates, contradicts, and even destroys the sense of progress that comes from descriptions and creativity" (LEGO et al., 2002, p. 16). This approach is not used for research once it interferes with one's premises and perspective. Although it is not used threateningly at LSP workshops, it does not seem appropriate when we want to grasp the actual meaning of the interviewee. The ethos is playful, exploratory, and creative, with the interviewee free to experiment and test out ideas without fear of failure or being wrong.

Although LSP was initially designed for corporate use, mainly discussing complex strategic issues, it is now seen as a language rather than a strict and predefined methodology, allowing facilitators to adapt the method to their specific needs in each context (Kristiansen et al., 2009). For this study, the LSP was chosen to enrich the events described by the interviewees. Exploring, via descriptive imagination, the contrasting positive and negative models expanded the understanding of the metaphors expressed in the models. Through the meanings given by the participants, the LSP models have shown aspects that had not previously appeared in the interviews, allowing a better observation of the complexity of each context. In this study, the LSP was applied as recommended by McCusker (2014) and McCusker and Gunaydin (2014) with some adaptations to fit the purpose of a naturalistic approach. For instance, according to the author, at the very beginning, the participants should be informed about the objectives of the LSP, with an overview of the theoretical basis of the method. The interview started with acknowledgment and thanks for the time dedicated to the interview. When interviewees entered the room, they automatically moved their eyes to the pieces on the table, which often opened a warm-up conversation.

The explanation of the methodology was skipped to save the research's naturalistic approach and because the focus of the conversation was not the method itself but the interviewees' experiences. After the questions asked them to remember a positive and, after that, a negative experience in the first months after admittance, they were informed that they could represent the chosen situations in the way they decide to, with no right or wrong way of doing it.

As mentioned above, another adaptation from McCusker and Gunaydin's (2014) approach regarding orientation is that participants should have a "warming up" activity, which involves building and explaining a non-specific model. The "warm-up" phase aims to make the interviewee feel comfortable with the process and, after this, build the models on the topic discussed (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2014). This stage was also redefined, and there was no model building to warm up. The interviews already started with the pieces in front of the interviewee. Almost everyone spontaneously grabbed a piece or a toy while sharing their positive and negative experiences concerning the first months at the company. Talking about unusual toys, such as the T. Rex or Pinocchio, was a warming-up stage. In the interview context, it may be distracting to demand the interviewee to build something else afar the interview focus, therefore being confusing and time-consuming, which could be a hindrance due to their work demands.

The LSP approach supporting the BEI trails McCusker and Gunaydin's (2014) strategy, asking the interviewees to create two models that could represent, distinctly, the positive experience and the negative experiences. Following the authors, after the positive model was assembled, the interviewees were invited to explain each element and encouraged to expand the analysis through storytelling (McCusker, 2014; McCusker & Gunaydin, 2014). This step encompasses the next, asking the participant to mark both models' "main point" with one piece and explain why. The interviewer approached the issues more subtly, allowing the interviewees to express freely perceptions of the experience. The exact process was repeated with the negative experience.

Finally, we followed McCusker and Gunaydin's (2014) guidance that participants should be asked to change the scenario and rebuild the model. In our interview strategy, the objective of 'rebuilding' was reframed to the context of an interview. We presented questions to open new perspectives for the interviewee, such as 'If you knew what you know today, what would you do differently if you went back in time?' and 'What advice would you give to yourself on arrival?' These questions led to a 'new model,' helping the interviewees to close some gestalt opened by the negative (and sometimes, traumatic) socialization experience. In some cases, the interviewee changed pieces in the negative experience model, expressing emotions and further evolving their perspective.

These closing questions also exposed interviewees' hidden expectations before admittance, which enhanced the understanding of the "reality shock" and the high level of frustration found in most of the interviews. The closing of the interview is also of great importance. The interviewees had just disclosed sensitive and buried experiences, and some of them experienced emotional arousal. Therefore, it is recommended that empathy and a supportive attitude be shown. Once again, empathy is essential to ending these intense encounters. Reassuring secrecy and expressing gratitude for the confidence of the conversation is a warm closure for the session. Table 1 details McCusker's LSP stages and how they were adapted for this study, as follows:

Table 1 Lego® Serious Play® application steps for BEI interview supported by LSP technique

McCusker's Stage	Consists in	Objective	How it was adapted to the BEI interview
<b>Presentation</b>	Presenting the LSP method, its steps and theoretical basis.	Informing the participant and avoiding anxiety or discomfort with the method.	The full explanation was skipped to focus on the interviewee's voice and follow a naturalistic approach, where the interviewees have no previous information regarding the focus of the research. There was no "perceived discomfort" with the method, at the contrary, the Lego pieces and toys, on the table elicited a joyful atmosphere. A warm and playful room setup helped to welcome each interviewee.
<b>Warm-up</b>	Asking the participant to assemble a model that symbolically represents a "Monday morning", encouraging them to develop their model.	Familiarization with the material and with the process of symbolic representation.	This stage was also skipped once the conversations already started with the interviewees' first experiences after admittance. Moving the attention to another issue (as warming up activities) could be confusing for the interviewee and would consume more of his/her working time. The interviewees were informed that they could represent the chosen situations in the way they decide to, with no right/wrong way of doing it.
<b>First Model</b>	Based on what was discussed on the previous stages of the data collection, the participant is asked to assemble a model that represents the issue in order.	Assembling the model and building symbolisms and metaphors.	We asked the interviewee to build two contrasting models that could represent, distinctly, the positive and the negative socialization experiences. There were no instructions of how to do it and no time or material usage restrictions.
<b>Sharing</b>	The participant is asked to explain and detail the meaning of each element of the model. The interviewer asks questions about the model to deepen its understanding and analysis.	Exploring the metaphors and symbols elaborated by the participant. Collecting deeper data about the issues previously discussed.	After both, positive and negative, models were assembled, the interviewees were invited to explain each element's meaning, and encouraged to expand the analysis telling the story represented in each model. The contrast between positive and negative experiences highlighted the important points for their socialization, and the relation among parts as well. Therefore, the socialization dynamic was enriched. It is an important moment that the interviewer needs to, carefully, expand the conversation regarding the relationship among the elements of the model and their representation alone and in the bigger context, without being invasive or indelicate.
<b>Reflection</b>	The participant is asked to mark the items (2) that impact the most the described scenario, positively and negatively.	Identifying, in the participant's perspective, which are the most critical aspects of the issue.	The reflection stage was handled throughout the sharing moment with "support questions", looking after to create a natural conversation environment, as for example "Looking at this situation, what do you think helped you and made this experience a positive one?" The objective was to keep the natural flow of the communication, avoiding judgements but keeping an emphatic attitude.
<b>Second Model</b>	The participant should alter the model of the scenario, in order to make it better or ideal, in their opinion, regarding the issue discussed.	Re-assembling of the model, promoting the reflection on what should be changed, in the participant's opinion.	At the interview strategy, this was adapted with questions that could open new perspectives for the interviewee as "If you knew what you know today, what would you do differently if you went back in time?" and "What advice would you give to yourself on arrival?" and a similar one, used at the closing: "What would be your advice for a newcomer?" So, there was no physical "re-assembling" of a new model, however, a new perspective of both situations arose naturally. After the positive experience model has been discussed, the same process was repeated towards the negative experience model. Some of the interviewees changed part of their models spontaneously.

Regarding the material used, McCusker and Gunaydin (2014) argue that no fundamental aspect of the method restricts mediating artifacts to LEGO®. Hence, any material that allows the expression of ideas, conceptions, and realities, stimulating play, sharing, and reflection are valid for the method. Thus, for this study, other figures with the character of the play and symbolic potential were associated with the LEGO® material (p.34).

The authors also mention that the method is not based on similarity or artistic quality but on the symbolic value of the items' meanings from the participant's perspective (McCusker, 2014; McCusker & Gunaydin, 2014). Thus, the coding process will rely on the transcripts of the interviews and the models' descriptions. Photographs of the models will be marked according to the participant's description and will only be used for illustration, comparison, and possible contrast with the analysis results. Videos will be saved as research evidence. For instance, see Figure 2 for the usage of LEGO bricks and windows:

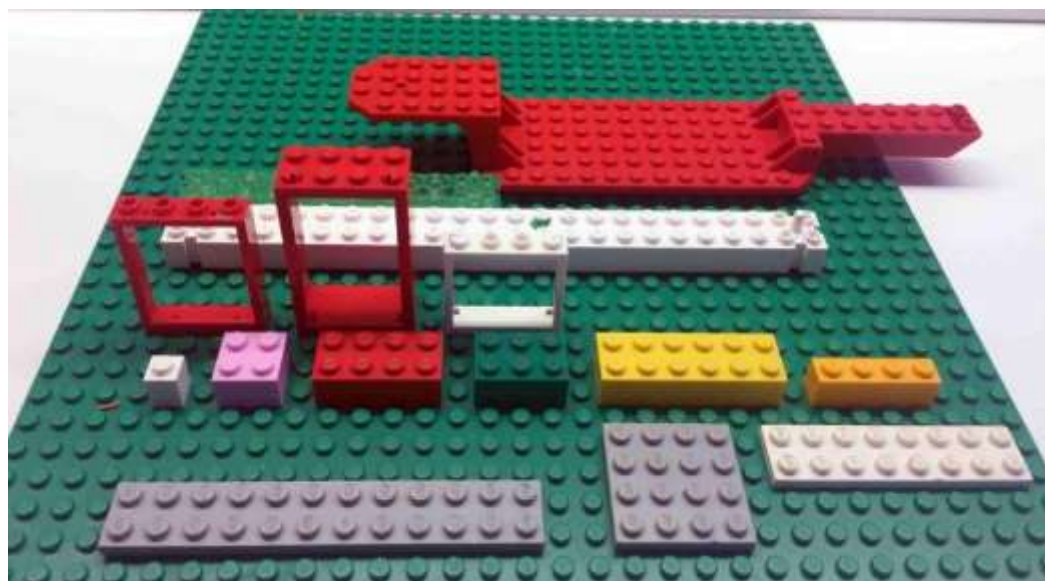


Figura 2 LEGO bricks and Windows. Source: Aylmer (2019). Reprinted under permission

#### IV. Findings and Analysis

**BEI positive events.** BEI positive events related to the presence of supportive figures as the supervisor (I#1, I#2 [first supervisor], I#11, and I#12), peers (I#3, and I#10), and the satisfaction with the company's structure (I#9 and I#13) as seen in the examples below:

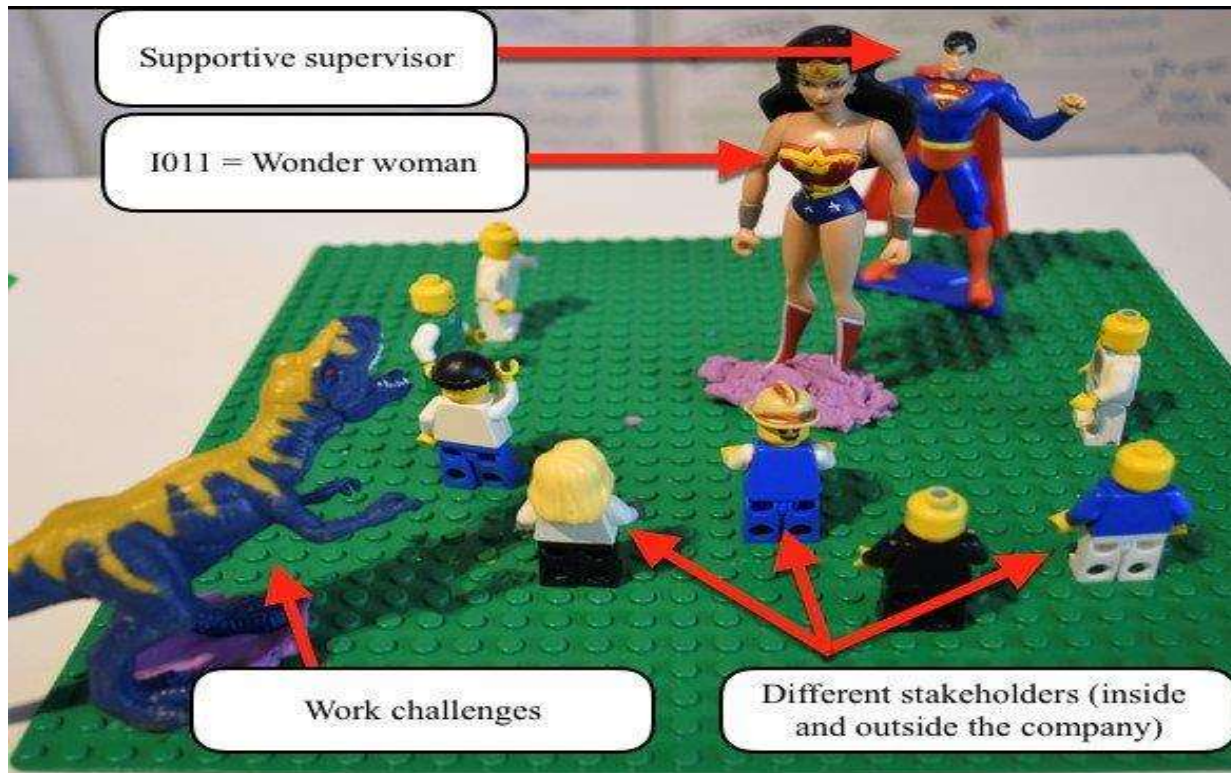


Figura 3 BEI Positive event - model I#11 supportive supervisor. Source: Aylmer (2019). Reprinted under permission

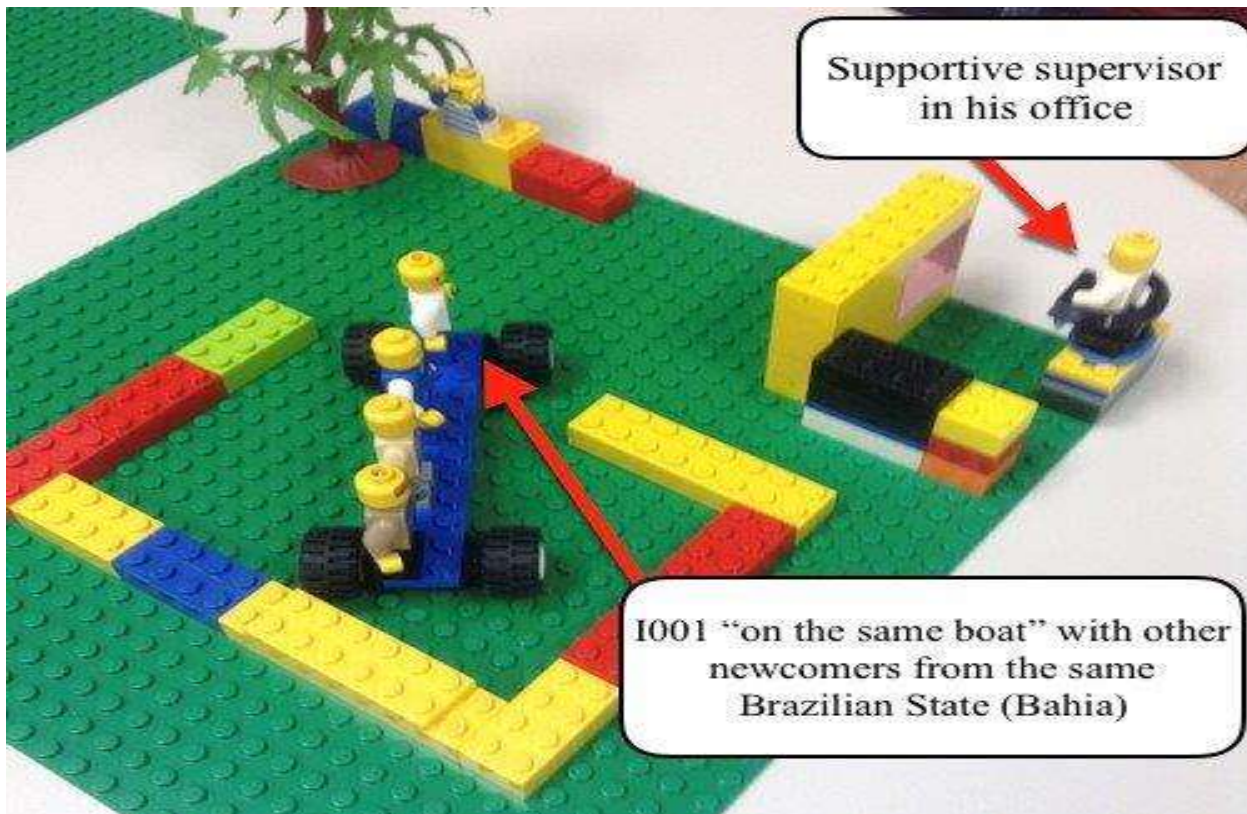


Figura 4 BEI Positive event - model I#1 Supportive peers (same cohort). Source: Aylmer (2019). Reprinted under permission

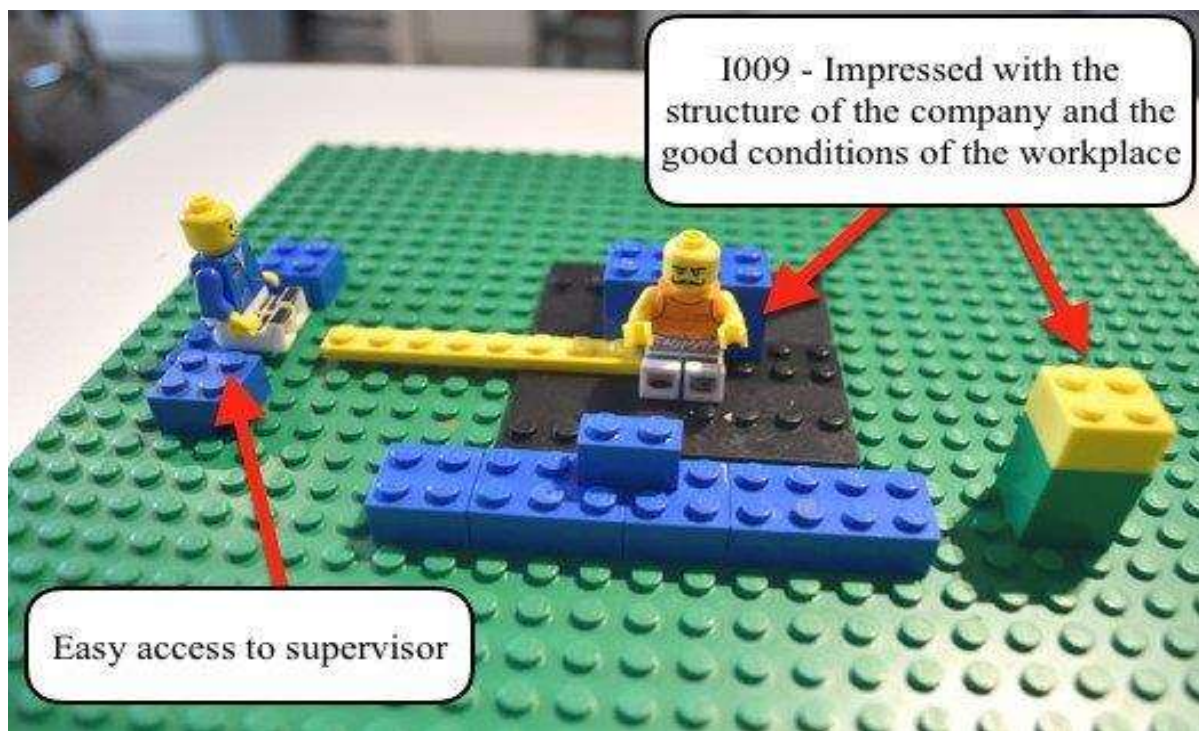


Figura 5 BEI Positive event - model I#9: satisfaction with the company structure. Source: Aylmer (2019). Reprinted under permission

In N=10 of the positive experiences, there is a mention of a supportive supervisor. In N=3 of the positive experiences there is no mention of a supervisor, and the positive experience is connected to peers and/or the company facility and grandiose structure.

**BEI negative events.** More dramatic toys, such as dragons, snakes, and Pinocchio, were used to symbolize the bad socializing experiences. These well-known toys convey strong feelings about particular objects or people. For example, the T-Rex dinosaur is meant to symbolize a direct danger, the snake an indirect one, and Pinocchio is anything connected to deceit and unreliable., as seen in the Figures 6 and 7:

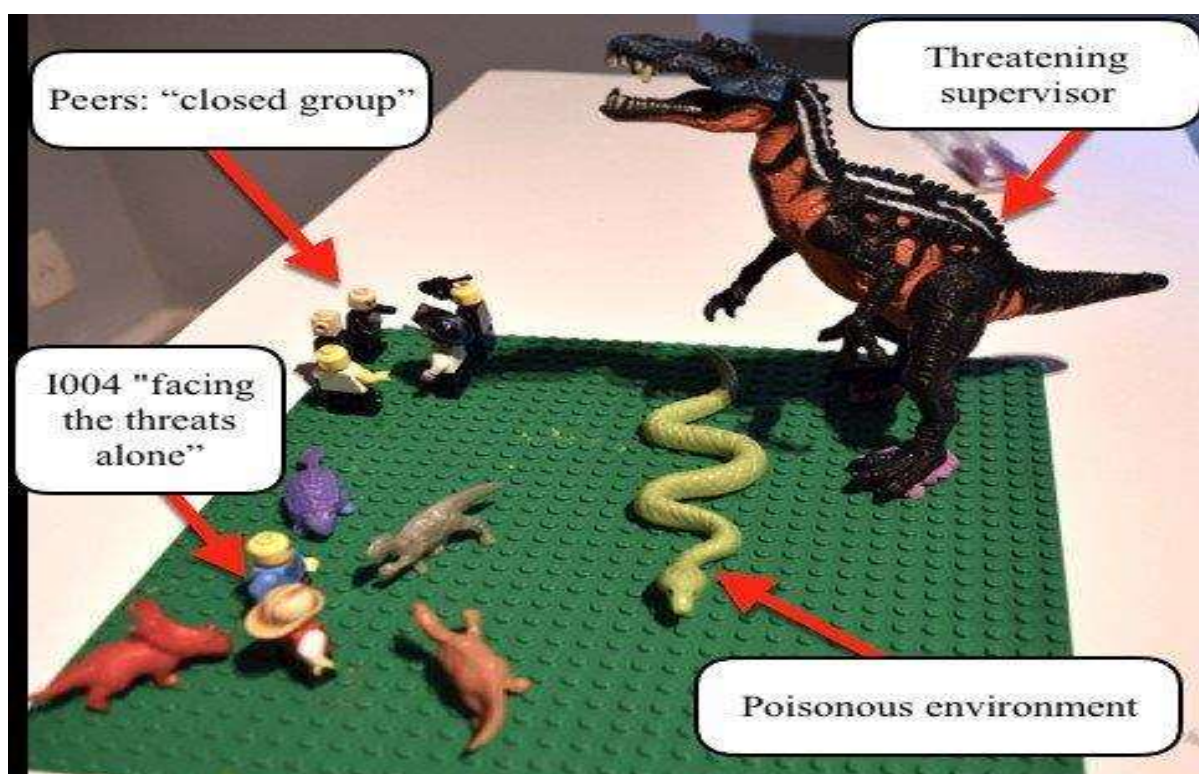


Figura 6 Model I#4 BEI Negative event. Source: Aylmer (2019). Reprinted under permission

The supervisor was represented by the T-Rex, the most enormous and menacing toy available. The snake symbolized the poisonous work atmosphere, and the unfriendly peers I#4 faced in her first year were symbolized by the little predators around her in the description of the unpleasant incident. The interviewee shed tears as she described the unfortunate incident since the

scenario's narration evoked deep emotions in her (Aylmer, 2019).

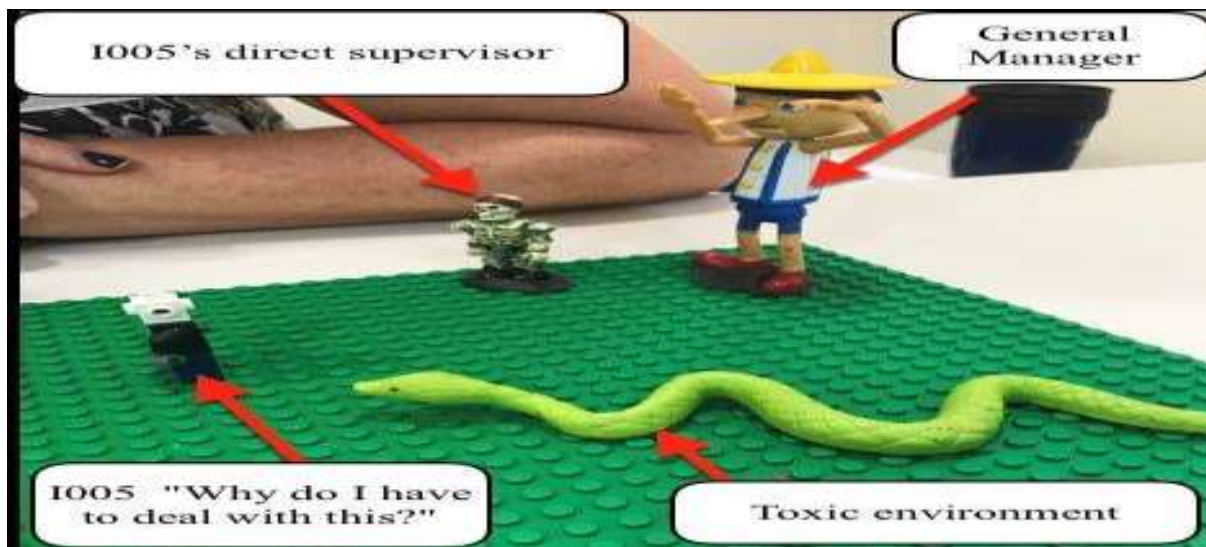


Figura 7 Model I#5 BEI Negative event. Source: Aylmer (2019). Reprinted under permission

In the BEI adverse event in model I#5, the executive manager is pointed as the Pinocchio who avoids accountability for the situations, saying, "No, I have nothing to do with it," and the supervisor as the Skull doing "the dirty work for him because she was more capable of it. I think there was this 'death' thing because it was at this time that I had labyrinthitis. I was very lost."

I#5 mentioned a toxic environment, representing it as the green snake, creating a connection between her daily experiences and the consequences to her health (labyrinthitis), as explained in another part of the interview: "It was so uncomfortable that after a month in the company, I had a labyrinthitis crisis that the doctor here wanted to call an ambulance to take me home because I could not walk straight. I have never had labyrinthitis in my life, neither before nor after. It was such discomfort that my body manifested this." (I#5)

In the BEI adverse event in model I#8, a similar relationship between old-timers and supervisors represents a barrier to newcomer adaptation. The Skull represents the old-timers and is pointing a weapon at the newcomer; likewise, the Dark Villain is threatening the newcomer with a weapon, and the description of this model by I#8 is revealing: "One thing that shocked me [when] arriving here was the relation of the employee with his manager [points to the toys in the model] like the villains here pointing the guns, like that." I#8 mentions the company's rigid and hierarchical culture as intimidating: "The thing with hierarchy was a powerful issue at Petrobras [pause], and that scared me."

The model also evinced I#8's perceived barrier to his adaptation: "People here are very vain. The environment that I entered was an environment of huge leadership egos. At the same time, we saw a group of newcomers as a young workforce, motivated and eager for new knowledge, information, and everything else—with ideas and proposals—we saw a big barrier regarding leadership. So, it was a very hostile environment."

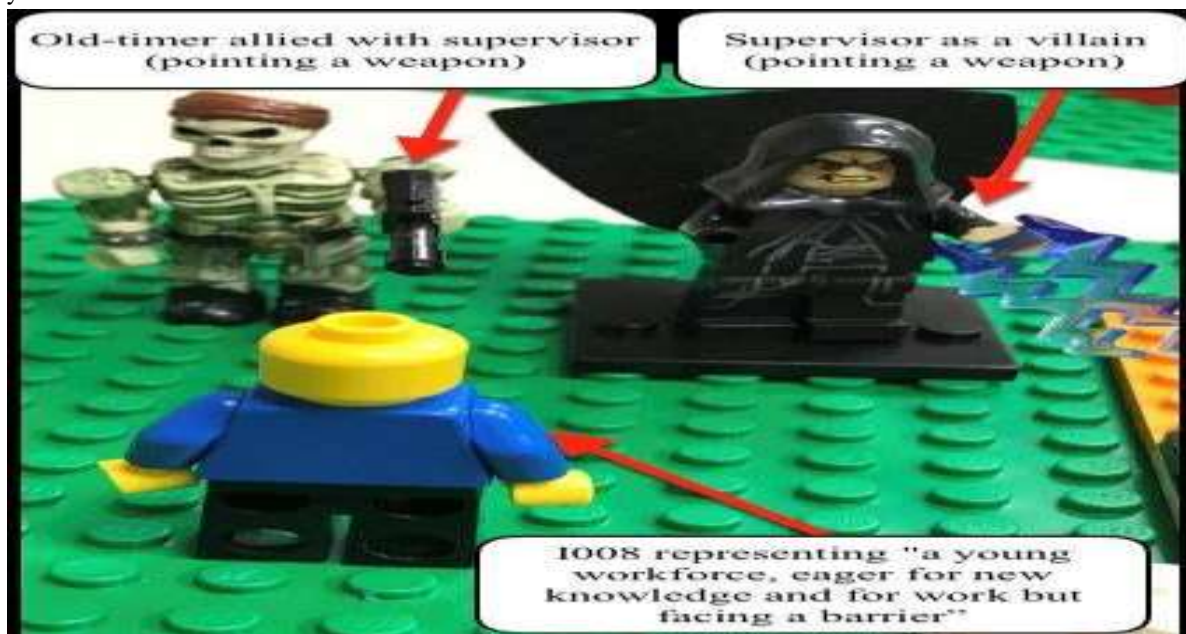


Figura 8 Model I#8 BEI negative event. Source: Aylmer (2019). Reprinted under permission



#### IV. Discussion: The Perspective of Socialization Process

The study reveals that newcomers in the public sector often suffer in silence, experiencing high levels of distress, decreased self-esteem, and Common Mental Disorders (CMDs), which can lead to long-term incapacitating diseases. The outcome of the socialization process impacts organizational productivity and ambiance, but further clarification is needed regarding SOC productivity. The healthier the socialization process, the more integrated and prepared the newcomer for their new job. The arrival of new motivated employees is an unquestionable opportunity when adequately managed. The supervisor plays a central role in the socialization process in a State-owned company, and poor socialization management may hinder the potential of new employees, slowing their adaptation and reducing their contribution to the company. The study concludes that in a State-owned company, it is mandatory to consider specific supervisors' training focused on newcomers' socialization. It is also essential to avoid the risk of silent suffering, as a supervisor may unintentionally harm newcomers' mental stability. The frequency of CMD reported by interviewees was an unexpected finding. If this causal chain could be proven, the supervisor may legally respond to the mental health of his team. The study also highlights the importance of caring and supportive supervisors in socialization. The more caring and supportive a supervisor is, the better the outcome of newcomers' socialization, even though they take on challenging tasks. Conversely, the more abusive or apathetic a supervisor is, the worse the consequences on the socialization outcomes, such as frustrations, higher levels of anxiety, distress, and CMDs, including depression and panic disorders. In conclusion, the study highlights the importance of managing the first experiences of newcomers in the public sector to ensure their well-being and contribute to the company's culture. The study explores the importance of peers in the socialization process for newcomers in a State-owned company (SOC). It concludes that supervisors for SOC newcomers' socialization are less relevant than peers. However, they play a more defining role when the supervisor is perceived as a barrier rather than a bridge. Peers can become an escape route for socialization if they empathize and support the newcomer. The relationship between newcomer-peers is different in the BPS, as long tenure in the public sector influences peer behavior. Interviewees' perceptions suggest that peers' support is more evident and relevant when the relationship with the supervisor is troublesome. They believe that joining an outstanding team and having a sense of belonging creates a solidarity of suffering. The study recommends that HR staff prepare peers to receive newcomers, providing incentives for adapting to the new workplace, smoothing reality shock, and creating a sense of community. A basic mentorship program should be created, where incumbents will be evaluated by the quality of newcomers' adaptation to work, creating an incentivized partnership. Special leadership training for peers who volunteer to mentor newcomers should be included in their performance assessment as a first leadership experience. The organization played a significant background role prior to the SOC, and once higher expectations were set, reality shock could deepen. The organization indirectly provides job stability and benefits that lessen turnover intentions, but these benefits do not hinder withdrawal behaviors. The relationship between organizations in a SOC needs more investigation to understand how to better use the newcomer's motivation from the beginning of the professional journey, keeping momentum and increasing engagement. In the first week or month of a newcomer's arrival, there needed to be more basic planning for receiving newcomers, representing negligence and a symbol of their importance. Interviewees reported feeling frustrated and unsupported in the purchasing sector, highlighting the potential for waste potential in the company.

#### V. Research Limitations

**Limitations related to the interviewer.** In qualitative research, reliability is concerned with whether alternative researchers would disclose similar data. The concern about reliability in this kind of study regards the issues of bias. There are various types of bias to consider; the first is the interviewer bias. Interviewers should presume that their perception can be biased, which means they may, consciously or not, try to impose a perspective upon the subject. This fact may also influence the interviewees' behavior and answers. Suppose the interviewer is a medical doctor, known professor, and consultant in the company. In that case, it may influence the answers for good and evil once the medical halo indicates secrecy, commitment, and interest in their health and well-being for good. Additionally, being a well-known consulting work brings a solid reputation and a track record of credibility among employees, supporting changes in different areas that would otherwise fail to come through. On the other hand, the status of the consultant among the company's top managers could interfere with the exploration of sensitive situations, eliciting suspicion regarding the disclosure of the interview despite all documentation and secrecy assurance. Although it is a possibility and under constant attention, there was no sign of this behavior.

**Limitations related to the sample.** The ability to generalize from this research is limited as the subjects in this study came from a single public sector research institution, albeit with 80,000 direct employees when this study started, and now 63,361 (Petrobras, 2018), with a strong operational focus and worldwide expression. Beyond that, the sample size is small (N=13) and could not represent the company's reality. Future research may need quantitative data, using questionnaires based on the present study's findings to evaluate different sectors of the same company and different companies, bringing the ability to generalize. Future research will also extend this model by examining the effects analyzed in this research, such as the influence of organizational reputation and side bets in different government companies and public sector institutions because they vary tremendously on pay, working conditions, employment contracts, socialization process than the SOC, locus of our study. In the same vein, it would be of great interest to expand this line of research to the Brazilian private-sector companies, comparing their approaches and findings.

**Limitations related to the interviewees.** Human beings are, by nature, biased. So, the memory of facts and the compositions of ideas and perceptions can array like a kaleidoscope, changing in many ways and rearranging in a different possibility. The toy model building may bring a perception to the interviewee that was not present at the time events occurred; actually, it is expected that the analysis of the situation may be transformed due to maturation processes. However, it may also enhance the perception of moral harassment and suffering that were unclear to the interviewee when they occurred. Toy models' approach has proven to overcome these constraints, leading the interviewees to their own experiences, efficiently eliciting memories, and supporting a more comprehensive understanding of the interviewee experience, even though they occurred many years before.

**Limitations related to the method.** Because this is a qualitative study, results cannot be generalized. Smola and Sutton (2002) posited that from the analysis results, a researcher cannot infer the frequency the phenomena may occur in other companies. Semi-structured interviews are time-consuming and may lessen the readiness to participate, mainly considering employees' overwhelming workload. Unstructured processes lead to difficulties in the replication of the research. Even if the qualitative research could be replicated, people change their interpretation, and results may differ. A toy model may not be repeated, and the explanation is the same. Finally, it is essential to emphasize that this research is also classified as a cross-sectional study. Cennamo and Gardner (2008) consider that the realization of this type of study needs to make it possible to verify if the influence of the generation, the career stage, or the age of the respondents caused the differences between the groups. Although the ten years gap could suggest a generational influence, a differentiation between the generation impact and the respondent's age, this verification could only be assessed with a longitudinal or time-lag study, as recommended by Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, and Lance (2010), which also allows comparisons between the different generations considering their life stage (Kowske et al., 2010). For this reason, the generational analysis was kept out of the research, driving the foci to newcomers' perspectives.

### Future Research

According to this study, the immediate supervisor of new hires plays a crucial role in their adjustment and can have a significant impact on their career in the public sector. Future research should focus on the degree to which the socialization process influences the performance of recent arrivals and their discomfort assessment in the first months after their admission. The present study concludes with an analysis of the research's limitations, a discussion of the lessons learned, and important recommendations for enhancing the socialization process.

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