



Socialization tactics, proactive behavior, and newcomer learning: Integrating socialization models [☆]

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine how socialization processes (socialization tactics and proactive behavior) jointly affect socialization content (i.e., what newcomers learn) and adjustment. Longitudinal survey data from 150 business and engineering graduates during their first 7 months of work indicate that: (1) institutionalized socialization and proactive behavior are each associated with newcomer learning, (2) the socialization processes and learning are each associated with various forms of adjustment, and (3) the socialization processes are associated with adjustment, while controlling for learning. These findings suggest that *how* newcomers are socialized has substantive and symbolic value over and above *what* they actually learn.

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1. Introduction

Organizational socialization is typically defined as the process through which individuals acquire knowledge about and adjust to their work context (e.g., Fisher, 1986; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). A great deal of research indicates that socialization has a large impact on the adjustment of individuals—typically newcomers—to their jobs, groups, and organizations (see reviews by Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007; Bauer, Morrison, & Callister, 1998; Fisher, 1986; Moreland & Levine, 2001, and Saks & Ashforth, 1997a). However, adjustment can be regarded as a secondary or distal outcome of socialization (Haueter, Macan, & Winter, 2003; Saks & Ashforth, 1997a). A more primary or proximal outcome is foreshadowed by the definition above: the acquisition of knowledge about the work context. Indeed, newcomer learning is argued to be “at the heart of any organizational socialization model” (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2005, p. 117). Surprisingly, far less research has focused on how the process of socialization affects the acquisition of knowledge—referred to as socialization content or newcomer learning (see Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002 and Hart & Miller, 2005, for examples of exceptions).

Further, the process of socialization has often been operationalized as either socialization tactics or newcomer proactive behavior. Socialization tactics refer to organization-driven or more or less formalized means of socializing individuals (Jones, 1986; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), whereas proactive behavior refers to individual-driven or informal means of “self-socializing” (Ashford & Black, 1996; Miller & Jablin, 1991). Traditionally, research has investigated these two processes relatively independently. That said, some research has examined how *specific* socialization tactics and *specific* forms of proactive behavior jointly affect adjustment, though not learning (e.g., Kim, Cable, & Kim, 2005; Saks & Ashforth, 1997b). However, what has not been studied is how socialization tactics and proactive behavior *jointly affect newcomer learning*. A joint consideration of organization-driven tactics and individual-driven proactivity should offer a more complete view of the process of learning during adjustment (Ashforth et al., 2007; Bauer et al., 1998; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003).

As mentioned, newcomer learning is proposed to be an important mediator. Saks and Ashforth (1997a) position newcomer learning as a linchpin in bridging (i.e., mediating) the relationship between socialization process and adjustment outcomes. Although theory has placed learning as the integral mediator, empirical support has been mixed. Several studies found that learning indeed mediates (partially, in some cases, and fully, in others) the link between specific socialization processes and outcomes (e.g., Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003) whereas other research has found no such evidence (Allen, McManus, & Russell, 1999). Our study investigates more deeply the mediating role of learning between the joint socialization process of socialization tactics and newcomer proactivity and a set of fairly typical adjustment outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction, intentions to quit, self-rated job performance, organizational identification, and role innovation). We argue that, while *what* newcomers learn is important, *how* newcomers are socialized has substantive and symbolic value over and above what they actually learn.

In sum, the purpose of the study is to assess a more comprehensive perspective on how the joint socialization process affects socialization content and newcomer adjustment. More specifically, we investigate (1) how newcomer perceptions of socialization tactics and newcomer proactive behavior jointly affect the proximal outcome of newcomer learning (socialization content), and (2) how the process and content of socialization affect the

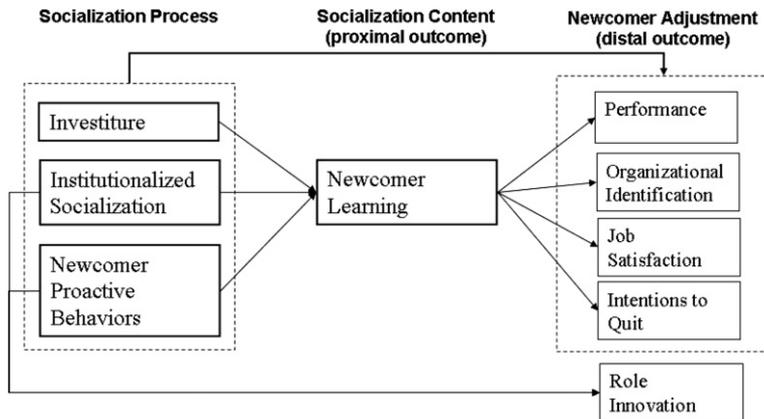


Fig. 1. How socialization process and content affect newcomer adjustment.

more distal outcome of newcomer adjustment. Our hypotheses, developed below, are summarized in Fig. 1. This model is examined with a sample of business and engineering graduates who were tracked during the first 7 months in their new full-time jobs.

2. Socialization content

Socialization content refers to the substance of what an individual learns (or should learn) in order to become a proficient and comfortable member of the organization. Although various typologies of content domains have been suggested (e.g., Chao, O’Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994; Haueter et al., 2003; Morrison, 1995), the typologies tend to agree that knowledge acquisition spans the job and role, interpersonal and group relationships, and the nature of the organization as a whole. For the sake of parsimony, we will focus on Morrison’s (1995) relatively inclusive schema. She integrated several typologies to derive the following seven content domains:

...*technical information* about how to execute required tasks...*referent information* about what is required and expected as part of one’s job role...*social information* about other people and one’s relationships with those people...*appraisal information* about how others are evaluating one’s performance and behavior...*normative information* about the organization’s culture...*organizational information* about the firm’s structure, procedures, products/services, and performance...and *political information* about the distribution of power within the organization. (pp. 133–134)

2.1. Learning and the process of socialization

As noted, most research on the process of socialization has focused on socialization tactics or newcomer proactive behavior. Other well-known processes can be seen as specific forms of either the organization-driven tactics or individual-driven proactivity. For example, the use of mentors and training programs are consistent with the serial and formal tactics, respectively, described below.

2.1.1. Socialization tactics

Van Maanen and Schein (1979) proposed a set of bipolar tactics by which organizations engage in “people processing.” The tactic of *collective (vs. individual)* socialization involves grouping newcomers and exposing them to a common set of learning experiences; *formal (vs. informal)* socialization entails segregating a newcomer from on-the-job veterans for a limited period, as in training classes; *sequential (vs. random)* socialization involves a lock-step series of developmental steps; *fixed (vs. variable)* socialization includes a set timetable for the steps; *serial (vs. disjunctive)* socialization involves a veteran(s) as a role model(s); and *investiture (vs. divestiture)* entails the affirmation of a newcomer’s incoming identity and attributes, as when a person is hired for her expertise. Jones (1986) argued that the collective, formal, sequential, fixed, serial, and investiture poles form a cluster that he termed *institutionalized socialization*. Institutionalized socialization represents a more or less formalized developmental program for newcomers that research suggests facilitates adjustment (Ashforth et al., 2007). Conversely, Jones (1986) argued that the tactics’ opposite poles—individual, informal, random, variable, disjunctive, and divestiture—constitute *individualized socialization*. This form of socialization represents an *absence* of structure such that newcomers are left to “sink or swim.” Although this benign neglect may encourage role innovation because the newcomer is on his or her own (e.g., Allen & Meyer, 1990; Ashforth & Saks, 1996), it may also foster a sense of abandonment and role ambiguity, undermining adjustment.

However, the role of investiture in institutionalized socialization has been contested. First, Jones (1986) predicted that investiture would be negatively related to role innovation, whereas Van Maanen and Schein (1979) argued that it would be positively related. Second, studies of the socialization tactics have tended to use Jones’ operationalization of investiture, which Ashforth and Saks (1996) argued is closer to the construct of social support than to Van Maanen and Schein’s intended construct of identity affirmation. Ashforth (2001) posited that investiture, as meant by Van Maanen and Schein, may be used with a program of *either* institutionalized socialization (e.g., a management training program that hires business school graduates) or individualized socialization (e.g., a real estate firm that hires extroverted individuals that it lets “sink or swim”). Accordingly, Ashforth and Saks (1996) developed a measure of investiture that focuses on identity affirmation and found that it did not load with the other institutionalized tactics. Given our desire to stay true to Van Maanen and Schein’s conceptualization of investiture as identity affirmation, we will use (a modified version of) Ashforth and Saks’ investiture scale and treat investiture separately from the other tactics.

Although research on socialization tactics routinely examines their association with newcomer adjustment, little research has examined their association with the more proximal outcome of newcomer learning. It seems likely that institutionalized socialization will be positively associated with learning. Organizations typically develop formal socialization programs with the explicit intent of imparting organization-relevant content to newcomers, and such programs provide a structured milieu for that purpose. For example, Cooper-Thomas and Anderson (2002) found that institutionalized socialization in the British Army was associated with knowledge in the social, interpersonal, organizational, and role domains. Further, studies of specific tactics, such as the use of mentors (serial), an orientation program (formal), and training cohorts (collective) have reported positive associations with learning about tasks, groups, and the organization (e.g., Haueter et al., 2003; Sonnentag, Niessen, & Ohly, 2004). Hence:

Hypothesis 1a. Institutionalized socialization (excluding investiture) will be positively associated with newcomer learning.

We also argue that investiture will be positively related to learning. To be sure, it could be argued that affirming the newcomer's incoming identity potentially inhibits the perceived need to acquire further knowledge, whereas divestiture (the opposite pole) creates this need by stripping away the newcomer's identity so that he or she is confronted with uncertainty (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). An extreme example of divestiture is military boot camp. However, it seems likely that divestiture motivates learning primarily about *oneself* to rebuild one's identity and to adapt to the work context. For example, Ashforth and Saks (1996) found that divestiture was positively related to personal change among business school graduates. In contrast, the affirmation of ones' incoming identity through investiture may provide "psychological safety" (Edmondson, 2004)—that is, a secure base for further learning—and motivate one to learn about the wider organization and how to apply one's existing attributes. Indeed, newcomers may experience divestiture as alienating, inhibiting their desire to learn. As Cable and Parsons (2001) put it, "positive reinforcement induces more learning than negative reinforcement" (p. 7). Hence:

Hypothesis 1b. Investiture will be positively related to newcomer learning.

2.1.2. Proactive behavior

Whereas the literature on socialization tactics tacitly portrays newcomers as relatively passive recipients of organizational efforts and information, research on proactivity emphasizes the active role that newcomers often play in learning about—and possibly altering—their work context (Crant, 2000). Our study utilized Ashford and Black's (1996) typology of proactive behaviors: *information seeking*, *feedback seeking*, *job-change negotiating* (i.e., trying to modify one's tasks and others' expectations), *positive framing* (i.e., attempting to see things in an optimistic way), *general socializing* (i.e., participating in social events), *building a relationship with one's boss*, and *networking*.

Just as studies of socialization tactics have tended to focus on the distal outcome of adjustment, so too have studies of newcomer proactive behavior (e.g., Ashford & Black, 1996; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000). This research generally indicates that proactivity is associated with positive adjustment, presumably because newcomers are actively engaging in and tailoring their own socialization. However, few studies have examined the association between newcomer proactivity and knowledge acquisition. We argue that proactive behavior facilitates learning because the individual is likely to probe on (1) precisely those topics about which he or she is unsure and (2) in a manner and pace with which he or she is comfortable. In actively engaging the context, the newcomer not only generates information about his or her tasks, coworkers, and so on, but may substantively modify the context to better suit his or her needs and preferences, thereby enhancing learning. Hence:

Hypothesis 2. Newcomer proactive behavior will be positively associated with newcomer learning.

3. Newcomer adjustment

Knowledge acquisition reduces newcomers' uncertainty and role ambiguity (e.g., Miller & Jablin, 1991; Saks & Ashforth, 1997a). Thus, learning is likely to greatly facilitate newcomer adjustment. In support, a recent literature review indicates that learning socialization content is associated with a variety of adjustment variables (although not always consistently; Ashforth et al., 2007). For example, Haueter et al. (2003) report that knowledge of the organization, group, and task were each associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment (although none were associated with supervisor ratings of performance).

For purposes of this study, we conceptualize newcomer adjustment as a constellation of task adjustment (i.e., self-perceived job performance, job satisfaction, and role innovation) and organizational adjustment (i.e., organizational identification, and intentions to quit). Indeed, most socialization research has conceptualized adjustment with similar constellations of variables (Ashforth et al., 2007). We argue that knowledge acquisition will have a positive influence on adjustment. First, learning about the job, role, group, and organization provides useful information for performing one's job better. Second, learning reduces uncertainty and anxiety, thus increasing one's positive affect and evaluation of the new job (i.e., job satisfaction). Third, learning about the organization should also facilitate one's sense of connection with the organization (i.e., organizational identification). Last, learning should also increase one's future prospects within the organization, thereby decreasing intentions to quit (cf. Allen, 2006). Hence:

Hypothesis 3. Newcomer learning will be positively associated with (a) performance, (b) job satisfaction, and (c) organizational identification, and negatively associated with (d) intentions to quit.

Hypotheses 1–3 collectively imply that the process of socialization (tactics and proactive behavior) influences newcomer adjustment through the content of socialization. However, in addition to the indirect effect that process has on adjustment via content, we contend that the process has a *direct* effect. That is, *how* one is socialized has an impact above and beyond *what* one is formally taught. First, the process has instrumental or substantive effects on adjustment. For example, the collective tactic creates a cohort of peers who go through an often stressful process together, thus facilitating a sense of identification (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Second, the process has expressive or symbolic value that may affect adjustment (Ashforth & Saks, 2002). For instance, the investiture tactic may communicate to newcomers that they are valued by the organization, thus decreasing intentions to quit. And information seeking (proactive behavior) may convince newcomers that they have unearthed the most relevant information, thereby increasing performance and job satisfaction. Thus:

Hypothesis 4. The process of socialization (i.e., institutionalized socialization, investiture, and proactive behavior) will be directly and positively associated with (a) performance, (b) job satisfaction, and (c) organizational identification, and negatively associated with (d) intentions to quit, while controlling for the indirect associations via newcomer learning.

Missing from Hypotheses 3 and 4 is role innovation. Perhaps surprisingly, we argue that role innovation will be associated with socialization processes rather than content. First, institutionalized socialization tends to be used to reinforce rather than challenge

the status quo (Ashforth & Saks, 1996). Organizations structure newcomers' early work experiences to help impart certain values, norms, and beliefs that center on "the way things are done around here." Although, in theory, institutionalized socialization may be used to impart values, norms, and beliefs that encourage one to challenge the status quo, in practice, it tends not to be (e.g., Allen & Meyer, 1990; Jones, 1986). Second, proactive behavior is also likely to be associated with innovation precisely because the newcomer is taking the initiative to actively prod the organization. A newcomer behaving more passively is less likely to question the status quo. Thus, information and feedback seeking have been found to be positively associated with role innovation (Mignerey, Rubin, & Gorden, 1995). Finally, innovation is not associated with the amount of learning per se, but with the specific norms that are learned. If the norms encourage innovation, then learning will be positively associated with innovation; if the norms encourage conformity, learning will be negatively associated with innovation. Because our study focuses on the amount of learning, socialization content is not expected to be associated with innovation.

Hypothesis 5. (a) Institutionalized socialization (excluding investiture) will be negatively associated with role innovation, whereas (b) proactive behavior will be positively associated with role innovation.

4. Method

4.1. *Sample and procedures*

To investigate newcomer adjustment in a wide variety of organizations, we surveyed the 2002 and 2003 business and engineering graduates from a large state university in the southwestern United States that were employed full-time following graduation. Participants were surveyed three times: (1) 1 week before graduation (T1), (2) 4 months after the participant's hire or start date (as determined from a start-date form included in the T1 survey) (T2), and (3) 7 months after the start date (T3). We assessed the control variables before the post-entry socialization process began (T1); the independent variables (i.e., socialization tactics and newcomer proactivity) during the socialization process (T2); and the dependent variables (i.e., newcomer learning and adjustment) after the socialization process has been argued to have more or less stabilized (T3) (Saks & Ashforth, 1997a).

Our final sample consisted of 150 individuals who started full-time employment upon graduation. Of a potential sample of 2,002 graduates (less 87 with incorrect addresses), 415 returned the T1 survey; 27 were excluded due to their continued employment in jobs they held before graduation, their plans to enroll in graduate school, or their status as international graduates returning to their home country. Of the remaining 388 respondents, 282 reported accepting a job with a start date and 200 of these returned the T2 survey. However, 24 had discontinued employment and were discarded from the sample. Of the remaining 176, 151 returned the T3 survey; 1 person had discontinued employment. Given that our protocol required us to include only those with new full-time jobs (with a definite start date), our qualified response rate is 53% (i.e., 150/282) with an overall response rate of 8% (i.e., 150/2002).

Using demographic information supplied by the university (i.e., age, gender, college, and grade point average), we tested for differences between non-respondents ($N = 1587$) and the respondents to the T1 survey ($N = 415$). The respondents had a slightly higher GPA (3.39 vs. 3.27; $t = 5.18$; $p \leq .01$) and proportionately more women (52% vs. 33%; $\chi^2 = 44.97$, $p \leq .01$). We repeated the analyses comparing non-respondents ($N = 1587$) with respondents in the final sample ($N = 150$). The results were identical.

We also tested for attrition bias. Using multiple logistic regression, we regressed whether the subject “stayed” (responded to T1 and T2 *or* responded to T1, T2, and T3) or “left” (responded only to T1) on the demographic variables (i.e., age, gender, college, and GPA) as well as two psychological variables—positive and negative affectivity. “Leavers” had slightly lower GPAs than “stayers” at T2 only (3.34 vs. 3.44 [$t = -2.62$, $p \leq .01$]) and were older at T2 and T3 (25 years vs. 23 for T2 [$t = 2.77$, $p \leq .01$]; 24 years vs. 23 for T3 [$t = 3.10$, $p \leq .01$]). Although theory does not anticipate these demographic differences substantively affecting the results (Saks & Ashforth, 1997a), it remains that our final sample is somewhat skewed toward younger, female graduates with higher GPAs. We repeated our substantive analyses (that is, that tested our hypotheses—see below) with both information from the final sample and with “full information.” In other words, we created a final sample covariance matrix using list-wise deletion and a “full information” covariance matrix using pairwise deletion. The results were identical.

Not surprisingly, respondents entered a wide variety of occupations and industries. None of the occupations or industries accounted for more than 14% of the sample. The most popular occupations were account representative, analyst, auditor, product engineer, supervisor, and service representative. The most popular industries (above 10%) were aerospace, financial/accounting services, retail sales, software development, and technological services.

4.2. Measures

4.2.1. Institutionalized socialization tactics (excluding investiture)

We used Jones (1986) measures of the collective, sequential, serial, and fixed tactics—each of which has 5 items—and adapted Jones’ measure of the formal tactics. The response scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Scores on the collective, sequential, serial, fixed, and formal tactics were combined such that high composite scores indicate institutionalized socialization. We adapted Jones’ measure of formal tactics due to its record of somewhat poor reliability. Here, the reliability remained poor, $\alpha = .63$; subsequent item analysis led to a 4-item scale with an alpha reliability of .69: “I have been through a set of training experiences which are specifically designed to give newcomers a thorough knowledge of job related skills,” “I did not perform any of my normal job responsibilities until I was thoroughly familiar with departmental procedures and work methods,” “Much of my job knowledge has been acquired informally on a trial and error basis” (R), and “My training in this organization has been mostly on-the-job” (R).

The correlations between the collective, sequential, serial, fixed, and formal subscales range from .37 to .74 (mean = .50), and the overall alpha for the 24-item institutionalized socialization scale is .91.

4.2.2. Investiture

We adapted Ashforth and Saks' (1996) measure of investiture and obtained an alpha reliability of .79. The 5-item scale is: "My organization accepts newcomers for who they are," "The organization does not try to change the values and beliefs of newcomers," "The following statement describes the attitude of my organization toward newcomers: 'We like you as you are; don't change,'" "My organization tries to transform newcomers into a different kind of person" (R), and "In this organization, you must 'pay your dues' before you are fully accepted" (R).

4.2.3. Proactive behavior

The seven proactive behaviors were assessed via Ashford and Black's (1996) scale, each of which has 3–4 items. The response scale ranged from 1 (to a very little extent) to 5 (to a very large extent). The correlations between the seven subscales range from .25 to .53 (mean = .36), and the overall alpha for the 24-item scale is .91.

4.2.4. Socialization content (newcomer learning)

Newcomer learning was assessed via Morrison's (1995) measure of seven socialization content areas, each of which has 4–7 items. Morrison's respondents were given the following instructions: "Below is a list of 40 types of information that employees may receive when they begin a new job. Please indicate the extent to which you feel each type of information is useful to new employees. . ." (p. 142). Instead of assessing the usefulness of the content areas, we asked participants to rate the extent to which they have learned in these areas. The response scale ranged from 1 (to a very little extent) to 5 (to a very large extent). The correlations between the seven subscales range from .38 to .75 (mean = .53), and the overall alpha for the 40-item scale is .96.

4.2.5. Socialization factor analysis

Because socialization tactics, proactive behavior, and socialization content bear on the common issue of socialization, we conducted a factor analysis to establish their discriminability. Using maximum likelihood estimation via LISREL (8.71; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2004), we compared the a priori 3-factor model to a 2-factor (i.e., tactics and proactivity together with content separate) and a 1-factor model. The 3-factor model demonstrated the best fit as well as overall adequate fit ($\chi^2 = 248.73$ [$df = 132$; $\chi^2/df \leq 2$]; RMSEA = .07 [Ho: RMSEA $\leq .05$; $p \leq .01$]; CFI = .87; SRMR = .08). Both the 2-factor ($\chi^2 = 540.37$ [$df = 134$; $\chi^2/df > 2$]; RMSEA = .15 [Ho: RMSEA $\leq .05$; $p \leq .01$]; CFI = .68; SRMR = .13) and 1-factor models ($\chi^2 = 727.65$ [$df = 135$; $\chi^2/df > 2$]; RMSEA = .18 [Ho: RMSEA $\leq .05$; $p \leq .01$]; CFI = .52; SRMR = .14) demonstrated unacceptable fit. Note that RMSEA and CFI have been found to be less sensitive to sample size and, therefore, are useful fit indices when analyzing models based on smaller samples (i.e., $N < 200$; Fan, Thompson, & Wang, 1999). As expected, the sixth tactic, investiture, did not load significantly on this (or any other) factor. In sum, we used composite measures for institutionalized socialization tactics (with investiture as a separate predictor), proactive behavior, and socialization content (learning).

4.2.6. Adjustment

We captured adjustment via self-rated performance (6 items; Smith, 1982; $\alpha = .82$), job satisfaction (3 items; Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1983; $\alpha = .93$), organizational

identification (6 items; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; $\alpha = .85$), intentions to quit (3 items; Colar-elli, 1984; $\alpha = .89$), and role innovation (6 items; West, 1987; $\alpha = .87$). It is possible that common method bias is present due to these adjustment outcomes and content being measured from the same source. Using maximum likelihood estimation via LISREL, we compared the a priori 6-factor model to a 2-factor (i.e., outcomes and content) and a 1-factor model. To preserve an adequate item to sample ratio, we used the subscales for content and the items for the outcome measures. The 6-factor model demonstrated the best fit as well as overall adequate fit ($\chi^2 = 637.10$ [$df = 419$; $\chi^2/df \leq 2$]; RMSEA = .06 [Ho: RMSEA $\leq .05$; $p = .06$]; CFI = .90; SRMR = .07). Both the 2-factor ($\chi^2 = 2115.16$ [$df = 433$; $\chi^2/df > 2$]; RMSEA = .16 [Ho: RMSEA $\leq .05$; $p \leq .01$]; CFI = .55; SRMR = .15) and 1-factor models ($\chi^2 = 3042.92$ [$df = 434$; $\chi^2/df > 2$]; RMSEA = .20 [Ho: RMSEA $\leq .05$; $p \leq .01$]; CFI = .39; SRMR = .16) demonstrated unacceptable fit.

4.2.7. Controls

Regarding the prediction of socialization content, we included the following controls: gender, age, ethnicity, major (business, engineering, or joint business/engineering), full-time work experience (in months), part-time work experience (in months), previous internship experience with the employer, and the extent of differences between one's current and previous employers and between one's current and previous jobs. Regarding the prediction of adjustment, we included the above demographic variables as well as positive and negative affectivity as controls (because affectivity is likely to be associated with one's sense of adjustment). Positive affectivity was measured by Fortunato and Mincy's (2003) 22-item scale ($\alpha = .91$) and negative affectivity was measured by Stokes and Levin's (1990) 21-item scale ($\alpha = .87$).

Given the number of controls, we conducted a separate regression analysis to determine which controls were to be included in the analyses so as to not include "impotent" controls (Becker, 2005, p. 285). None of the demographic variables significantly predicted learning or adjustment and thus were not included in the path analysis. However, positive and negative affectivity did predict adjustment outcomes and were therefore included as controls.

5. Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations are presented in Table 1. We used observed variable path analysis (LISREL 8.71; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2004) to test Hypotheses 1–5.

H4 predicted that the process of socialization is directly and positively associated with adjustment (excluding role innovation) while controlling for the indirect associations via learning. In addition to specifying paths testing for H1–3 and H5, we specified all direct paths from the three socialization process variables (i.e., institutionalized socialization, investiture, proactive behavior) to performance, job satisfaction, organizational identification, and intentions to quit. The fit statistics of this model— $\chi^2 = 21.92$ ($df = 11$; $p \leq .05$; $\chi^2/df < 2$); RMSEA = .08 (Ho: RMSEA $\leq .05$; $p = .16$); SRMR = .05; GFI = .97—indicated good fit. See Fig. 2 for the coefficients for specific paths in the model.

As hypothesized, the path coefficients between institutionalized socialization and learning (H1a: .17; $p \leq .05$) and between proactive behavior and learning (H2: .37; $p \leq .01$) were significant. However, the path coefficient between investiture and learning was non-significant (H1b: .07). As expected, learning was positively associated with perfor-

Table 1

Descriptive statistics and correlations for controls, socialization tactics, proactive behavior, newcomer learning, and outcomes

Composite variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Positive affectivity	5.79	0.66	.91										
2. Negative affectivity	2.77	0.73	-.54	.87									
3. Investiture	4.78	0.98	-.08	.06	.79								
4. Institutionalized socialization	4.14	0.92	.17	-.08	.11	.91							
5. Proactive behavior	3.37	0.67	.45	-.24	.04	.24	.91						
6. Newcomer learning	3.74	0.59	.40	-.33	.10	.26	.41	.96					
7. Performance	7.25	1.03	.35	-.23	.14	.19	.35	.46	.82				
8. Job satisfaction	5.20	1.39	.13	-.08	.34	.21	.31	.31	.36	.93			
9. Organizational identification	4.78	1.17	.28	-.04	.33	.16	.30	.32	.24	.48	.85		
10. Intentions to quit	3.18	1.83	.03	-.03	-.34	-.23	-.27	-.15	-.17	-.71	-.32	.89	
11. Role innovation	2.04	0.61	.14	.04	-.02	-.08	.27	.04	.06	.07	.13	-.03	.87

Note: $n = 150$. Scales reliabilities are on the diagonal in bold. Correlations greater than $|.16|$ are significant at $p \leq .05$. Correlations greater than $|.20|$ are significant at $p \leq .01$.

mance (H3a: $.32, p \leq .01$), job satisfaction (H3b: $.18, p \leq .05$), and organizational identification (H3c: $.18, p \leq .05$). However, learning was not associated with intentions to quit (H3d: $-.03, NS$).

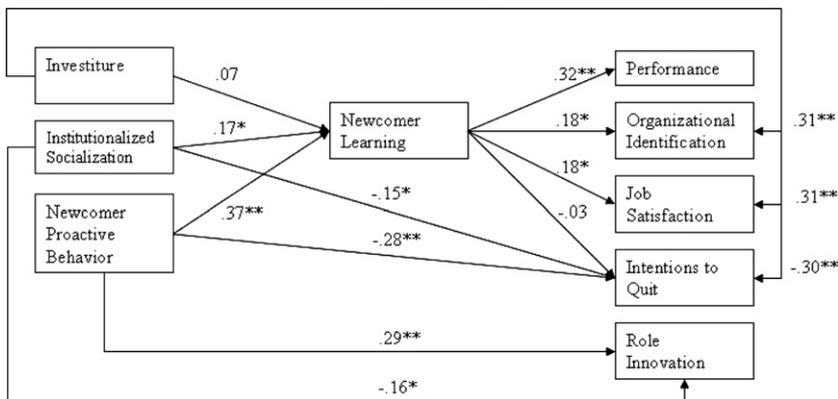


Fig. 2. Final model results. Note: To simplify presentation: (1) Paths from the control variables (positive affectivity and negative affectivity) are not shown. Positive affectivity and negative affectivity were associated only with organizational identification. (2) Only the significant paths from the process variables to the outcome variables are shown. Due to the relationship between job satisfaction and the other outcomes, we allowed the errors to covary between job satisfaction and three other outcomes (i.e., performance, organizational identification, and intentions to quit). $*p \leq .05$; $**p \leq .01$.

H4 held that the process of socialization would be directly associated with four of the five adjustment variables (i.e., performance, organizational identification, job satisfaction, and intentions to quit), while controlling for the indirect association via learning. We did not hypothesize, a priori, which processes would be linked to which adjustment variables. Five of the twelve possible associations were significant: investiture was positively associated with job satisfaction (.31, $p \leq .01$) and organizational identification (.31, $p \leq .01$), and negatively associated with intentions to quit ($-.30$, $p \leq .01$); institutionalized socialization was negatively associated with intentions to quit ($-.15$; $p \leq .05$); and proactive behavior was negatively associated with intentions to quit ($-.28$; $p \leq .01$). Note that the non-significant direct paths from the process variables to the adjustment variables (combined with the significant indirect paths via newcomer learning) indicate full mediation. In short, learning fully mediated the relationship between institutionalized socialization and performance, job satisfaction, and organizational identification as well as the relationship between proactive behavior and these three adjustment variables. On the other hand, investiture was directly related to job satisfaction, organizational identification, and intentions to quit whereas institutionalized socialization and proactive behavior were directly related to intentions to quit sans any indirect effect via newcomer learning. Thus, H4 was partially supported.

Finally, in support of H5, institutionalized socialization was negatively associated with role innovation (H5a: $-.16$, $p \leq .05$) whereas proactive behavior was positively associated with role innovation (H5b: $.29$, $p \leq .01$).

6. Discussion

Although previous research has examined how specific socialization tactics and proactive behaviors affect specific adjustment variables, no study to our knowledge has assessed how the socialization processes (i.e., socialization tactics and proactive behaviors) *jointly* affect both socialization content (newcomer learning) and newcomer adjustment. Thus, the purpose of the study was to examine a more comprehensive and holistic perspective on how socialization processes affect newcomer learning and adjustment as well as testing the substantive and symbolic role of the socialization process over and above socialization content.

With the exception of investiture, the socialization tactics were combined into the composite variable of institutionalized socialization. Consistent with H1a and 2, institutionalized socialization and proactive behavior at 4 months were each positively associated with learning at 7 months. Investiture was not positively associated with learning, providing no support for H1b. Consistent with H3a–c, learning at 7 months was positively associated with performance, job satisfaction, and organizational identification. However, inconsistent with H3d, learning was not associated with intentions to quit. In partial support of H4, the process of socialization was directly associated with job satisfaction, organizational identification, and intentions to quit, while controlling for the indirect association via learning. Indeed, the process components that were directly associated with these outcomes had no indirect effect via learning. Consistent with H5a, institutionalized socialization was negatively associated with role innovation whereas, consistent with H5b, proactive behavior was positively associated with role innovation.

These results suggest that perceived organization-driven socialization tactics and individual-driven proactive behavior are each associated with socialization content (learning).

However, proactive behavior was more strongly related to learning than were the socialization tactics. This is consistent with Morrison's (1995) finding that newcomers acquired more content through active rather than passive means. Considering the organization- and individual-driven processes jointly, perhaps a key, unacknowledged role of institutionalized socialization is that it not only imparts information in a relatively passive way (e.g., via a company orientation) but it may facilitate certain forms of proactivity (e.g., having a mentor and fellow learners to query, having structured activities to observe) (Ashforth et al., 2007; Gruman, Saks, & Zweig, 2006).

The results also provide evidence that *how* newcomers are socialized (process) has an impact on adjustment over and above *what* newcomers learn (content). Specifically, investiture was directly related to job satisfaction and organizational identification while investiture, institutionalized socialization, and proactive behavior were each directly related to intentions to quit. It thus appears that the affirmation of one's incoming identity (i.e., investiture) has particularly salutary effects on subsequent adjustment—independent of content. Similarly, institutionalized socialization and proactive behavior help the newcomer feel embedded in the organization, reducing intentions to quit—again, independent of content (cf. Allen, 2006). Further, we hypothesized and found that processes (i.e., institutionalized socialization and proactive behavior)—but not content—were associated with role innovation. In sum, socialization processes have both substantive and symbolic effects on newcomers' adjustment.

The value of the socialization process (while controlling for content) is important for the socialization literature. As mentioned, socialization scholars argue that learning plays an integral role, reducing uncertainty and increasing relevant knowledge. We complement this theoretical perspective, arguing (and finding) that the socialization process has symbolic as well as substantive value independent of newcomer learning—thus, finding a more active role for cognitive sensemaking (Saks & Ashforth, 1997a; cf. Pratt & Rafaeli, 2001).

6.1. Limitations and future research

Several limitations should be noted. First, our reliance on self-reports raises the issues of common method variance and the accuracy of respondents' perceptions. The use of separate 4- and 7-month questionnaires for the post-entry variables likely reduced method variance and the reliance on recall and consistency motifs. Moreover, as Bauer and Green (1994) note in the context of socialization research, “when individual perceptions and attitudes are determining employees' responses to work, self-reports should be a valid and useful source of data” (p. 22). Nonetheless, future research should supplement self-report data with alternative sources, such as managers, peers, and company documents (Bauer et al., 1998; Saks & Ashforth, 1997a).

Second, the sample is relatively homogeneous in that it is comprised of recent graduates of the same university who are generally in their early twenties. To be sure, our inclusion of two distinct types of graduates—business and engineering—introduced some diversity, and the graduates worked in a variety of occupations and industries. Nevertheless, the remaining similarities raise questions about the generalizability of our findings to other populations. For example, the salutary effects of investiture may not apply to settings with distinctive subcultures that practice divestiture, such as in the military. Future research should assess our arguments with diverse samples, such as blue collar workers, contingent workers, job changers, and expatriates (Ashforth et al., 2007; Bauer et al., 1998).

Third, socialization tactics and proactive behavior were treated as exogenous variables. Future research should explore the antecedents of each and factors that may moderate their impact on learning and adjustment (Ashford & Black, 1996; Ashforth et al., 2007). Because the tactics reflect an organization-driven process, it may appear that the work context influences them more than it does proactivity. However, it is likely that newcomers' propensity for proactivity is also strongly influenced by the context. For example, achievement-oriented cultures, climates for innovation, and workgroups that foster psychological safety may encourage newcomers to display initiative in learning about, adjusting to, and perhaps modifying the work environment (Edmondson, 2004; Kauffield, Jonas, Grote, Frey, & Frieling, 2004). Similarly, because proactivity reflects an individual-driven process, it may appear that individual differences influence it more than socialization tactics (Crant, 2000). However, it is also likely that newcomers' receptiveness to socialization tactics is affected by individual differences. For instance, Jones (1986) found that self-efficacy moderated the impact of institutionalized socialization such that individuals with low self-efficacy were less likely to role innovate.

Finally, the socialization tactics are currently somewhat of a black box in terms of the specific activities they entail. Thus, future research should examine how the tactics translate into newcomer learning and adjustment. For example, which social-psychological dynamics within the context of collective socialization foster learning and adjustment and which undermine them? How can divestiture be practiced so as to encourage openness to change but not resentment against the organization? And how should desired learning be chunked into developmental activities and content within sequential and fixed socialization?

In conclusion, this study has contributed to the socialization literature by examining a relatively comprehensive model of socialization that considered organization-driven socialization tactics and individual-driven proactive behaviors as a joint process. The results indicate that, while both socialization tactics and proactivity substantially predict learning, how newcomers are socialized has substantive and symbolic value over and above what they actually learn.

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