NEWCOMER AND ORGANIZATIONAL
SOCIALIZATION TACTICS: AN
INTERACTIONIST PERSPECTIVE

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During the past 15 years, organizational socialization research has focused on two issues. The first is the need for researchers to take an interactionist perspective on the process. The second has been both a conceptual and empirical concern with the pro-active socialization techniques employed by newcomers. The present article takes an interactionist perspective by presenting a model and propositions of how organization socialization tactics impact on and interact with newcomer pro-active socialization tactics to influence socialization outcomes.

Organizational socialization has been defined as the process by which an individual acquires the attitudes, behavior, and knowledge needed to participate as an organizational member (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). It is a process that involves both the organization and the employee—with an ultimate outcome being mutual acceptance (Wanous, 1980). Thus, the actions that each take to bring about organizational socialization are mutually interdependent (Reichers, 1987). The focus of this article is to first review newcomer pro-active socialization tactics and organizational socialization tactics and then put forth propositions about how these actions on both parties interact to influence the socialization process and outcomes.

The research on organizational socialization has evolved, particularly in the theoretical realm, over the last several decades (Bauer, Morrison, & Callister, 1998; Fisher, 1986), but there is one perspective that has not been adequately addressed—the interactionist perspective. Early work in the area of socialization focused primarily on how organizations socialized newcomers, i.e., emphasis was placed on what organizations did (Fisher, 1986;
Van Maanen, 1976; Wanous & Colella, 1989). In the late 1980s, several researchers argued that the socialization literature should take an interactionist perspective (Jones, 1983; Reichers, 1987; Schneider, 1983). These arguments helped to spur a flurry of research activity in the 1990s, which focused on the manner in which newcomers pro-actively behave to facilitate their own socialization process (e.g., Ashford & Taylor, 1990; Bauer et al., 1998). Thus, researchers have examined the theoretical underpinnings of socialization—both in content and process, and empirical studies have moved this work forward, but have examined them either primarily from the individual’s or the organization’s perspective. The interactionist perspective would seek to integrate these two areas by examining how newcomer’s attempts at self-socialization work in tandem with the organization’s attempts at socialization to influence socialization outcomes. Specifically, this article explores how the socialization tactics employed by the organization will impact on, and interact with the pro-active tactics used by newcomers to influence the socialization process. Before presenting this portion of the article, we present a brief review of the newcomer pro-active socialization tactics literature, followed by a brief review of Van Maanen and Schein’s (1979) model of organizational tactics.

NEWCOMER PRO-ACTIVE SOCIALIZATION TACTICS

During the last decade, there has been a fairly large number of studies which have empirically examined pro-active behaviors by newcomers, many of which focus on the information-seeking efforts in which newcomers engage (Bauer et al., 1998). We conducted computerized searches of psychology and organizational science literature to locate work that specifically examined newcomer pro-active socialization. A listing of these articles and the pro-active socialization tactics examined is presented in Table 1. Based on this review, we uncovered the following pro-active socialization tactics that newcomers may engage in and have been found to be related to the socialization process and/or its outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, turnover, performance): performance feedback seeking, information seeking from technical sources, information seeking from co-workers, information seeking from supervisors, relationship building with co-workers, relationship building with supervisors, informal mentorship, job change negotiation, positive framing, involvement in work-related activities, behavioral self-management, and observation/modeling.

Feedback and Information Seeking

There are several conceptualizations of the socialization process that focus on newcomers’ ability to acquire information. Louis’ (1980) newcomer sense-making model is one such theory. Also, Miller and Jablin’s (1991) model focuses on newcomers’ pro-active search for information in order to reduce
the uncertainty associated with organizational socialization. Most empirical research on pro-active socialization has focused on information-seeking behaviors. For example, Morrison (1993a) investigated several types of information that newcomers seek: referent, social, feedback, technical, normative information as it relates to the behavioral and attitudinal expectations of the organization. Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) reported that newcomers searched for information that included not only task-related, referent, and social information, but also organizational information about the company’s structure, procedures, products, performance, and power distributions. Morrison (1995) provided an integration of these frameworks by suggesting that there are seven primary types of information that organizational newcomers will seek during the socialization process: technical, referent, social, feedback, normative, organizational, and political.

The methods by which newcomers seek information have also been the subject of empirical investigation. Research has shown that organizational newcomers will vary their tactics based on the type of information they are trying to obtain (Bauer et al., 1998). Morrison (1995) found that newcomers would use tactics such as inquiry to obtain technical information, but use more indirect tactics for other types of information. In the same vein, supervisors, more than other sources, are relied upon for technical, referent, and feedback information, and peers more for social information (Bauer et al., 1998). Settoon and Adkins (1997) suggested that while newcomers will seek information from family and friends in addition to supervisors and co-workers, the information from supervisors and co-workers predicted socialization outcomes as their tenure in the organization increased. Although several studies have linked newcomers’ pro-active information-seeking behavior to important outcomes (e.g., Holder, 1996; Morrison, 1993b; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992), other studies have been inconclusive about the impact of pro-active information seeking (e.g., Ashford & Black, 1996; Bauer & Green, 1998; Kramer, Callister, & Turban, 1995; Morrison, 1993a). One of our arguments in the current article is that the type of socialization tactic employed by organizations may impact on the effectiveness of newcomer pro-active socialization behavior, and thus, explain some of the inconsistency in past research findings.

For the purposes of our analysis, we have distinguished four different information-seeking strategies, differentiated based on both content and source: feedback seeking, information seeking from technical sources, information seeking from co-workers, and information seeking from supervisors. We kept feedback seeking a separate category because feedback seeking is often a psychologically different process than asking for other less self-referent information (Ashford, 1986; Ashford & Cummings, 1983). For other types of information, we distinguish between technical, co-worker/peer, and supervisory sources. This distinction is often made in other studies. Also, as discussed later, the ease and effectiveness of seeking information from these different sources is proposed to vary as a function of organizational socialization tactics.
## TABLE 1
Summary (Sample) of Studies that Examined Individual Modes of Self-Socialization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Tactics</th>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
<th>Job</th>
<th>Study design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashford and Black (1996)</td>
<td>Relationship building, sensemaking, job change negotiation, framing</td>
<td>Job performance, job satisfaction, desire for control, domain knowledge</td>
<td>Engineering and management undergraduate students</td>
<td>Longitudinal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bauer and Green (1994)</td>
<td>Involvement in work-related activities</td>
<td>Accommodation, work outcome such as performance (i.e., research productivity), commitment</td>
<td>Faculty members and doctoral students</td>
<td>Longitudinal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bauer and Green (1998)</td>
<td>Task- and social-oriented information seeking</td>
<td>Accommodation ratings (role clarity, performance efficacy, feelings of acceptance by the manager) Socialization outcomes (performance, job satisfaction, commitment)</td>
<td>College graduates, their co-workers, managers</td>
<td>Longitudinal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black and Ashford (1995)</td>
<td>Self-change, job change</td>
<td>Modes of adjustment (satisfaction, commitment)</td>
<td>Undergraduate business and MBA students</td>
<td>Longitudinal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brett, Feldman, and Weingart (1990)</td>
<td>Feedback seeking from co-workers, supervisor (active discussion)</td>
<td>Feedback seeking, Adjustment</td>
<td>Consumer products employees</td>
<td>Longitudinal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chao et al. (1992)</td>
<td>Formal and informal mentorship (psychosocial and career-related functions)</td>
<td>Job satisfaction, organizational socialization, salary</td>
<td>Alumni</td>
<td>Cross-sectional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Outcome Measures</td>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Design</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fedor et al. (1992)</td>
<td>Feedback seeking—eliciting versus monitoring (indirect techniques)</td>
<td>Costs of feedback seeking</td>
<td>Helicopter pilots</td>
<td>Longitudinal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heimann and Pittenger (1996)</td>
<td>Formal mentorship work interaction with mentor closeness of relationship</td>
<td>Value of mentorship program, socialization, commitment</td>
<td>Faculty members</td>
<td>Cross-sectional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holder (1996)</td>
<td>Information-seeking strategies overt, indirect, and third party sources</td>
<td>Role ambiguity, role conflict, social costs of information seeking</td>
<td>Women in non-traditional careers</td>
<td>Cross-sectional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morrison (1995)</td>
<td>Inquiry or monitoring of technical, referent, appraisal, social, organizational, normative, or political information</td>
<td>Usefulness of information, how information is taken or received</td>
<td>MBA graduates</td>
<td>Cross-sectional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morrison (1993a)</td>
<td>Active and passive seeking technical information, performance feedback, normative information and social feedback, referent information, from peers, supervisors, and through observation</td>
<td>Acculturation, task mastery, role clarity, and social integration</td>
<td>Accountants</td>
<td>Longitudinal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Tactics</td>
<td>Dependent variables</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morrison (1993b)</td>
<td>Information seeking—technical, normative, referent information, performance, and social feedback</td>
<td>How information obtained</td>
<td>Accountants</td>
<td>Longitudinal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992)</td>
<td>Observation, objective referents, co-workers, experimentation, mentoring, supervisors</td>
<td>Job satisfaction, commitment, turnover, intentions to leave, adjustment to stress</td>
<td>Business and engineering students/graduates</td>
<td>Longitudinal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settoon and Adkins (1997)</td>
<td>Use of intra-organizational (supervisors, co-workers) and extra-organizational (family, friends) referents</td>
<td>Role ambiguity, role conflict, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to leave, self-rated performance</td>
<td>Mental health specialists</td>
<td>Longitudinal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith and Kozlowski (1994)</td>
<td>Social learning, infoseeking, inquiry, experimentation</td>
<td>Use of strategies</td>
<td>Newcomers in various organizations</td>
<td>Cross-sectional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Relationship Building

The informal relationships newcomers form with co-workers, supervisors, and mentors has also been an important means of successful socialization (Louis, 1980; Reichers, 1987). These relationships can help the socialization of newcomers by serving as a means of information, advice, social support, stress reduction, and/or skill and role behavior instruction (Louis, Posner, & Powell, 1983; Major, Kozlowski, Chao, & Gardner, 1995; Nelson & Quick, 1991; Reichers, 1987). Empirical research has indicated that newcomers' efforts to build relationships with both peers and supervisors is important to the socialization process (e.g., Ashford & Black, 1996; Settoon & Adkins, 1997).

Informal Mentor Relationships

Newcomers may also form relationships with other insiders who act as informal mentors (Chao, Walz, & Gardner, 1992). There is a great deal of research which points out the positive effects of mentoring on newcomer adjustment (e.g., Chatman, 1991; Dreher & Asch, 1990; Kram, 1985). Here, we only consider informal mentor relationships, or the initiation of such, as a pro-active tactic, because formal mentorship programs are instituted by the organization, not newcomers. In a study comparing protégés in formal and informal mentor relationships, Chao et al. (1992) found that those in informal relationships received more career-related support from their mentors and higher salaries than those in formal mentor relationships. Those in informal relationships reported many more favorable outcomes than those who were not mentored at all.

Job Change Negotiation

Job change negotiation has been another way that newcomers have been proposed to gain control and overcome uncertainty during socialization (Ashford & Black, 1996; Dawis & Lofquist, 1978; Nicholson, 1984). This pro-active behavior involves newcomers attempting to change their job duties or the manner and means by which they carry out their jobs. For example, newcomers may focus on the tasks they perform well or on tasks that provide more developmental opportunities. Recent empirical work (Ashford & Black, 1996) has found equivocal results regarding the impact of this tactic on newcomer performance and job satisfaction.

Positive Framing

Positive framing has also been demonstrated to be a pro-active tactic used by individuals to adapt to new, uncertain, or stressful situations (Ashford & Black, 1996). Positive framing can be viewed as a form of cognitive self-management whereby individuals consciously control how they frame various
situations so as to increase their self-confidence and self-efficacy (Ashford & Black, 1996). Ashford and Black (1996) found positive framing to be related to both newcomer performance and job satisfaction.

**Involvement in Work-Related Activities**

Involvement in work activities is defined as newcomers’ pro-active involvement in “extra-curricular” work-related activities. These are activities that, while work-related, are not part of the newcomer's defined role behaviors. An example of this pro-active socialization technique is provided by Bauer and Green (1994) who found that graduate students’ “professional involvement” (measured by the degree that they engaged in various extra-role activities such as attending non-mandatory seminars and social events) was related to their performance, role ambiguity, acceptance, and commitment.

**Behavioral Self-Management**

Saks and Ashforth (1996) examined the effectiveness of behavioral self-management techniques as a form of pro-active newcomer socialization. Specifically, they considered self-observation, goal setting, self-reward and punishment, and rehearsal. While their results were mixed, they did find that such behavioral management techniques helped reduce early anxiety. Behavioral self-management may be any type of behavior or strategy that newcomers employ to improve their own performance and/or learning.

**Observation/Modeling**

Social learning theory posits that one of the primary ways in which people learn, a primary task of socialization, is through the observation and modeling of the behavior of appropriate others (Bandura, 1971). Several scholars have posited that observation and modeling are an important way in which newcomers learn during socialization (Miller & Jablin, 1991; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Smith & Kozlowski, 1994; Weiss, 1978). Indeed, Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) found that observation was the most common way that newcomers reported learning on the job.

In summary, there has been a great deal of recent research which has examined the behaviors that newcomers use to pro-actively facilitate their own socialization and the effectiveness of those behaviors (or cognitions) in doing so. However, empirical research, where there exists a substantial body, indicates conflicting and/or equivocal results. In other words, pro-active socialization behavior is not always found to be related to the socialization outcomes as predicted. Our argument here is that the effectiveness of these tactics is also a function of the tactics used by the organization. Thus, we now turn to a discussion of organization socialization tactics.
ORGANIZATION SOCIALIZATION TACTICS

Most research on organization socialization tactics has been based on Van Maanen and Schein’s (1979) model developed to predict the role orientation which would be adopted by newcomers. Essentially, this model posits that the type of tactics employed by organizations will influence whether newcomers adopt a custodial, status quo, or innovative role response. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) proposed six tactics that organizations can use to structure the socialization experience of employees. Each of the six socialization tactics consists of a bipolar continuum where one end represents institutionalized socialization and the other represents individual socialization (Jones, 1986).

The tactic of collective (vs. individual) socialization refers to the grouping of organizational newcomers and putting them through a common set of experiences, rather than providing each newcomer with a set of unique experiences. Formal (vs. informal) socialization focuses on segregating organizational newcomers from other organizational members during a defined socialization period, as opposed to integrating newcomers with more experienced organizational members. Sequential (vs. random) socialization provides a fixed sequence of socialization steps that leads to the assumption of the new organizational/job role, as opposed to random socialization, which is characterized by ambiguous and changing sequences of events. Fixed (vs. variable) socialization provides an established timetable for the initial socialization and integration process, whereas a variable socialization tactic provides no set timetable for the unfolding of the process. Serial (vs. disjunctive) socialization processes are characterized by newcomers being socialized by an experienced member of the organization (i.e., a mentor), whereas disjunctive processes do not utilize specific role models. Investiture (vs. divestiture) socialization focuses on validation of the incoming identity and personal characteristics of the newcomer, rather than focusing on stripping these characteristics away (often in a demoralizing way).

Rather than treat each dimension separately, we adopt Jones’ (1986) three-dimensional grouping based on Van Maanen and Schein’s (1979) typology and later factor analysis findings. Collective–individual and formal–informal techniques are grouped together to form a context-related tactic. Collective/formal represent the institutional end of the continuum. Sequential–random and fixed–variable tactics are linked together to comprise a content-related tactic. Sequential/fixed represent the institutional end of the continuum. Finally, serial–disjunctive and divestiture–investiture are combined to form a social-related socialization tactic. Serial/investiture represent the institutional end of the continuum. We classify investiture as an institutional tactic based on the findings of Allen and Meyer (1990) and Jones (1986).

Organizations that use more institutionalized tactics—by formally orienting newcomers in groups, providing a fixed career sequence, providing insider role models for newcomers, and providing interpersonal support and acceptance to newcomers—are thought to yield more compliant employees who understand and accept organizational values. Individualized tactics, which involve individual orientation, more variable career progression, few role models, and
pressure newcomers to change their self-identities are thought to yield more innovative employees who are less accepting of the status quo (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Jones, 1986; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Chao et al. (1994) propose that other sources of variance in the socialization process should also be addressed. We are suggesting that one source of variance is the newcomer's attempts at self-socialization. In other words, socialization outcomes will be a function of the interaction between newcomer's pro-active socialization tactics and the socialization tactics employed by the organization. We now turn to a discussion of our model of how newcomer and organization socialization tactics may interact to influence socialization outcomes.

**NEWCOMER–ORGANIZATION TACTIC INTERACTION MODEL**

Fig. 1 presents a schematic model of the ideas presented in this article. Before examining the model in more detail, the assumptions and boundary conditions of the model need to be discussed. First, we assume that newcomers are somewhat stable in their employment of various pro-active socialization tactics due to particular learning or interpersonal preferences on the part of the newcomer (Louis, 1980). Indeed, what little research that has focused on why newcomers engage in various pro-active behaviors has focused on stable personality traits. For example, Ashford and Cummings (1985) found a relationship between individuals' tolerance for ambiguity and pro-active feedback-seeking behavior. Reichers (1987) suggested that individual difference variables such as tolerance for ambiguity, field dependence, and need for affiliation would be related to higher incidences of newcomer pro-active behaviors. Ashford and Black (1996) found that individuals with a high desire for control tended to engage in more information seeking, relationship building with co-workers, job change negotiations, and positive framing. Major and Kozlowski (1997) studied the role of self-efficacy in information-seeking behaviors exhibited by newcomers. Thus, since newcomer pro-activity is linked with stable traits, it is unlikely that newcomers will immediately change their own tactics when those tactics fail to achieve desired results. However, we also propose below that the tactics used by the organization will influence the likelihood of newcomers engaging in various pro-active tactics, no matter what their personal propensity is.

Although newcomers may be fairly stable and persistent in their use of various pro-active tactics, it is unreasonable to assume that they would persist in the long-term in using the same tactics if they resulted in negative feedback or sanctions from the organization. Thus, one boundary condition of this article is that it focuses on early socialization and does not consider long-term effects of the use of ineffective socialization tactics. It is reasonable to focus solely on early socialization since research has demonstrated that the dynamics which occur during the first months of socialization can have long reaching effects (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Bauer et al., 1998; Engle & Lord, 1997; Liden, Wayne,
Yet, it is important to note here that future work in this area should also focus on the long-term process of how newcomers learn to adjust their pro-active tactics to better use in a particular organizational environment.

A second boundary condition of this model is that we conceptualize the notion of socialization outcomes broadly. The socialization literature has examined many possible outcomes, and it not our intent to introduce new outcomes here. Neither is it our intent to make predictions about certain, specific outcomes. The socialization outcomes that have been traditionally studied in the literature have focused on attitudinal or performance-based measures, such as job satisfaction, job performance, learning, organizational commitment, stress, intentions to leave, and actual turnover (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Bauer et al., 1998; Fisher, 1986; Wanous, 1980; Wanous & Colella, 1989) as the determinants of effective socialization. Others have also focused on the newcomer’s perceived level of social integration (Morrison, 1993a; Wanous, 1980) (e.g., employee alienation, mutual acceptance, integration) as well as their decision to participate in the workplace (March & Simon, 1958). These variables may be seen as antecedents to the traditional attitudinal variables, as well as performance-based measures that are often used to determine the effectiveness of organizational socialization tactics. Thus, when we refer to “socialization outcomes” or the “effectiveness of socialization,” we are referring to any or all of the outcomes listed in Fig. 1.

Figure 1. Model of Organizational Socialization Tactics on the Effectiveness of Newcomer Pro-Active Tactics.
The most important section of our model is that which illustrates how organizational tactics will (1) impact on the likelihood that newcomers will use various tactics; and (2) moderate the relationship between newcomer tactics and socialization outcomes. As depicted in Fig. 1, we argue that the two types of tactics work together through two mechanisms. First, organization tactics can impact on the likelihood that a newcomer can effectively execute a particular tactic. For example, the organizational context can prevent a newcomer who is trying to seek performance feedback from actually obtaining any information. Second, organization tactics can impact on how effective a tactic actually is when employed by the newcomer. For example, a newcomer may seek feedback, actually obtain it, but is perceived poorly for doing so or obtains inaccurate information. In this case, the newcomer sought feedback, obtained it, but the behavior is not effective due to the organizational context. The next section of the article focuses on these relationships and presents specific propositions.

NEWCOMER–ORGANIZATION TACTIC INTERACTIONS: SOME PROPOSITIONS

In order to clarify the following presentation, we concentrate on how each general category of organization tactics (context, content, and social aspects) will impact on (1) the likelihood that various newcomer tactics can be enacted; and (2) the likelihood that the newcomer tactic will be successful.

Context-Related Organizational Tactics

The institutional context of organizational socialization is typically characterized by socialization processes that are formal and collective (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). In this context, newcomers are usually provided with orientation in a group setting, separated from current employees, and provided with more structured formal experiences. Newcomers are not likely to have many interactions with experienced co-workers or even supervisors. In contrast, socialization contexts that are more individually oriented offer informal learning experiences that are often ad hoc, and individuals are socialized separately (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

When the context of organizational socialization is institutionalized, newcomers will be unlikely to interact with experienced co-workers, supervisors, and potential mentors, indeed, most contact will be with other newcomers. Therefore, their ability to seek information from and build relationships with these sources will be seriously curtailed. Also, due to the structured nature of the entry experience, where activities and work are specifically defined, newcomers will be less likely to be able to engage in job change negotiations or involve themselves in extra work-related activities. There is nothing inherent about an institutional context that would prevent newcomers from engaging in feedback seeking (they would have a large normative comparison group of
other newcomers), positive framing, behavioral self-management, or observation modeling. Furthermore, there is nothing inherent about individualized contextual tactics that would prohibit newcomers from engaging in any proactive socialization tactic. Thus, we propose:

**Proposition 1a.** When the context of organizational socialization is institutionalized (collective and formal), newcomers will be less likely to engage in the following proactive individual socialization tactics: information seeking from co-workers and supervisors, informal mentorship, job change negotiation, and extra work-related activities.

It can be argued that, overall, newcomer proactive socialization tactics would be more necessary in an individual contextual socialization environment than in an institutionalized environment. Because socialization experiences are structured and uniformly applied to all newcomers in an institutional context, those tactics that newcomers are able to use are likely to matter less, then when the newcomer is not provided with specific socialization experiences, which is the case with individual contexts. In other words, because newcomers in individual contexts are not provided with specific socialization experiences, anything that they can do to facilitate their own socialization should have a bigger effect than if they were provided with lock-step socialization experiences. Thus, we propose:

**Proposition 1b.** All newcomer proactive socialization tactics should be more strongly and positively related to socialization outcomes when the context of organization tactics are individualized as opposed to when they are institutionalized.

Furthermore, some socialization experiences may actually be ineffective in institutionalized contexts. Often, newcomers are put through institutionalized socialization contexts so that they form an “esprit de corps” among themselves. This is why this tactic is so common in military and police organizations (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Relationship building with other newcomers may provide an important opportunity to create a support network that may be essential to the success of the new employees as they progress in the organization (Chatman, 1991). Thus, any type of proactive behavior that would cause them to be perceived negatively by other newcomers could actually be detrimental to long-term socialization. Job change negotiations that could be perceived by other newcomers as breaking equity or procedural justice rules would be one such tactic (Greenberg, 1990).

Another newcomer tactic that may interact negatively with institutional contexts is observation/modeling. It is generally argued that the successful impact of modeling on individual performance outcomes depends on people choosing a successful model (Weiss, 1978). Because newcomers in an institutional context may choose other newcomers as models, they may learn behaviors that are idiosyncratic to the model but not necessarily rewarded by the organization. This is less of a problem if newcomers can
choose co-workers or supervisors as models because the newcomer is also likely to observe how that model has been rewarded by the organization over a period of time (Smith & Kozlowski, 1994). Consequently, newcomers would be less likely to choose experienced co-worker or supervisor models who did not behave in a manner rewarded by the organization (Weiss, 1978). However, experienced co-worker and supervisor models are less available to newcomers in an institutionalized context.

Proposition 1b predicted that overall, pro-active socialization tactics would be less effective, but still positively related to socialization outcomes. Given the above discussion, we add the caveat that some newcomer tactics may actually be negatively related to outcomes. We propose:

Proposition 1c. When the context of organizational socialization is institutionalized (collective and formal), the following newcomer pro-active socialization tactics of job change negotiation and observation/modeling will be negatively related to socialization outcomes.

Content-Related Organizational Tactics

Institutionalized content tactics (sequential and fixed) are characterized by having newcomers move through a specific order of assignments or positions according to a set timetable, i.e., there is a specific set of socialization steps which occur at specific intervals (Black & Ashford, 1995). Individualized content tactics (random and variable) are characterized by having no set pattern of positions or timetables for newcomers to follow as they become socialized. Thus, the content dimension of organizational socialization tactics varies the degree of ambiguity faced by newcomers (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Baker, 1995).

We argue that the content of organizational socialization tactics will influence the likelihood of four types of pro-active behaviors: feedback seeking, information seeking from supervisors, information seeking from experienced co-workers, and job change negotiation. First, feedback-seeking behavior (Ashford, 1986; Fedor, Rensvold, & Adams, 1992) and other information-seeking behavior (e.g., Morrison, 1993a,b) are more likely to be employed when newcomers face an ambiguous and uncertain socialization environment where expectations, role requirements, and progress criteria are unclear. Thus, when the content of socialization is individualized (i.e., random and variable), and newcomers face a more uncertain course of progression (Jones, 1986), it would be expected that they would engage in more feedback- and information-seeking behaviors than when the content of socialization was more institutionalized (i.e., sequential and fixed).

Second, empirical research examining the effects of organizational socialization tactics on newcomers’ role orientation has consistently found that sequential and fixed tactics are negatively related to role innovation (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Ashforth & Saks, 1995; Baker, 1995; Black, 1992; Black & Ashford, 1995; Jones, 1986). Because common measures of role innovation (Jones, 1986; West,
1987), in part, assess a newcomer’s attempts at changing his or her job duties, one can extrapolate to say that newcomers are less likely to engage in job change negotiations when the content of socialization is institutionalized. Jones (1986) suggests that the reason for this is because newcomers are unwilling to “rock the boat” if their progression in the organization has already been determined. Thus, we propose:

**Proposition 2a.** When the content of organizational socialization is institutionalized (sequential and fixed), newcomers will be less likely to engage in the following pro-active individual socialization tactics: feedback seeking, information seeking from co-workers and supervisors, and job change negotiation.

In terms of the moderating role of socialization content tactics on the effectiveness of various pro-active tactics, there is no reason to believe that those tactics influencing the performance of newcomers (i.e., feedback seeking, information seeking, behavioral self-management, and observation/modeling) would be more or less effective under institutionalized or individualized content scenarios. Anything that could help a newcomer perform better in either case should be positively related to socialization outcomes. However, because individualized content allows for variability in the socialization and career paths of newcomers, the social guidance, career support, and sponsorship gained from informal networks and mentors (e.g., Chao et al., 1992) may play a more important role than when the newcomers’ progression is more institutionalized. Furthermore, any activities that give the newcomer breadth of experience or exposure, such as engagement in extra work activities, should also be more effective when content tactics are individualized as opposed to institutionalized. Thus, we propose:

**Proposition 2b.** Relationship building with co-workers and supervisors, forming informal mentor relationships and involvement in extra work activities, should be more strongly and positively related to socialization outcomes when the content of organization tactics are individualized as opposed to when they are institutionalized.

**Social-Related Organizational Tactics**

Finally, the last two categorizations (serial vs. disjunctive and investiture vs. divestiture) of socialization tactics developed by Van Maanen and Schein (1979) refer to the social or interpersonal aspects of organizational socialization. On the institutional side of this continuum are serial tactics whereby newcomers are provided with mentors or more experienced job incumbents to serve as role models. On the individualized side are disjunctive tactics where newcomers do not have access to prior job incumbents or role models. At the institutionalized end of the continuum, investiture tactics suggest to the newcomer that he or she is valued and the organization accepts his or her identity. Individualized divestiture tactics communicate to newcomers that
their previous identity is not accepted and that they must change to fit the organization. The above tactics vary primarily along the dimension of whether the newcomer has social support or not.

Given that individualized social/interpersonal tactics (particularly divestiture) can be personally threatening to newcomers, they may be more likely to avoid seeking feedback in this instance because it would be too costly to do so (Ashford, 1986; Ashford & Cummings, 1983). Indeed, one of the primary deterrents to feedback-seeking behavior is ego-defensiveness whereby people avoid looking for information about themselves that may be negative (Ashford, 1986). Newcomers in the individualized scenario may also avoid requesting information from co-workers and supervisors for the same reasons. The nature of the disjunctive experience would also deter newcomers from actively building relationships with co-workers and supervisors because the organization is consciously demonstrating a lack of social support for these newcomers. It is difficult to attempt to form relationships with others that are acting as though one is not accepted by the group. In contrast, investiture tactics, which serve to make newcomers feel valued and welcomed, should explicitly lead to such pro-active bonding (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

On the other hand, due to the nature of the serial vs. disjunctive tactic, it is also expected that newcomers in the individualized scenario would be more likely to form informal mentor relationships and less likely to engage in observation and modeling. Those in disjunctive situations are expected to be more likely to form informal mentor relationships because they have not received a formal mentor or role model as have newcomers in a serial situation. Also, they would be less likely to engage in observation/modeling because there is less likely to be an appropriate role model present.

The effects of these socialization tactics on job change negotiation are more difficult to predict. In fact, there has been debate in the literature over this issue (see Jones, 1986). Earlier, it was noted that job change negotiation could be thought of as one aspect of role innovation. In that case, arguments have been made that disjunctive tactics should lead to more innovation (or job change negotiation) because they cause newcomers to excel in their roles (i.e. “I’ll show them!”) (Jones, 1986) or they should lead to more passive responses (i.e., less job change negotiation) because newcomers are essentially broken down (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Empirical research on this issue has not solved the debate, thus, we do not put forth a specific proposition.

In summary, we propose:

**Proposition 3a.** When the social aspects of organizational tactics are institutionalized (serial and investiture), newcomers will be less likely to form informal mentor relationships. When the social aspects of organizational tactics are individualized (disjunctive and divestiture), newcomers will be less likely to engage in the following pro-active socialization tactics: performance feedback seeking, information seeking from co-workers and supervisors, relationship building with co-workers and supervisors, and observation/modeling.
In terms of the effectiveness of various pro-active tactics, the social tactics are expected to moderate relationships between information seeking from co-workers and supervisors, positive framing, informal mentor relationships, behavioral self-management, and observation/modeling. The individualized aspects of social tactics (disjunctive and divestiture) should lead to stronger relationships between information seeking, positive framing, and informal mentor relationships and socialization outcomes than institutionalized social tactics. On the other hand, institutionalized social tactics should lead to stronger effects for observation/modeling.

First, under disjunctive tactics, newcomers are not given supervision or help from an immediate predecessor (there may not even be one) or mentor. Thus, their willingness to seek out information from other co-workers and supervisors would be more important to their socialization and learning than if they did have such a role model because they lack the information that such a role model would provide. Second, along the same line of reasoning, since they do not have a formal mentor, any informal mentor would be even more important to their effective socialization (Chao et al., 1992). Forming informal mentor relationships are also likely to be very important for newcomers subject to divestiture tactics, since in this case, the mentor would be needed to lessen the stress caused by divestiture tactics. Therefore, under individualized social tactics, both the career-related and psychosocial functions of informal mentors are particularly important (Kram, 1985).

Third, positive framing should be more important when divestiture tactics are employed because newcomers need to interpret the organization's disconfirming treatment of them as a “rite of passage” (Wanous, 1980), otherwise, they would be likely to hold and maintain negative feelings toward the organization. Such active positive framing would not be as necessary under investiture tactics where newcomers are treated in an accepting and supportive manner.

Finally, observation/modeling is expected to be more effective under institutionalized social tactics (serial and investiture) because newcomers are explicitly provided with acceptable role models. Under more individualized social settings, newcomers may choose inappropriate role models or model divestiture type behaviors, which are not appropriate given the newcomer's role. In summary, we propose:

**Proposition 3b.** Information seeking from co-workers and supervisors, forming informal mentor relationships, and positive framing should be more strongly and positively related to socialization outcomes when the social/interpersonal aspects of organization tactics are individualized as opposed to when they are institutionalized. Observation/modeling should be more strongly and positively related to socialization outcomes when the social/interpersonal aspects of organization tactics are institutionalized as opposed to when they are individualized.
SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In the most recent and comprehensive review of the organizational socialization literature, Bauer et al. (1998) suggest that the effectiveness of newcomer pro-active socialization tactics (particularly various types of information seeking) be studied as a function of other variables, such as organizational tactics. This article addresses this issue and is meant to provide conceptual direction for future empirical work. We essentially argue that organizational tactics both impact the likelihood that newcomers engage in various pro-active tactics and that they moderate the effectiveness of pro-active tactics that do occur. Exact relationships are expected to vary as a function of the organizational tactic and specific newcomer pro-active tactics. We provided specific research propositions concerning these relationships.

The past 10 years of socialization research have focused heavily on newcomers as being pro-active in their new environments, thus, extending past research that tended to focus only on what organizations did to newcomers during socialization (Bauer et al., 1998). However, calls for an interactionist perspective of socialization which surfaced during the 1980s (e.g., Jones, 1983; Reichers, 1987; Schneider, 1983) have still not received a great deal of empirical attention. Hopefully, this article will stimulate research that will allow for closer examination of these issues.

Another way in which this article can guide future research is to form the basis for examining issues of fit in the context of organizational and newcomer preferences for specific socialization tactics. Organizational fit is usually conceptualized in terms of values fit or skills and abilities versus needs fit (Kristof, 1996). Here, we suggest that newcomers may enter an organization with some predisposition toward engaging in certain socialization tactics that will be either effective or ineffective depending on the organizational tactics. For example, newcomers who seek to control uncertainty by seeking information from supervisors and co-workers would be a poor fit in organizations where newcomers have little individual access to supervisors or more experienced co-workers (e.g., a collective tactic). Newcomers may also experience frustration because organizational tactics prevent them from engaging in the behaviors that they prefer to use to learn the job and reduce uncertainty. Research on this issue would add to our understanding of the processes that occur early in newcomers’ socialization experiences that shape their perceptions of fit with the organization and the resulting decision to stay and participate.

The current article is bound to the time period of early socialization. A logical extension of this work would be to examine these effects over time. Can newcomers self-correct their own pro-active tactics to make the most out of those being employed by the organization? What influences this self-correction? Are some scenarios easier to correct than others? Future research that addresses these issues and extends the current model across time is certainly warranted.

Finally, this article only concerned a certain set of newcomer pro-active socialization tactics, based on our review of literature specifically addres-
singing this issue. However, other forms of pro-active socialization are also likely to be employed. One such category of behaviors that warrants attention is the impression management techniques employed by new-comers. This article was also limited to discussing socialization context in terms of Van Maanen and Schein’s (1979) tactical dimensions. This model can be extended to include other ways of describing organizational socialization contexts. For example, the political context of the organization may influence which self-socialization tactics are likely to provide new-comers with social currency and political leverage, in addition to providing them traditional job-based information and performance outcomes (Ashford & Northcraft, 1992; Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1986; Morrison & Bies, 1991; Wanous, 1989).

The practical implications of this article are significant. At one level, we suggest that organizations, by the use of certain socialization tactics, can hurt the chances of newcomers becoming effectively socialized because they either squelch newcomers’ attempts to engage in various pro-active tactics or because they hinder the effectiveness of various tactics. Specifically, we suggest scenarios in which organization tactics may actually prohibit new-comers from using pro-active tactics that would be most useful. For example, in Proposition 3b, we suggest that building informal mentor relationships would be most helpful for newcomers when the social aspects of socialization are individualized. In other words, informal mentors will be most helpful when formal mentors are not available and newcomers are receiving negative and stressful information from those they work with. Yet, we also suggest in Proposition 3a that newcomers will be unlikely to pro-actively form informal mentor relationships under these organizational tactics. Thus, in this scenario, organizations may be preventing newcomers from engaging in pro-active tactics that would be most effective. Thus, this research has implications for ways in which organizations can align their own socialization tactics with newcomer tactics to most quickly and effectively integrate newcomers into the organization.

In conclusion, we proposed that organizational socialization tactics can impact on the likelihood that newcomers can or will employ various pro-active socialization techniques. Furthermore, organizational tactics can moderate the effectiveness of various newcomer tactics. We have put forth specific propositions that we hope will guide future research to simultaneously consider newcomer and organizational behavior during socialization.

REFERENCES


