Perceived organizational support and embeddedness as key mechanisms connecting socialization tactics to commitment and turnover among new employees

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Summary
Retention of new hires is a critical issue for organizations. We propose that relationships are important mechanisms through which socialization tactics influence commitment and turnover. The key theoretical mechanisms connecting socialization tactics to turnover in our model are the extent to which newcomers perceive their relationship with the organization as supportive, caring, and entailing positive social exchanges and the extent to which newcomers become embedded within the organization. We collected longitudinal data from over 500 employees over the first year of employment. Consistent with our hypotheses, socialization tactics influence perceived organizational support (POS) and job embeddedness, and POS and embeddedness both relate to organizational commitment and voluntary turnover. Results support POS and embeddedness as relational mechanisms that bind employees to the organization as a result of socialization tactics. Copyright © 2012 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Keywords: POS; socialization; embeddedness; turnover

Entering a new organization is associated with uncertainty, anxiety, and reality shock (Jones, 1986). Organizations often help newcomers adapt by providing orientation, training, and other socialization resources intended to reduce uncertainty and anxiety, speed up task and role mastery, and facilitate transformation from outsider to insider (Feldman, 1976a). Successful socialization is related to important outcomes including job performance, organizational commitment, and retention (e.g., Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007). The impact of socialization on retention of new hires is particularly important because turnover is often highest in the first year and can be particularly dysfunctional (Allen, 2006; Griffeth & Hom, 2001).

Although socialization models describe several mechanisms by which socialization may influence outcomes such as withdrawal, there is very little empirical research linking organizational socialization tactics with voluntary turnover, and conceptual understanding of this relationship is underdeveloped (Allen, 2006; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). In particular, whereas previous socialization models focus largely on task mastery, role properties, and knowledge of the environment to explain relationships with outcomes, we argue that newcomers’ perceptions of relationships they experience with the organization and others in it warrant greater attention, particularly when considering voluntary turnover. Although task/role mastery and knowledge of the environment are surely important for understanding performance-related outcomes, we think relational concerns may be particularly important for understanding voluntary turnover.

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Newcomers typically have few established relationships with supervisors, co-workers, work groups, or the organization, yet the desire for positive social relationships is one of the most fundamental and universal of human needs (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Individuals experiencing little social inclusion are motivated to forge bonds with alternative sources of potential affiliation (Maner, DeWall, Baumeister, & Schaller, 2007). Thus, an individual unsuccessful in forging positive relationships upon joining an organization may be motivated to find an alternative organization in which to meet this fundamental need. Previous models have considered relationships primarily in terms of acceptance into the work group by co-workers. We conceptualize relationships more broadly, encompassing perceptions of a supportive caring relationship with the organization as well as links to others in the organization and perceptions of being embedded in a web of restraining forces.

Fang, Duffy, and Shaw (2011) argued that a key yet relatively ignored mechanism underlying the relationship between socialization and career success is the importance of social resources newcomers obtain through interactions with organizational insiders. Building on this notion, we take a relational cohesion (Yoon & Lawler, 2006) perspective to describe the influence of early socialization experiences on subsequent turnover. We propose a model (Figure 1) on the basis of two key mechanisms proposed in relational cohesion theory. These mechanisms connect socialization tactics to turnover and include the extent to which newcomers perceive their relationship with the organization as supportive, caring, and entailing positive social exchanges (perceived organizational support (POS)) and the extent to which newcomers develop a sense of embeddedness within the organization. Our model and subsequent empirical test make several important theoretical contributions. Our core proposition is that relationships are important to retaining newcomers; by shifting the focus to relationships, we provide a novel way of thinking about how socialization affects retention grounded in the fundamental human need to develop relationships. This may help explain the link between socialization and turnover in a way that focusing on role clarity, task mastery, and information seeking has not. We also build on POS and embeddedness research by focusing on their development in newcomers. This is the first study considering how organizations can actively influence newcomer POS through socialization tactics and is one of the first to address antecedents of job embeddedness at all. Doing so in the context of newcomers may be of particular conceptual and practical importance because newcomer attitudes may be particularly malleable.

Socialization

Recent models of socialization

Recent models of socialization describe several mechanisms by which socialization may influence outcomes such as attitudes, performance, and withdrawal (Bauer et al., 2007; Bauer & Erdogan, 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller &
A common theme among these models is the importance of adjustment to the new work role. For example, role properties (clarity, ambiguity, and conflict), task mastery, and self-efficacy are posited as key mediators. That is, organizational efforts (such as socialization tactics) and individual newcomer characteristics and behaviors (such as personality, experience, and information seeking) influence distal outcomes (such as attitudes, personality, and withdrawal) largely through work adjustment. A second theme in three of the models involves adjustment to the new organizational environment. Thus, perceived fit with the new environment and the acquisition of knowledge about organizational culture and politics may also help explain how socialization influences more distal outcomes. The third theme in three of the models involves adjustment to new co-workers. Thus, the extent to which newcomers experience social acceptance and integration into the work group may also help explain relationships with outcomes.

Socialization is a multistage process including anticipatory socialization prior to organizational entry, accommodation during entry, and adaptation as the newcomer settles in (Bauer, Morrison, & Callister, 1998; Feldman, 1976b). Although there is no consensus on the length of these stages, socialization researchers often conceptualize the accommodation and adaptation process as being completed within the first year (Bauer et al., 2007). During the accommodation stage, organizations use socialization tactics to help newcomers adapt, whereas newcomers seek information and feedback to help their own learning and adaptation (e.g., Morrison, 1993).

Socialization tactics
We focus on organizational socialization tactics for two reasons: These tactics are primarily under organizational control, making managerial implications more straightforward; and although newcomer information seeking is important for task mastery and uncertainty reduction, empirical evidence suggests it is not a critical antecedent of turnover (Bauer et al., 1998, 2007). Further, there is sparse empirical evidence linking socialization tactics with turnover: the meta-analysis by Saks et al. (2007) only examined relationships with turnover intentions, and the other recent meta-analysis, by Bauer et al. (2007), only found four studies reporting relationships between socialization tactics and turnover.

Organizations use a variety of tactics to socialize newcomers. Jones (1986) developed a widely used conceptualization of tactics based on a classification scheme from Van Maanen and Schein (1979). The content dimension concerns the extent to which the content of the socialization process is clearly placed into a framework of organizational activities and expectations (whether the sequence is sequential or random, and whether the timing is fixed or variable in Van Maanen & Schein’s original framework). Tactics higher in content provide more specific information about the timing and sequence of learning activities and experiences. The social dimension concerns the nature of interactions with experienced organizational members during socialization (whether the organization provides experienced role models (serial) or not (disjunctive), and whether interactions with insiders provide mostly positive (investiture) or negative (divestiture) feedback in Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Tactics higher on the social dimension provide more interactions and more positive interactions with experienced organizational members. The context dimension concerns the environment in which socialization activities take place (whether socialization takes place in collective or individual settings, and whether socialization experiences are formal or informal in Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Tactics higher in context provide common learning experiences in clearly defined socialization activities.

Relational cohesion theory, socialization tactics, and relationships
Although retention has been identified as one indicator of successful socialization, we think this is likely a mediated process; we think it unlikely in most cases that socialization tactics would directly drive someone to quit (severe hazing perhaps being an example of an exception). Instead, consistent with relational cohesion theory, we suggest that socialization tactics directly affect how newcomers develop perceptions of support and embeddedness in their
new work environment and this adaptation process in turn affects one’s affective commitment to the organization and the likelihood of turnover.

Relational cohesion theory as relevant to socialization tactics
Relational cohesion theory focuses on individual-to-collective attachment and suggests that groups or organizations provide members with three types of capital through on-going social exchanges: human capital based on knowledge, skills, and experiences; social capital based on relationships; and cultural capital based on shared understanding of norms, history, and culture (Yoon & Lawler, 2006). These types of capital are related to the three categories of socialization tactics described above. Tactics that provide more specific content information about learning and timing likely provide more human capital to newcomers in the form of clearer expectations and faster acquisition of needed skills. For example, research suggests that more content-oriented tactics reduce uncertainty about expectations and motivate newcomers to acquire appropriate skills and behaviors (Cable & Parsons, 2001; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Tactics that provide more social learning through role modeling and positive interactions with experienced organizational members likely provide more social capital to newcomers. For example, more social-oriented tactics provide increased opportunities to interact with others and to form social networks (Allen, 2006; Cable & Parsons, 2001). Tactics that provide context through common and clearly defined learning experiences likely provide more cultural capital to newcomers in terms of a common frame of reference for interpreting experiences. For example, more context-oriented tactics promote common core assumptions and values, and a common message about how to interpret and respond to situations (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Yoon & Lawler, 2006).

Relational cohesion theory, perceived organizational support, and embeddedness
According to relational cohesion theory, through on-going exchanges such as when newcomers go through socialization, individuals develop perceptions of support from the organization and a sense of unity with the organization; these relational mechanisms lead to affective and behavioral commitment. In the context of newcomer adjustment and retention, socialization tactics are methods organizations use to foster exchange and develop human, social, and cultural capital. Linking relational cohesion theory with turnover theory, we suggest the two key relational mechanisms are nicely captured by POS and embeddedness, respectively.

The construct of support in relational cohesion theory is defined as the belief that the organization will treat the individual as a deserving member. The relational cohesion theory notion of support is explicitly derived from Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa’s (1986) construct of POS, which refers to an employee’s global perception of the degree to which the work organization values her contributions and cares about her well-being. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) described how POS represents a social exchange relationship between the organization and employee (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). POS tends to develop because employees personify the organization, assigning it humanlike characteristics. On the basis of such personification, employees view their favorable or unfavorable treatment (on the basis of experiences with agents of the organization such as supervisors and policies of the organization) as an indication that the organization believes they are valuable (i.e., a deserving member). In turn, employees feel obligated to reciprocate POS with effort and commitment because of the norm of reciprocity. Thus, positive treatment leads to affective and behavioral commitment in part through perceived support. This general idea is consistent with prior research showing that the relationship between HR practices and turnover is partially mediated by POS (Allen, Shore, & Griffeth, 2003).

The construct of unity in relational cohesion theory is briefly described such that on-going exchange with the organization leads individuals to experience positive emotional and affective responses; as the individual attributes these positive responses to the organization, they begin to perceive their relationship with the organization as an emotionally and cognitively binding force resulting in affective and behavioral commitment. This is conceptually similar to job embeddedness theory (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, & Erez, 2001), which suggests that individuals become enmeshed in a web of relationships and other restraining forces that bind them to the organization. Thus, positive social exchanges can also lead to affective and behavioral commitment in part through leading
the individual to perceive themselves as becoming enmeshed in a web of binding or restraining forces connecting them to the organization. This general idea is consistent with prior research showing that the relationship between socialization tactics and turnover is partially mediated by on-the-job embeddedness (Allen, 2006). Taken together, this perspective provides a coherent theoretical lens for thinking about how socialization tactics relate to newcomer retention.

Hypothesis development

Socialization tactics and perceived organizational support

Socialization tactics have not been conceptually or empirically linked with POS; we believe there is reason to expect tactics to influence POS. Theory underlying POS suggests that organizational practices that are discretionary in nature (offered by the choice of the organization) should be particularly influential in leading to the development of POS (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Offering socialization tactics is the choice of the organization, and as such, newcomers attempting to make sense of their new environment would view their treatment by the organization during early socialization as signals about the extent to which the organization cares about them and is willing to invest in them. The relationship of socialization tactics with POS follows similar logic to literature linking training and development opportunities to POS. Training opportunities have been characterized as discretionary treatment by the organization which signals a willingness to treat the employee as deserving of investment (e.g., Johlke, Stamper, & Shoemaker, 2002) and have been shown to relate positively to POS (e.g., Allen et al., 2003; Johlke et al., 2002; Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997).

With regard to specific socialization tactics, such tactics that provide information about the sequence of learning activities and experiences and about the timing associated with completing each step of socialization should lead to perceptions of a positive social exchange relationship with the organization for several reasons. First, providing this information requires that the organization invest in developing a systematic socialization process and communicating this process to new employees; newcomers that recognize this investment in their adaptation should feel obligated to reciprocate. Second, information of this type may also increase perceptions that the organization is willing to invest in the employee’s future because it should be clear that the organization has developed a plan for adaptation and development. Third, this type of information may also increase perceptions that the organization cares about employee well-being because such knowledge also tends to reduce newcomer uncertainty and anxiety and to help newcomers establish routines and a sense of personal control (Cable & Parsons, 2001).

Tactics that provide experienced organizational members as role models and positive social support during socialization should also lead to perceptions of a positive social exchange relationship with the organization. The willingness of experienced organizational members, as agents of the organization, to invest time and effort in assisting newcomers should increase perceptions that the organization and its agents care about new employees and are willing to invest in them (e.g., Eisenberger, Stinglehamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002). Alternatively, the lack of participation by experienced organizational members could be viewed as a signal that new employees are not worth the investment of time required or that organizational agents care very little whether newcomers successfully adapt or not.

Tactics that provide common learning experiences with a group or cohort and clearly defined socialization activities such as training classes should also foster perceptions of positive social exchange. These designed socialization activities may signal that the organization cares about newcomer adjustment and is willing to invest resources in helping newcomers adapt to the work environment. Alternatively, the lack of such activities may leave newcomers with a sense that they are on their own in a “sink or swim” environment, which may dampen their sense of social exchange.

Hypothesis 1: The content, social, and context dimensions of socialization tactics are positively related to POS.
Socialization tactics and embeddedness

Beyond developing a social exchange relationship with the organization, new employees are also forging bonds with others in the organization and forming a sense of being connected to the organization itself. Just as relational cohesion theory suggests that on-going exchange with the organization and with organization members leads to a sense of unity that becomes a binding force, job embeddedness theory suggests that employees become embedded in a network of relationships that can create a web of restraining forces and make voluntary turnover less likely (Mitchell et al., 2001). We focus on on-the-job (as opposed to community-focused) embeddedness for three reasons. First, we believe that socialization tactics are typically intended to focus on on-the-job adjustment. Second, Allen (2006) found that socialization tactics did not predict community embeddedness and that community embeddedness did not mediate between socialization tactics and turnover. Third, it may be the case that community embeddedness only matters when changing jobs also requires relocating out of the community (Allen, 2006).

Job embeddedness theory focuses on three types of ties: links to others, fit with the environment (the organization for on-the-job embeddedness), and sacrifices of material or psychological benefits that would be lost by leaving. Socialization tactics may be one mechanism for organizations to help newcomers make connections to others that increase links, engender a sense of fit, and represent material and psychological benefits. Preliminary support for this notion comes from Allen (2006) who found that socialization tactics were related to on-the-job embeddedness and that on-the-job embeddedness partially mediated relationships with turnover. We add to that study by considering the theoretical role of relationships for explaining the link between socialization tactics and on-the-job embeddedness, separating the measurement of socialization tactics and embeddedness, and incorporating additional mechanisms (POS and commitment). Fang et al. (2011) suggested that it is primarily through interactions and communication with others, provided by socialization tactics, that newcomers develop social capital; similarly, we suggest that certain types of socialization tactics foster interaction and communication likely to influence all three components of on-the-job embeddedness. Two recent meta-analysis provided evidence that socialization tactics are related to fit, a key component of embeddedness, and social acceptance, which is similar to the links component of embeddedness (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks et al., 2007).

Specifically, tactics that provide specific information about the sequence of learning activities and about the timing associated with completing each step of socialization should help newcomers develop perceptions of fit and sacrifices. Because newcomers tend to be uncertain and anxious about their place in the organization, specific knowledge concerning when they will complete official socialization activities and perhaps be considered insiders should speed the development of a sense of fit with the organization. For example, Cable and Parsons (2001) found that more content-oriented socialization tactics are positively related to person–organization fit. At the same time, successfully completing steps in a socialization process could be viewed as a sacrifice in the sense that leaving may require starting over from square one in a new organization (Allen, 2006).

Tactics that provide experienced organizational members as role models and positive social support during socialization should also help newcomers increase connections. Contact with organizational members during socialization should directly increase the number of relationships and links with others, and there is empirical evidence connecting such tactics with more developed social networks (Cable & Parsons, 2001). Experienced role models also help newcomers make sense of their environment, and newcomers often rely heavily on social learning; research suggests positive interactions with insiders lead to a greater sense of shared values and perceptions of better fit (e.g., Major, Kozlowski, Chao, & Gardner, 1995).

Tactics that provide common learning experiences with a group or cohort and clearly defined socialization activities such as training classes should also help newcomers increase their connections. Common learning experiences with other newcomers lead directly to opportunities to develop links and relationships (O’Reilly, Caldwell, & Barnett, 1989); the loss of these relationships may also be viewed as an additional sacrifice associated with leaving the organization (Allen, 2006). There is also evidence that formal training activities in a group setting provide a common message to newcomers that helps promote a sense of community and shared values as well as perceptions of fit (Cable & Parsons, 2001; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Promoting shared values and a sense of
community may also provide newcomers with cultural capital as described in relational cohesion theory that further embeds newcomers.

**Hypothesis 2:** The content, social, and context dimensions of socialization tactics are positively related to embeddedness.

**Perceived organizational support and embeddedness as mechanisms that link socialization tactics with commitment and turnover**

As described earlier, and consistent with relational cohesion theory, we expect socialization tactics to influence attitudinal and behavioral commitment primarily through POS and embeddedness. Socialization tactics would influence commitment largely because they signal caring and a willingness to invest in employees, which fosters positive social exchange with a supportive organization. Such positive social exchange, manifested through POS, has a consistently positive relationship with affective commitment (e.g., Coyle-Shapiro & Morrow, 2006; see Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002, for review), and POS has been found to mediate the effects of other types of HR practices on commitment (Allen et al., 2003). POS results in greater commitment due to the social exchange view of employee–organization relationships, according to which workers trade effort and dedication to their organization for such tangible incentives as pay and fringe benefits and such socio-emotional benefits as esteem, approval, and caring (Shore, Coyle-Shapiro, Chen, & Tetrick, 2009).

**Hypothesis 3:** Perceived organizational support mediates relationships between socialization tactics and commitment.

Our model also suggests that embeddedness will mediate the effects of these socialization tactics on commitment. We propose that socialization tactics influence commitment in large part because they can lead directly to the development of relationships with others and a sense of fit, newcomers are likely to attach value to these relationships that would have to be sacrificed upon leaving, and together, these factors lead newcomers to perceive themselves as more embedded in the organization. One study has shown that on-the-job embeddedness mediates between socialization tactics and behavioral commitment (Allen, 2006); we suggest that it may also mediate relationships with affective commitment. This suggestion follows from relational cohesion theory, which suggests that social exchange leads to attitudinal and behavioral commitment through the creation of a sense of positive relationships and unity (Yoon & Lawler, 2006).

**Hypothesis 4:** Embeddedness mediates relationships between socialization tactics and commitment.

We also suggest that POS and embeddedness will be negatively related to turnover, as mediated by commitment. Considerable research shows that affective commitment is an important antecedent of behavioral commitment in the form of turnover and that commitment tends to mediate the relationships of many more distal turnover antecedents (Hom & Griffeth, 1995).

Organizational support theory suggests that commitment will mediate the relationship between POS and turnover because people seeking to reciprocate POS by staying at the organization would do so in part because they incorporate the organization into their identity, resulting in greater affective commitment (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Some empirical evidence supports this notion (Allen et al., 2003; Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001), although the current study is one of the first studies linking POS to turnover behavior (as opposed to merely intentions) and the first to examine the relationship between POS and turnover in new employees. POS may be particularly important to commitment and turnover among newcomers because entering a new organization is
typically associated with uncertainty and anxiety that could be alleviated or exacerbated by high or low organizational support.

**Hypothesis 5:** Commitment mediates the negative relationship between POS and turnover.

With regard to embeddedness, theory and research indicate that more embedded individuals are less likely to voluntarily turnover (Mitchell et al., 2001). The development of embeddedness may be particularly important for organizational newcomers, because they tend to enter a new organization with few relationships. To the extent that relationships engender links and a sense of fit and would be a sacrifice to sever, it becomes more difficult to leave. Embeddedness was originally offered as a non-affective alternative to affect-driven turnover models (Mitchell et al., 2001), suggesting that embeddedness would be directly related to the likelihood of turnover separately from affective mechanisms such as affective commitment. However, relational cohesion theory suggests that the development of relationships with others will lead to behavioral commitment (i.e., retention) through affective commitment (Yoon & Lawler, 2006). Consistent with this perspective, we test the possibility that commitment mediates the relationship between embeddedness and turnover; however, consistent with job embeddedness theory, we also assess the direct embeddedness–turnover relationship in an alternative model.

**Hypothesis 6:** Commitment mediates the negative relationship between embeddedness and turnover.

**Method**

**Study overview**

We tested our model by assessing perceptions of newcomer socialization tactics of over 500 newly hired employees of a large organization at 27 locations around the U.S.A.; assessing POS, embeddedness, and commitment across the first year of employment; and linking these to voluntary turnover by using a multi-group analysis strategy. We invited all new hires of a large entertainment and gaming organization over a three-month period to participate. Although the organization provided guidelines regarding the orientation and socialization of new hires, local HR professionals and managers were allowed considerable discretion; thus, socialization tactics could vary by location, department, and even individual manager.

We measured each construct at a different time to minimize common method variance; the organization constrained the length of each survey so that we were unable to measure each construct at each period. Survey 1 measured perceptions of socialization tactics, and we administered it approximately two weeks after each new hire began employment. We chose two weeks because corporate policy was to complete formal new hire orientation within two weeks. Research has shown that early perceptions of socialization tactics impact outcomes, and also that early perceptions may have a bigger impact than later perceptions (Chao, O’Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002; Major et al., 1995). Subsequent survey timing was determined by organizational requirements. Survey 2 measured POS, and we administered it approximately six weeks after beginning employment. Survey 3 measured embeddedness, and we administered it approximately three months after beginning employment. Survey 4 measured affective commitment, and we administered it approximately six months after beginning employment. We collected employee start date, end date (if the employee ended employment during the course of the study), and reason for departure from organizational records for approximately 16 months from the beginning of the data collection.

Given organizational length constraints requiring us to measure POS and embeddedness on separate surveys, we made the decision to put POS on the second survey and embeddedness on the third. Our rationale for measuring POS
first is that it probably takes some time for individuals to develop a web of relationships. Also, it probably takes time to build up the perception that much sacrifice would be made if one left; on the other hand, perceptions of support and caring are likely made as soon as one starts interacting with the organization. Although organizational support theory has not directly addressed how long it takes POS perceptions to form, Aselage and Eisenberger (2003) suggested that POS may develop as early as during recruitment on the basis of promises made by organizational members. Also, Casper and Buffardi (2004) found evidence that, even before organizational entry, job seekers form anticipated POS. It is likely then that newcomers may form early perceptions of how much their organization cares about them and values their contributions.

Sample and procedures

Over a three-month period, the organization hired 2412 new employees. Of these, 131 did not show up for work, quit, or were fired within the first two weeks, and we did not include them. Approximately two weeks after beginning employment, we mailed Survey 1 to each employee’s home address along with a description of the study and a stamped envelope in which to return the surveys. We entered each employee who returned a completed survey in a drawing to win $50; 645 employees responded to Survey 1 (28.3 percent). Of these, 139 were involuntarily terminated or transferred to another location during the course of the study and we did not include them, leaving a sample of 506 of employees who completed Survey 1. Of these, 135 (26.7 percent) voluntarily turned over during the study, consistent with typical turnover rates in the industry.

The sample was closely split between women (52.8 percent) and men. Age ranged from 20 to 64 years (mean = 38.5), and the sample was majority Caucasian (65.5 percent), followed by African-American (17.3 percent), Hispanic and Asian (7.4 percent each), and American Indian (2.0 percent). The gender composition was very similar to the population of new hires, whereas the age of the population of new hires was lower (mean = 34.8), and the ethnicity composition varied such that minority respondents tended to be less likely to be represented (all new hires: Caucasian 52.7 percent; African-American 25.3 percent; Hispanic 13.1 percent; Asian 6.9 percent; American Indian 1.5 percent). Respondents came from 27 different properties throughout the U.S.A. and represented the following job divisions: casino (30.0 percent), food and beverage (24.6 percent), hotel (11.8 percent), finance (9.8 percent), facilities (9.2 percent), marketing (8.5 percent), retail (2.7 percent), executive (1.2 percent), HR (0.9 percent), gaming (0.9 percent), IT (0.6 percent), and operations (0.2 percent). Approximately six weeks, three months, and six months after beginning employment, we mailed Surveys 2, 3 and 4 by using the same procedures as described above; 310 completed Surveys 1 and 2 only; 231 completed Surveys 1–3; and 145 completed all four surveys.

Measures

We assessed all measures except turnover with Likert-type responses ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

Socialization tactics

We measured socialization tactics using items from Jones’ (1986) socialization tactics scale. Because of space constraints imposed by the organization, we chose 12 items previously used by Allen (2006) that loaded at least 0.40 in both Jones (1986) and Allen (2006). We assessed content with five items ($z = .83$); a sample item is “I have a good knowledge of the time it will take me to go through the various stages of the training process.” We assessed social aspects with four items ($z = .71$); a sample item is “I have received little guidance from experienced employees as to how I should perform my job” (reverse scored). We assessed context with three items ($z = .69$); a sample item is “This company puts all new hires through the same set of learning experiences.”
Perceived organizational support
We measured perceived organizational support using the nine-item short form of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger et al., 1986; \( \alpha = .92 \)). A sample item is “This company really cares about my well-being.”

On-the-job embeddedness
We used the scale developed by Mitchell et al. (2001). Because of our focus on new hires, we omitted items asking about tenure in current job and with the organization. We also focused on organization embeddedness (nine items) and omitted community embeddedness in part because competing casinos tend to be geographically clustered, making it relatively easy to change jobs without relocating. A sample item assessing links is “I regularly interact with many of my co-workers.” A sample item assessing fit is “I feel like I am a good match for this company.” A sample item assessing sacrifice is “I would sacrifice a lot if I left this job.” Embeddedness is a formative construct; thus, internal consistency is not relevant, but was high (\( \alpha = .92 \)).

Affective commitment
We used the nine-item version of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ; Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979) omitting three items with excessive conceptual overlap with turnover intentions (Bozeman & Perrewe, 2001). A sample item is “I really care about the future of this company” (\( \alpha = .87 \)). In their meta-analysis of commitment research, Meyer, Stanley, and Herscovitch (2002) noted that the OCQ is the most commonly used unidimensional measure of commitment. They showed that the OCQ and the Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993) affective commitment scale was correlated at 0.88 and thus appear to be measuring the same construct.

Turnover
We collected turnover data through organizational records. The organization uses a combination of supervisor exit interviews at the time of exit and corporate exit interviews conducted by HR several months after exit to classify turnover as voluntary or involuntary. We coded employees who remained with the organization as “0,” and we coded those who left the organization voluntarily as “1.”

Data analysis strategy
We set up the hypothesized model in Figure 1 for testing like usual in a structural equation modeling (SEM) framework. However, given that our study involved a four-wave design, we were concerned about losing information from participants who did not complete all four waves, especially given that turnover is the phenomenon of interest. Therefore, we used an SEM strategy that allowed us to incorporate data from participants who did not complete all four waves of the surveys (Hayduk, 1996; Ed Rigdon, pers. comm.). The approach simply treats the respondents with various survey responses as “groups” as in a typical multiple-group SEM design. Here, we divided the respondents into groups on the basis of which surveys they answered (group 1 \( n = 196 \), socialization tactics and turnover only; group 2 \( n = 79 \), socialization tactics, POS, and turnover; group 3 \( n = 86 \), socialization tactics, POS, embeddedness and voluntary turnover; and group 4 \( n = 145 \), socialization tactics, POS, embeddedness, commitment and voluntary turnover). The total sample size across these four groups equals our overall sample size of 506.

We then tested the hypothesized model like usual in SEM. The only difference is that any path in the model for which there are data from more than one “group” is estimated by combining the data from all groups and imposing equality constraints on paths that were present in more than one group. Equality across groups is not necessary for this design; breaking the respondents into “groups” and imposing equality constraints ensures that path coefficients are calculated by combining information from all participants who have the relevant data for each path. This approach allowed us to take advantage of all the information available from participants to
calculate the most robust estimates of each path coefficient as possible (i.e., by constraining the paths to be equal across groups, it forces the SEM analysis to combine all information available from each group to calculate each path coefficient; Ed Rigdon, pers. comm.). Thus, instead of \( n = 145 \) for all paths, \( n = 506 \) for socialization tactics and turnover; \( n = 310 \) for socialization and POS and POS and POS and turnover, \( n = 231 \) for socialization and embeddedness and embeddedness and turnover, and \( n = 145 \) for relationships of socialization, POS, and embeddedness with commitment, and commitment and turnover.

Although as mentioned equality across groups is not necessary for this design, having equality across groups does help to support the notion that people who did not participate in all four waves of the study do not differ from those who did. In addition to the equality constraints in our hypothesized model, we also conducted analyses of variance to assess whether the means of the variables used to predict turnover varied across the four groups. No groups significantly differed on any of the three socialization tactics; groups 2, 3 and 4 did not differ significantly on POS; and groups 3 and 4 did not significantly differ on embeddedness. Groups also did not differ significantly in terms of age or gender. Allowing structural paths to vary across groups also did not significantly improve model fit, and only one out of all possible paths across groups differed.

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations

We show means, standard deviations, internal reliabilities, and correlations among measures for the total sample in Table 1. We also checked for correlations between demographic variables contained in the data set (gender, ethnicity, and salary) and our study variables. None of the demographic variables were related to any of the dependent variables (DVs) in our study (POS, embeddedness, commitment, or turnover). Only three of the possible correlations were significant, in relation to socialization tactics. Caucasians reported less content (−.15) and more social (.28) socialization tactics than other ethnicities, and the higher one’s salary, the lower the content socialization tactics one reports (−.13).

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Variable</th>
<th>( M )</th>
<th>( SD )</th>
<th>( 1 )</th>
<th>( 2 )</th>
<th>( 3 )</th>
<th>( 4 )</th>
<th>( 5 )</th>
<th>( 6 )</th>
<th>( 7 )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Content</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>(.83)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Social</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>.17(^a)*</td>
<td>(.71)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Context</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>.48(^a)*</td>
<td>.22(^a)*</td>
<td>(.69)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. POS</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.44(^a)*</td>
<td>.31(^b)*</td>
<td>.37(^b)*</td>
<td>(.92)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. On-the-job embeddedness</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>.42(^c)*</td>
<td>.20(^a)*</td>
<td>.24(^c)*</td>
<td>.58(^c)*</td>
<td>(N/A)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Affective commitment</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>.33(^d)*</td>
<td>.19(^d)*</td>
<td>.20(^d)*</td>
<td>.48(^d)*</td>
<td>.43(^d)*</td>
<td>(.87)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Voluntary turnover</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>−.06(^a)</td>
<td>−.01(^a)</td>
<td>−.01(^a)</td>
<td>−.19(^b)*</td>
<td>−.17(^c)*</td>
<td>−.24(^d)*</td>
<td>(N/A)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Alpha reliability estimates are reported on the diagonal. No alpha is reported for embeddedness because it is a formative measure nor for turnover because it is a binary measure. Content, Social, and Context, socialization tactics subscales; POS, perceived organizational support.

\(^a\)\( p < .05. \)
\(^b\)\( N = 506. \)
\(^c\)\( N = 310. \)
\(^d\)\( N = 231. \)
\(^e\)\( N = 145. \)
Discriminant validity of the constructs

We first tested a series of nested confirmatory factor analytic models to assess whether the survey variables (excluding embeddedness because it is a formative measure) were distinct from each other and that the indicators loaded onto their intended latent variables. We used AMOS (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999) with maximum likelihood estimation to compare the fit of three nested models: (i) a 1-factor model treating the socialization tactics, POS, and commitment items as indicators of one latent factor; (ii) a 2-factor model treating the initial socialization tactics as one factor, and POS and commitment as a second factor; and (iii) a 5-factor model treating each of the variables as separate factors. Because testing this set of models requires using all potential factors including the commitment measure, we tested the confirmatory factor analytic models using only the participants who had all the relevant variables (socialization tactics, POS, and commitment, N = 145). To set the metric of the latent variables, we set the highest loading item from each measure (or for each factor when combined) to 1. Each more differentiated model showed a significantly better $\chi^2$ statistic, and the model treating each hypothesized construct as a separate construct (5-factor model) showed the best fit ($\chi^2_{314} = 551.30; \chi^2/df = 1.76; CFI = 0.90; RMSEA = 0.07$). Thus, it appears that the variables in the five factor model were distinct. Although RMSEA values below 0.05 are considered good fit, values up to 0.08 represent reasonable errors of approximation (Byrne, 2001). In addition, all indicators in the 5-factor model loaded reliably on their predicted factors (lowest loading = 0.41), and the average variance in the indicators explained by each factor was 44 percent for social, 48 percent for content, 57 percent for context, 61 percent for POS, and 66 percent for commitment.

Test of the hypothesized model

Fit and significance of hypothesized relationships

We used SEM using AMOS to test the hypothesized model, which allows us to test the mediating role of POS and embeddedness, as well as commitment, simultaneously (Figure 2). Given the relatively modest sample sizes, as suggested by Williams and Hazer (1986), we evaluated a manifest variables model. Such a model uses the variance–covariance matrix as input, calculating the measurement loadings for each latent variable as the square-root

![Figure 2. Structural model of the hypothesized relationships (standardized path coefficients are presented). Content, Social, and Context are socialization tactics; POS = perceived organizational support; Turnover = stayers coded as “0” and voluntary leavers coded as “1.” All relationships are significant, $p < .05$ except the relationship of context with embeddedness (n.s. = non-significant). Squared multiple correlation for POS is 0.29; for embeddedness 0.23; for commitment 0.25; and for turnover 0.09. The commitment relationship with the binary outcome of turnover is based on a logit link function called a Yule transformation (Kupek, 2006) and its significance assessed using the bootstrap estimate of the standard error associated with that coefficient.](image)
of the scale reliability and setting the error variances for each latent variable to 1 minus reliability times the scale variance.

Although the \( \chi^2 \) test of exact fit was significant, \( \chi^2(90)=357.03 \), indicators of approximate fit suggested approximate fit to the data: \( \chi^2/df=3.97 \); \( CFI=0.93 \); \( RMSEA=0.08 \) (we reported only one set of fit indices because we tested only one model with equality constraints imposed in this multi-group approach). Consistent with our hypothesized model, all three socialization tactics related to POS (\( \beta=.32 \) for content, \( \beta=.22 \) for context, and \( \beta=.19 \) for social), supporting H1 (squared multiple correlation [SMC] of 0.29 indicating that socialization tactics explained 29 percent of the variance in POS). Content (\( \beta=.36 \)) and social (\( \beta=.15 \)) related to embeddedness, partially supporting H2 (SMC of 0.23). Context was not related significantly to embeddedness (\( \beta=.11 \), \( p=.13 \)). POS (\( \beta=.27 \)) and embeddedness (\( \beta=.30 \)) related positively and significantly to commitment (SMC of 0.21).

The relationship between commitment and voluntary turnover involves a binary outcome measure, which violates the assumption of normality for variables used in maximum likelihood estimation. We followed recommendations outlined by Kupek (2006) for handling binary DVs in SEM. One option he recommended is using a Yule transformation for relationships with the binary DV. A second option he recommended is using bootstrap estimates of standard errors in the model because standard errors are the estimates most sensitive to violations of normality assumptions. We conducted the relevant portions of our analyses using both of these options. The Yule transformation is a logit function to correct for the non-normality of a binary DV. The Yule transformation is a two-step process in which one first assesses relationships with the outcome variable in logistic regression to obtain a logit function (odds of the event occurring). Then, one converts the odds ratio to an approximation of a Pearson correlation coefficient, which can be used (or converted to a covariance to be used) as input for SEM. We also asked for bootstrap estimates of our standard errors in AMOS and used those to calculate critical ratios rather than the potentially biased \( SE \) estimates given without bootstrapping.

The Yule transformed relationship between commitment and turnover is significant (\( \beta=-.35 \)) with the use of the bootstrap estimate for the standard error (SMC of 0.09). We also calculated bootstrap estimates of standard errors for all paths in our model to help ensure that violations of multivariate normality were not responsible for our results. We found no differences in the significance or non-significance of proposed relationships with the use of bootstrapped standard errors.

**Tests of mediation**

Because we used SEM to test our hypothesized model, the steps required for mediation (as outlined in Kenny, Kashy, & Bolger, 1998) were able to be assessed simultaneously rather than conducted as separate steps. Our model posits that the relationship of socialization tactics with commitment is through POS and embeddedness. With regard to POS, consistent with the first of the Kenny et al. steps, all three socialization tactics were positively related to POS. Further, POS was positively related to commitment, controlling for the three types of socialization tactics. The final step in the Kenny et al. mediation process involves the calculation of the indirect relationship of the independent variables with the outcome variable through the mediator. The indirect relationships of content (\( t=3.02, p<.05 \)), social (\( t=2.76, p<.05 \)), and context (\( t=2.46, p<.05 \)) tactics on commitment through POS were significant, supporting H3.

Our model also suggests that embeddedness would mediate the relationship of the three types of socialization tactics with commitment. Social and content socialization tactics were positively related to embeddedness, but context was not. Therefore, we did not examine the context further for a mediated relationship with commitment through embeddedness. Embeddedness was positively related to commitment controlling for content and social socialization tactics; and the indirect relationships of social (\( t=1.94, p=.05 \)) and content (\( t=2.97, p<.05 \)) tactics on commitment through embeddedness were significant, supporting mediation as proposed in H4.

Finally, we hypothesized commitment would mediate the relationship between POS and voluntary turnover (H5), and between embeddedness and voluntary turnover (H6). POS and embeddedness were positively related to commitment, and commitment was negatively related to voluntary turnover, controlling for POS and embeddedness. The indirect relationships of POS (\( t=-2.15, p<.05 \)) and embeddedness (\( t=-2.23, p<.05 \)) with voluntary
turnover through commitment were significant with the use of the bootstrapped estimates of standard errors for relationships with turnover.

**Alternative models**

We specified an alternative model that added direct paths from the three socialization tactics to commitment to test for full versus partial mediation of the relationship between socialization tactics and commitment by our relationship mechanisms. Consistent with our hypothesized full meditational model, none of the three direct relationships between socialization tactics and commitment were significant. POS and embeddedness are hypothesized to relate to turnover through commitment, but nonetheless, we offer a test of partial versus full mediation by commitment by adding direct paths from POS and embeddedness to turnover. Using the Yule transformation with bootstrapped standard errors, we found that neither direct relationship with turnover was significant, which is consistent with our meditational model and our original findings. Including all these direct paths that are missing in our hypothesized model helps address the idea cited in O’Boyle and Williams (2011) that testing whether variables are not related is an important part of providing evidence in support of a hypothesized model.

**Discussion**

Consistent with our model, we found evidence that relational mechanisms may help explain how socialization tactics bind newcomers to the organization through enhanced commitment and reduced turnover. Our study focused on relationships with the organization overall (POS) and relationships with others in the organization (on-the-job embeddedness) in newcomers during their first year in the organization. Early experiences of socialization may be particularly important for creating relationship ties that help make them more committed to the organization. Socialization tactics related positively to POS and job embeddedness over time, which related positively to commitment and negatively to turnover.

**Theoretical implications**

**Implications for the socialization literature and relational cohesion theory**

We build on the previous socialization literature by providing a foundation for understanding how and why organizational socialization tactics relate to newcomer relationships. We focus on relationships with the organization overall and relationships with others in the organization as important for understanding newcomer turnover, in contrast to previous research focusing on task mastery with sparse empirical evidence on turnover. Major (2000) suggested that relational socialization focuses on experiences and connections with others that would be important for individual growth in high performance cultures. We extend this perspective to describe in more detail how the relationship of socialization with a broad conceptualization of relational mechanisms relates to commitment and turnover. We also build on the ideas of Fang et al. (2011) of a social capital model of socialization. We go beyond their focus only on interactions with insiders to incorporate a broader conceptualization of social exchange and the important outcome of newcomer turnover. We do so by contributing a relational cohesion theoretical perspective of how socialization may be related to turnover in new hires.

We drew from relational cohesion theory and our findings support some of the key tenets of that perspective, particularly that social exchanges are related to affective and behavioral cohesion; bridging theories typically used in the field of I/O psychology and management (job embeddedness and social exchange) with this largely sociology-based approach represents an additional contribution of our study. Further, we extend the strong experimental laboratory body of research on relational cohesion theory, including some field studies of commitment, by testing portions of it in an organizational setting with turnover behavior (e.g., Lawler, Thye, & Yoon, 2000; Yoon &
Thye, 2002). We also suggested that different types of socialization tactics result in the development of different types of social capital in newcomers, but did not directly test this notion. Future research on these relationships would provide further insight as to the relevance of relational cohesion theory for socialization research.

**Implications for organizational support theory**

To our knowledge, this is the first study linking socialization tactics to POS and examining POS among new hires. Our data collection over time with newcomers allowed us to test, for the first time, the extent to which early socialization experiences may contribute to the development of POS. Focusing on how socialization shapes the development of POS in new hires is particularly important because socialization experiences during early days of employment may have a large and lasting influence on employees’ perceptions, behaviors, and attitudes about the organization (Chow, 2002; Wesson & Gogus, 2005). Further, socialization tactics are an important addition to the literature on antecedents of POS. Discretionary treatment is likely to have the most influence on POS (Eisenberger, Cummings, Armeli, & Lynch, 1997; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002); socialization tactics are not likely to be viewed as mandatory on the basis of regulations but rather viewed as chosen and discretionary by each organization and thus may be particularly influential in developing POS in new hires.

**Implications for job embeddedness theory**

This study also expands on recent research linking socialization to embeddedness. Allen (2006) found that socialization tactics influenced on-the-job embeddedness; however, that study measured socialization tactics and embeddedness at the same point in time. We replicate the finding that socialization tactics are related to embeddedness while showing that perceptions of tactics collected very soon after organizational entry are related to embeddedness months later. In particular, tactics that provide more content and more social interaction are related to subsequent embeddedness, whereas those focused on context were not. This is one of the first studies to contribute to understanding the potential antecedents of embeddedness and one of the first studies investigating the embeddedness of organizational newcomers for whom on-the-job embeddedness may be particularly malleable. Future research that addresses the nature of relationships among types of socialization tactics and embeddedness may be able to specify these relationships more completely. We also identify a potential refinement to job embeddedness theory by finding that on-the-job embeddedness may operate through affective commitment, consistent with relational cohesion theory. Future research may need to continue to investigate the extent to which embeddedness leads to turnover through affective as compared with non-affective paths.

**Practical implications**

These findings suggest a new way for organizations to think about retaining newcomers. Many already use socialization tactics to aid task mastery, communicate norms, policies, procedures, and culture and provide realistic assessments of the work environment. Our study suggests that an additional benefit of socialization would be to consider how newcomers develop relationships with others, the nature of the relationship between newcomers and the organization, and how embedded the newcomer becomes in a web of connections binding them to the organization.

How can organizations develop POS and embeddedness in new hires? Our findings suggest socialization tactics that Jones (1986) classified as more institutional tend to lead to higher POS and embeddedness and indirectly to lower turnover. Thus, socialization tactics that provide clear information about the content, sequence, and timing of socialization activities and expectations, those that provide positive interactions with experienced organizational members during socialization, and those that provide group learning experiences during well-defined socialization activities tend to be indirectly related to commitment and turnover through POS and embeddedness. So, for example, organizations may need to explore how to provide common learning experiences with opportunities to interact with others even in situations where large numbers of new hires do not enter the organization simultaneously and in the
face of increasing use of self-paced electronic orientation materials. One possibility is to take advantage of social networking technology to connect newcomers with others who may be at different stages of the socialization process or even different locations.

Another consideration may be how to provide clear and consistent information about content, sequence, and timing in less structured situations such as organizations that rely heavily on on-the-job training or one-to-one mentoring models. Our findings suggest that even in these relatively unstructured situations, organizations would be able to foster more attitudinal and behavioral commitment to the extent that they are able to provide an overarching framework to newcomers.

Still another practical consideration is the extent to which retention is a key goal of newcomer adjustment. There is some evidence that more institutional tactics may be less likely to lead to role innovation (Jones, 1986); thus, organizations may need to make strategic decisions about the extent to which they desire to foster loyalty or innovative behavior. Alternatively, organizations may be able to discover methods for fostering both; for example, perhaps there are certain types of interactions with others that tend to lead to more innovative behavior while simultaneously building relationships.

Limitations and future research directions

One limitation of this study is that we focused on organizational socialization tactics and did not incorporate the anticipatory socialization stage or the proactive information seeking and sensemaking activities in which newcomers engage (Morrison, 1993). It is likely that newcomers actively seek to develop relationships with others and that some newcomers may be more or less inclined or skilled in developing these relationships. Thus, future research examining newcomer relationship building activities would provide a more comprehensive picture of these processes. We also focused on POS and embeddedness as adjustment mechanisms without incorporating other key indicators of adjustment such as task mastery or role properties. Future research that examines the relative importance of various mechanisms for understanding how newcomer adjustment influences turnover decisions would also be valuable.

Although we conceptualize POS and embeddedness as distinct mechanisms, we hypothesized similar patterns of relationships with socialization tactics as well as with affective and behavioral commitment. However, we found some evidence that socialization tactics did not relate in the same way with each mechanism in that the context of socialization tactics related to POS but not embeddedness. It is possible that sample size and modest reliability for the context measure limited the power to detect this relationship. An alternative explanation may be that that relationships with incumbents (captured by the social dimension) are more important than relationships with other newcomers (captured by the context dimension) when considering embeddedness compared with POS. Also, we posited and found evidence for the idea that POS and embeddedness both relate to turnover via affective commitment; however, other research suggests embeddedness should relate to turnover directly. Thus, future research that specifically examines the extent to which POS and embeddedness are similar versus distinctive mechanisms would be helpful.

We assume that newcomers typically have fewer established relationships within the organization; however, some new employees do have such relationships or even find jobs because of relationships with organizational members, for example, through employee referrals. Thus, an important boundary condition for future research would be to assess prior relationships and/or hiring method and to determine whether the impact of socialization tactics on embeddedness is weaker for those recruited via referrals or already having relationships with organizational members. Another potential boundary condition may be that some individuals simply care more or less about relationships in the workplace. Thus, future research examining needs for affiliation or belongingness might suggest individual differences influencing for whom relationships matter. We also did not incorporate the possibility of intra-organizational job change. Extensive internal opportunities could lessen the impact of embeddedness because individuals could change jobs without sacrificing relationships, and future research should assess this idea.
From a measurement perspective, we chose to measure relationships in terms of perceptions of POS and embeddedness. Future research assessing relationships via social networks might provide additional perspective on newcomer relationships. For example, Fang et al. (2011) suggested that network structure should be a primary method for studying the role of social capital in understanding socialization. We also relied on a combination of supervisor and corporate exit interviews to identify voluntary versus involuntary turnover; we cannot prove the validity of this classification method, although triangulating between these two methods may provide more confidence than relying on either alone. Future research that incorporates a direct assessment of voluntariness from the departing employee may be helpful. Also, the fit of both our measurement and structural models was slightly below standards indicating good fit, suggesting that improved measurement or alternative model specifications might be warranted in future research.

The timing of measurement may also have implications for our findings. The order in which we measured constructs was theoretically driven, but the timing of survey administration was largely driven by the organization. We measured socialization tactics, for example, after only two weeks. Previous research has shown that perceptions of socialization measured as early as four weeks influence subsequent outcomes (e.g., Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002; Major et al., 1995). Our results show that perceptions of socialization at two weeks influence subsequent outcomes. To the extent we can assume socialization (formal and informal) continues beyond two weeks, it is reasonable to conclude that the ability to assess socialization over a longer timeframe would likely strengthen the impact of socialization; thus, our results may somewhat understate the impact of socialization tactics. Still, it is practically important for organizations to know that these early experiences are important. Similarly, we measured POS and embeddedness at two different periods chosen by the organization. We chose to assess POS first, for reasons discussed earlier; however, organizational support and embeddedness theories, like many theories in organizational psychology, do not say much about how long it takes these perceptions to form. Future research that investigates these temporal issues would be valuable.

As with most longitudinal research, respondents who dropped out over time are another limitation. Although analyses suggest that study attrition is not related to measured variables in our study, it remains possible that unmeasured variables are related. We attempted to retain as many respondents as possible using a novel data analysis strategy, although this approach may have implications for our findings as well. We constrained relationships to be the same across groups of respondents who completed different sets of surveys. We used this approach simply to retain as much information as possible from participants, even if they did not complete all four surveys, to ensure the most robust path coefficients possible. It is not necessary for groups to be equal in this approach. Nonetheless, we found that groups of respondents did not differ significantly in mean responses to any study survey variable and that relationships among study constructs were essentially the same across groups (within the confidence intervals of the coefficients obtained from the hypothesized model with its equality constraints). Similarly, in a model using only participants who have data on all four surveys \((n=145)\), relationships were essentially the same (within the confidence intervals of coefficients shown in our hypothesized model). Nonetheless, future research teasing out the relationships among socialization tactics, POS, and embeddedness in newcomers at various stages of their first year of socialization would provide additional evidence concerning the robustness of our findings.

**Conclusion**

This study presents a relational model of how organizations may create ties that bind newcomers to the organization in which a key mechanism underlying newcomer adjustment is the drive to develop relationships. Results indicate two key relationship mechanisms that may connect socialization tactics to turnover are newcomers’ social exchange relationship with the organization (POS) and the extent to which newcomers become enmeshed in a web of relationships with others in the organization (on-the-job embeddedness). The present study adds to the literature...
on POS by examining the development of POS in newcomers via socialization tactics, and to the literature linking socialization to turnover by proposing and testing simultaneously two theoretical mechanisms. It adds to the literature on embeddedness by being one of the first studies to consider antecedents of embeddedness and the possibility that embeddedness may lead to affective commitment.

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References


