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THE EMPLOYEE WHO KNEW TOO MUCH?: AN EXAMINATION OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN PRIOR WORK EXPERIENCE, INFORMATION SEEKING, AND THE SOCIALIZATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL NEWCOMERS

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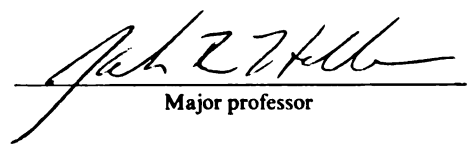

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By

Michael J. Wesson

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ABSTRACT

THE EMPLOYEE WHO KNEW TOO MUCH?: AN EXAMINATION OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN PRIOR WORK EXPERIENCE, INFORMATION SEEKING, AND THE SOCIALIZATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL NEWCOMERS

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Recent research claims both positive and negative effects of prior work experience on the organizational newcomer. Although consistent and positive relationships have been found between prior work experience and job performance, some theoretical and empirical research would also lead us to believe that work experience may have a negative effect on the organizational socialization of these newcomers. This paper attempts to explicate these seemingly contradictory findings by examining the effects of prior work experience on the information seeking behaviors and socialization of organizational newcomers in more detail. Prior work experience at the organizational, role, and task levels and their effects on the organizational socialization and task performance of 423 organizational newcomers were examined using a longitudinally designed study. Prior work experience did indeed have both positive and deleterious consequences for organizational newcomers. Prior organizational level work experience hindered both self and supervisor rated organizational goal and value socialization while prior task experience did lead to higher short-term performance. Prior work experience was also found to lead to less newcomer information seeking which was found to be a partial reason for its negative consequences on socialization.

Socialization was found to have effects on the more traditional work outcome measures such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions.

Dedicated to my wife, Liesl.

Her support throughout this process has been unwavering and more appreciated than she will ever know. I love her more than words can say.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A sincere appreciation goes out to my dissertation committee: John Hollenbeck (chair), Alison Barber, Neal Schmitt, and Vernon Miller. Their help and comments have been invaluable.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> "She had nothing to unlearn as an actress because she had never acted before. She was under my control"
>
> *Alfred Hitchcock on selecting Tippi Hedren to star in "The Birds (1963)"*

> "It seemed like a fascinating new possibility, but later I thought that I really found it so new and difficult – I'd had no acting experience at all – that I overcompensated by working too hard, by sometimes being too accommodating to the crueler demands of the business of movie-making"
>
> *Tippi Hedren on being selected by Alfred Hitchcock to star in "The Birds (1963)" (Spoto, 1983)*

One of the most consistent findings in organizational psychology has been the notion of person-environment fit. When the qualities and attributes of an individual match the environment they are placed in, good things generally happen. From an organizational viewpoint, two major types of person-environment fit have found support in the literature: person-organization fit and person-job fit. Person-job fit occurs when an employee's knowledge, skills, and abilities match the roles and demands of their job (Kristof, 1996). Person-organization fit occurs when an individual's personality and values match the culture of the organization they work for. In general, when such matches take place, employees are more satisfied with and committed to their organization (Chatman, 1991; Kristof, 1996; Schneider, 1987). Achieving these types of fit have been the underlying goals of both socialization and selection research. Selection researchers have focused almost solely on person-job fit by trying to predict which job applicants are more likely to match the demands of the

job thus providing higher levels of job performance. (Schmitt & Chan, 1998). Socialization has taken more of a person-organization fit perspective in focusing on how employees adjust or adapt to the culture of their new organization or group once the employee has been hired. For the most part, these two streams of research have progressed separately, neither taking into account that what might be good for one, might not be good for the other.

A prime example of this divergence revolves around the use of prior work experience to help explain, predict, and control the behavior of organizational newcomers. Work experience is a construct that has been largely misunderstood and misused by prior researchers (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998; Quinones, Ford & Teachout, 1995). From a selection standpoint, prior research on work experience tells us that there are widely varying but consistently positive relationships between work experience and job performance (Quinones et al., 1995). However, although much less established and clear, recent research on work experience and socialization outcomes would lead us to believe that prior work experience might actually hinder a newcomers' ability to adapt to a new organization (Adkins, 1995; Morrison & Brantner, 1992). If both of these findings are indeed true, then no theory currently exists to help explain the discrepancies as to why we might find these seemingly contradictory conclusions. In addition, if companies do indeed use prior experience as a predictor during selection, which it is obvious many companies do, it is important to understand if and when the positive effects of experience on job performance might be ameliorated by negative effects on socialization outcomes. Since the relationship

between work experience and performance is well established (e.g. meta-analyses by Mumford, Stokes & Owens, 1990; Quinones et al. 1995), this paper attempts to explain the work experience phenomenon both through the use of methodological explanations for prior findings and a theory of how work experience affects socialization through the use (or non-use) of proactive socialization behaviors.

It is important to note that socialization research has changed a tremendous amount over the last decade. This change accompanies the fact that organizations are changing both their hiring practices and the way they socialize employees at a rapid pace. In fact, organizations' outlooks on socialization are changing altogether. Schein (1996) when talking about the issues involving the studies of careers stated,

> "[In the future] Management and employee development will become much more a process of initial selection based on competency profiles that will have been built up from actual work histories. Socialization and training will fall much more on the individual and will be designed as learning exercises rather than teaching or training programs. Organizational culture will be acquired by self-socialization, observation, mentoring, and coaching."

Recognizing these future trends and the changes in corporations, the working environment and others, there has been a recent paradigm shift in much of the socialization literature toward focusing attention on how organizational newcomers affect their own adjustment to organizations (Ashford & Black, 1996; Major, Kozlowski, Chao, & Gardner, 1995; Morrison, 1993a,b). Past socialization research has focused on a number of different dimensions of socialization such as the stages an individual goes through as they cross organizational boundaries, socialization tactics used by organizations, and the content of socialization (Fisher, 1986; Morrison, 1993

a,b; Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein & Gardner, 1994; Wanous, 1992). Most of these approaches have focused on the organization's attempts to process individuals as if they were simple bystanders in the process (Morrison, 1993a). Recent empirical and theoretical research in the area of socialization has focused on the socializing individual and the effects these individuals can have on various socialization processes (Adkins, 1995; Ashford, 1986; Ashford & Black, 1996; Ashford & Taylor, 1990; Jones, 1986; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 1993a,b; Morrison & Brantner, 1992; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992, 1993; Reichers, 1977; Saks, 1995). These studies and others have had a tremendous impact on the way in which we currently view socialization. As the stereotypic notion of the one-organization career continues to fade, organizations are likely to place less emphasis on centralized socialization and training programs, and more on creating task-centered opportunities for learning (Schein, 1996). Thus, the utility of proactive socialization research should become increasingly noticeable to researchers, newcomers and organizations alike.

Although the need for research on outcomes and processes in proactive socialization research is far from over, two recent reviews of the socialization literature have noted the lack of research and need to further investigate the antecedents of proactive socialization behavior (Bauer, Morrison & Callister, 1998; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Although some dispositional constructs have been examined, many of the factors that are likely to lead to differences in proactive socialization behavior have not been investigated. Some of the reasons for this are rooted in the difficulty of collecting data on variables that might affect proactive behaviors.

Partially due to the samples being used to conduct research, previous dispositional and even contextual antecedent research has been limited by the fact that almost all information seeking behavior research has been conducted with the tacit assumption that all individuals enter the organization with the same level of information and uncertainty. This is clearly not the case, as even relatively homogeneous samples such as college graduates enter an organization with prior assumptions about many things (Cable, Aiman-Smith, Mulvey & Edwards, 2000). This paper proposes and stresses that not all individuals enter organizations with the same perceptions or level of knowledge of the organization. Specifically, it considers for the first time, how various types of prior work experiences affect proactive socialization behaviors. Much of the early socialization theoretical work focused on the stages of organizational socialization. Invariably, the majority of these authors began their process with a stage known as anticipatory socialization (Brief, Aldag, Van Sell, & Melone, 1979; Feldman, 1976, 1981; Louis, 1980; Porter, Lawler & Hackman, 1975). Van Mannen (1976, p. 81) defined anticipatory socialization as the "degree to which an individual is prepared – prior to entry – to occupy organizational positions". Although this definition seems to indicate that the individual is placed in a passive role, it is the individual who forms expectations about both the job and the organization both in a passive and proactive way. Many of these perceptions are formed well before they enter the organization. In fact, it is more than likely that most new hires have already solidified ideas and preconceptions about the work environment well before they enter a new organization.

Theoretical arguments have been made that would substantiate the examination of the effect of prior work experience on socialization processes and newcomer adaptation (Adkins, 1995; Morrison & Brantner, 1992). However, much in the same vein as all selection research dealing with work experience and job performance, these studies have hypothesized positive relationships between prior work experience and newcomer adaptation. Past empirical examinations of prior work experience and socialization outcomes have not produced these positive results (Adkins, 1995; Morrison & Brantner, 1992). Due to methodological limitations in these studies, it is difficult to tell just what the relationship between prior work experience and the socialization of newcomers actually is. This proposal provides theoretical and methodological arguments that attempt to show why previous studies may have failed to find the hypothesized results for which they were looking. Hypotheses are developed and presented in chapter 2 that purport that prior work experience should be viewed as a multidimensional construct and that different forms of prior work experience are relevant individual difference variables for predicting variance in proactive socialization behaviors and the learning of socialization content.

Primary Research Question #1 - Do certain types of prior work experience have a negative effect on the socialization of organizational newcomers?

Primary Research Question #2 - Can an examination of proactive socialization behaviors help to explain why this relationship might exist?

The present study expands the current literature in three distinct ways. First, it helps to re-examine and disentangle how work experience affects the newcomer's socialization experiences through the use of multidimensional measurement and a sample that should provide ample opportunity for prior work experiences to have an affect on behavioral outcomes. It should provide an integration of seemingly contradictory findings in the work experience literature and provide a more systematic and comprehensive basis for understanding work experience and designing future research. Second, it extends the examination of the antecedents of information seeking behavior. Specifically, it examines the effects of previously unstudied antecedents and attempts to uncover a faulty tacit assumption made by previous proactive socialization research that everyone enters the organization with the same amount of perceived information. Third, it empirically integrates various concepts in the socialization literature that have not as yet been studied together including literature from the proactive socialization stream of research and some aspects of what has become known as traditional socialization research.

The method used to examine these areas is also worthy of note. In an influential review, Fisher (1986) highlighted several methodological concerns that the socialization literature has suffered from in the past. Many of these concerns have been addressed in recent studies (Bauer, Morrison & Callister, 1998), namely the use of longitudinal studies to assess the effects of socialization processes and practices. However, many of the concerns Fisher raised are still prevalent in socialization research. One of these concerns was the principal use of either students as they

progressed into entry-level jobs or others joining various entry level jobs as subjects. This concern was reiterated in the most recent review of the socialization literature as it was noted that although many different organizations have been used, newly graduated college students are still far and away the most popular sample used (Bauer, Morrison & Callister, 1998). Differing greatly from previous approaches, this study used individuals entering an organization at different levels and with varying levels of experience. As Fisher (1986) would note when describing the continuous use of newcomer college graduates, "it is also necessary to study some settings in which more 'pure' [non-college student] organizational socialization can be observed" (p.104).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW, THEORY, AND HYPOTHESES

Chapter Overview

This chapter will outline why it is expected that some types of prior work experience might hinder the socialization of organizational newcomers. The chapter argues for a multi-dimensional outlook on work experience and that various levels of work experience (organizational, role, and task) will differentially affect newcomers' socialization (organizational, role, and task) into the organization. Part of the effect of prior work experience and its effects on newcomers' inability/ability to adapt to their new organizational surroundings will be explained through differences in proactive information seeking behaviors. The relevant literature on socialization, information seeking behaviors, and the interaction between these areas and work experience is discussed. Specific hypotheses are presented to help explicate these relationships.

The Work Experience Construct

Work experience is a commonly encountered concept in human resource management research and is integral to models of work performance and behavior. However, the study and understanding of work experience in the organizational literature has been limited by reliance on simple, oftentimes misguided measures and scant theory (Quinones, Ford & Teachout, 1995; Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998). The work that has been done so far regarding work experience has revolved primarily around a selection framework detailing the effects of work experience on work performance. Numerous meta-analyses have been conducted on the relationship between work

experience and job performance (Hunter & Hunter, 1984; McDaniel, Schmidt & Hunter, 1988; Quinones et al., 1995) the latest of which places the relationship between the two constructs at .27 after correcting for unreliability in measurement. However, work experience comes in many forms and the majority of past research has used current time on the job or tenure in the organization as the primary measure of work experience (Quinones et al., 1995). For the purposes of this paper, the use of such measures is confusing for two main reasons. First, the use of a current tenure measure confounds increases in skills and abilities on the job with the organizational socialization of the employee. Second, from a selection and socialization perspective, it does not take into account experiences an individual has when first coming into the organizational entry process. Examining the effects of prior work experience on the socialization of newcomers requires an in depth look at the effects of work experience gained prior to the entry of an organization.

The multidimensionality of the work experience construct. In order to study the work experience phenomenon, it is necessary to examine work experience from a more multidimensional viewpoint. The prior research between prior work experience and newcomer socialization has been hindered by its reliance on simple measurement. Quinones et al. (1995) provided an initial framework for examining the multidimensionality of the work experience construct. They divided the measurement of work experience along two dimensions: measurement mode and level of specificity. When examining work experience, there are three measurement modes one can adopt: *amount* of experience such as the number of times a task has been performed, *time* of

experience such as the length of tenure in a position or job, and *type* of experience such as functional background in an organization. Each of these three modes can also be examined at different levels of specificity. Levels of specificity range from experience on a task to experience on a job to experience in an organization. Tesluk & Jacobs (1998) built on the framework put forth by Quinones and his colleagues and differentiated between quantitative measures of work experience and qualitative measures of work experience. They noted the fact that regardless of the amount of time spent on a task, in a job, or in an organization, examinations of work experience should include the more detailed qualitative experiences such as challenges and interactions faced by individuals. These qualitative experiences can be seen as the richness of the experiences and can be examined by looking at things such as the variety or breadth of tasks performed, complexity of the job, or challenges encountered. In addition to the quantitative and qualitative aspects of work, these aspects could interact to form what they referred to as the *density* of work experience or what Quinones and colleagues (1995) have referred to as the "developmental punch" of past experiences.

One important aspect of the delineation between different aspects of work experience is the idea that the level at which one studies experience should depend on the construct one is trying to examine (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998). In the case of this paper, arguments are made that adaptation or socialization into an organization should be influenced to a greater extent by prior organizational experiences rather than past experiences with certain types of tasks or even certain types of jobs. This paper

attempts to recognize a density of organizational work experience by examining an interaction between quantitative (length of time spent in a prior organization) and qualitative (strength of that organization's culture) aspects of prior organizational experiences.

Work experience and socialization. The pre-entry factor that likely has the largest impact on socialization content knowledge and an individual's uncertainty upon entering the organization is background experience. One of the major limitations within socialization research today is its constant use of subjects that are all entering both their occupations and their first organization at the same time. The simple fact is that the majority of the newcomers into organizations are individuals that have already acquired a great deal of knowledge about themselves, their professions, and working environments in general. Some of these experiences have the ability to influence socialization in a positive way, but as will be discussed, prior experience should not always be seen as a good thing.

Past empirical findings. The empirical examination of work experience and its effect on the socialization process in general has been scarce. In all the most recent reviews of the work experience literature (e.g. Ford et al, 1991; Quinones et al., 1995; Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998) there was not one mention of work experience and its importance to the socialization of organizational newcomers. Early reviews of the organizational newcomer literature noted that little research attention had been paid to the events in a newcomer's life that occur before entry (Jones, 1983, Katz, 1980) and that situation has not changed over the last 20 years. In a review of the literature, only

four studies were found that have examined the impact of previous work experience on socialization processes (e.g. Adkins, 1995; Bauer & Green, 1994; Chan & Schmitt, 2000; Morrison & Brantner, 1992). While each provided contributions to the socialization field, all four of these studies were limited in various ways, mainly due to the fact that (1) each study's sample had situations that minimized work experience as a factor in socialization and (2) work experience was measured at a level not parallel with the constructs of interest in each study. In two of the studies and contrary to each study's hypothesized relationships, the studies produced results that showed that prior work experience can actually hinder a newcomers' ability to learn and adjust to a new job. Before detailing the theoretical processes that underlie the effects of prior work experience on socialization, it is important to review the empirical work that has been done to examine this topic.

All four of the studies detailed below hypothesized positive relationships between length of prior work experience and effective socialization outcomes. Morrison & Brantner's (1992) examination of prior work experience was limited to the learning of job roles and tasks among recently promoted individuals within the same organization (military officers in new ship assignments). Previous work experience was examined somewhat as an aside as it was one of three individual differences in a model that included 53 different variables. These authors found that previous distal and similar work experience had a negative direct relationship (-.12) with learning the job. These substantial results were found in this study even though their examination of previous work experience was limited in three important ways.

First, while relevant, the study examined subjects crossing a promotional boundary within an organization to which they already belonged. While this boundary is an important and arguably understudied stage of socialization, the newcomer stage is likely to produce many more surprises and learning opportunities regarding both an individual's role and their adjustment to the organization itself (Ashford & Taylor, 1990). Research has shown that job changers' socialization experiences are less drastic than those of organizational newcomers (Bauer, Morrison & Callister, 1998). Second, the study examined prior work experience among a sample of individuals who were supposedly somewhat equivalent. All subjects in the study were at the same organizational level and were being promoted into the same type of position from similar lower positions. Third, it could be argued that individuals having gone through the socialization tactics typical of the military (collective, serial, and divestiture) have limited different experiences to draw upon. Not nearly as common in most organizations, these types of socialization tactics are typically designed to remove the effects of past experiences and have the incumbents accept a more custodianship type of role (Ashforth and Saks, 1996; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Adkins (1995), in her study of work experience and its effect on socialization, used a sample of non-professional employees (mental health specialists) and only considered a self-admittedly coarse measure of similar work experience. While the focus of this study was primarily on previous similar work experience (job level), the variance attributable to it was once again likely minimized by the nature of the sample used. The sample in this study was surveyed before and after having completed a

somewhat detailed and lengthy (four weeks) technical training program prior to starting the job. Similar to the study mentioned above, the training program likely introduced collective, serial, and divestiture-oriented tactics which are designed to minimize some of the effects of prior work experience. Even so, Adkins found similar directional results to Morrison & Brantner (1992) in that prior similar work experience was positively correlated with role conflict and negatively correlated with both self and supervisor ratings of performance (measured at six months).

Bauer & Green (1994) has been the only study to find that prior experience positively affected socialization processes. Their study found that research experience among doctoral students was negatively related to role conflict and ambiguity. Notwithstanding the differences between student life and the socialization into the majority of professional organizations, one of the limitations of Bauer & Green's research is that it somewhat limited by the way in which they measured prior experience. As opposed to Adkins (1995) and Morrison and Brantner (1992), this study chose to use a measure of work experience that measured amount of task experience. Specifically, experience was measured by the frequency with which doctoral students had participated in 10 different research events at least half of which were actually performance related items such as having articles actually published. In that sense, they were essentially measuring past performance as a predictor of future performance. Although their research is useful and should be taken into account, the ramifications of it on the current study are likely to be minimal.

Chan & Schmitt (2000) used a similar sample of students and used latent growth modeling to examine the relationship between prior transitional experiences and proactive information seeking among newcomers. Previous transition experience was measured as the number of new transition experiences (such as moving to a new city or joining a new student organization) that graduate students had experienced prior to entering graduate school. This study found "an unexpected and moderate negative association" between previous transition experience and information seeking among new graduate students. Although the authors recognized that their measure of prior transitional experiences needed further development and could have been multidimensional in nature the relationship they found was contrary to its hypothesized direction.

Examining and reversing prior theory. It has long been recognized that organizational newcomers are some of the most relevant subjects to study when it comes to socialization, because these individuals are crossing multiple organizational boundaries simultaneously (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Wanous, 1992). These same individuals are going to have the greatest number of expectations that they will have to reconcile when they are confronted with the reality of their new positions (Louis, 1980). In that sense, the use of students entering organizations for the first time seems appropriate. However, perhaps even more appropriate and occurring in even greater numbers, those individuals with prior work experience changing jobs between organizations meet the same criteria. Although it has been noted that organizations can minimize the amount of socialization necessary to help newcomers

adapt by using various selection practices (Cohen & Pfeffer, 1986; Wanous, 1992), most individuals entering organizations will still have to adjust to new roles and make sense of their new environment (Louis, 1980; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992) regardless of how well they are selected into the organization. It is reasonable to expect that individuals entering an organization with prior work experience are likely to have different socialization experiences just based on the knowledge they possess.

In addition, while lengthy training programs such as those mentioned in the studies above (e.g. Adkins, 1995; Morrison & Brantner, 1992) might be typical among non-professional employees with prior work experience as they enter an organization or even in military settings, common knowledge tells us that most experienced professional employees do not go through similar programs as they enter an organization. They are much more likely to face socialization tactics that don't try to strip away their prior experiences. In fact, even if professional organizations' entry level positions are designed to be custodianship oriented, many experienced professional employees are not likely to be put through the same types of programs. In fact, evidence exists that between 34 and 50 percent of job moves by managers are into positions with no prior job incumbents (West, Nicholson, & Rees, 1987).

The majority of all previous articles dealing with work experience and socialization have measured previous work experience by using the amount of time an individual has spent performing tasks similar to those they are going to be expected to perform on their new job. The hypotheses put forth in previous studies have been that work experience will allow the newcomer to assimilate more quickly into the

organization. Theoretical arguments for finding results using these measures of previous work experience have centered around the learning of scripts (Gioia & Poole, 1984; Ashforth & Fried, 1988) during past experiences and the use of these scripts to make sense of organizational surroundings (Louis, 1980). A schema or script enables individuals to simplify the overwhelming stimuli provided by most environments (Lord & Foti, 1986). These cognitive structures suggest which behavioral actions are appropriate in certain situations, who are the key constituents involved in making decisions, what behaviors lead to rewards, and so forth. It is the use of these scripts that should allow individuals to learn new tasks more quickly (Gioia & Manz, 1985). While the previous theoretical arguments regarding work experience and socialization may have been sound, all three relevant empirical studies found results opposite of what was expected, namely, prior work experience is associated with less information seeking, less learning of job roles, and/or higher role conflict. Two of the socialization work experience studies have justified their findings post hoc by postulating that past similar experience hinders the learning of new tasks and/or socialization.

What previous researchers may have neglected was a limitation in socialization research pointed out by Louis (1980) and Katz (1980) that newcomers not only have to "change to" their new organization, but they also have to "change from" their old organization. The importance of "changing from" to the success of "changing to" at the individual level is not a new idea, has been discussed much earlier (Argyris, 1957), and is a focus of some of the work transition adaptation research. Schein (1973) put forth the idea that a lack of confirming information or the presence of disconfirming

information around one's self-image, one's image of others, or one's situation will contribute to the process of "unfreezing" from old mindsets about the way things are. Changing jobs and organizations are more than likely to start to trigger that unfreezing process. However, this unfreezing alone provides no assurance as to what or if changes will take place, as there is no guarantee how the individual will reorient to his/her situational reality (Katz, 1980). To adapt, individuals must maintain the flexibility needed to alter their behavior in the face of changing environmental conditions. They must be able to take on new habits, maintain and develop their competencies, interact with new people in the work environment and, perhaps most importantly, discard outdated behavioral routines (Schein, 1973).

To this degree, the organizations that are trying to socialize newcomers to adapt to their new organization's culture and expected roles are actually trying to resocialize those newcomers that have prior experiences that have shaped their beliefs about organizations, jobs, and roles and the subsequent behavior that those beliefs call for. However, the ability to alter one's behavior is a complex process. What previous researchers have assumed is that all old scripts regarding roles and making sense in organizations are good scripts. However, few organizations operate in exactly the same way whether it is the roles that individuals are placed in or the culture to which organizational members must adapt. Although scripts developed by employees over time can be good because they help them to be more efficient, they do not always result in the correct decisions (Gioia & Poole, 1984). In fact, Gioia & Poole (1984) state that "Scripted understanding of decision situations might lead to inappropriate

action. This is because the process of deciding is based on a protoscript, rather than a step-by-step accounting of the uniqueness of events relative to the present situation." Previously learned scripts are likely to prevent these newcomers from seeing discrepancies that would cause them to try to rectify their perceptions of the environment (Louis, 1980).

In the process of learning or adaptation, individuals must first recognize that adaptation is required. Individuals may not begin the process of adaptation simply because they fail to recognize the need for it. Due to the presence of organizational schemas that are created through prior work experiences, external or internal cues signaling a need for adaptation may go unnoticed. Schemas and scripts, for example, cause individuals to overlook relevant information (Neisser, 1976), to "see" schema-consistent information where none existed (Graesser, Gordon, & Sawyer, 1979) and thus to draw incorrect inferences (Alloy & Tabachnik, 1984). If cues demanding change are not relevant in a person's schema, he or she will have a difficult time accurately learning about the environment and thus adapting to it.

As mentioned earlier, the findings regarding previous similar work experience and socialization are somewhat paradoxical as past meta-analytical research on biographical data has shown positive correlations between prior work experience and performance (Mumford, Stokes, & Owens, 1990). There are two likely explanations for these differences. First, ratings of job performance based on the task to be completed are very different from how well an individual has been socialized into the organization. It is possible for a newcomer to perform job tasks well, but to be

confused over the politics, people, and other organizational culture issues. In other words, they might have high task-related performance, but not "fit" the organization. To the degree this argument holds, individuals might have good performance ratings and still be frustrated, dissatisfied, and less committed to their role in the organization. Second, it is possible that the measures in the meta-analysis and the previous studies have been have been somewhat confounded in that the meta-analysis in question does not take the multidimensionality of work experiences into consideration. It could be that some aspects of work experience have positive effects and some aspects of work experiences have the opposite.

Information Seeking and Socialization in Organizations.

Although much of this paper is concerned with the links between work experience and socialization outcomes, information seeking behaviors are theorized to be one of the primary mechanisms for why work experience might actually hinder the organizational socialization process. A review and examination of the research that has been conducted helps to explicate exactly what information seeking is, how these behaviors occur in organizational contexts and helps readers to better understand the measurement of information seeking behaviors in the next chapter.

The importance of socialization. Socialization is a term used to describe a process in which organizational newcomers "learn the ropes" as they enter a new organization" (Schein, 1968). A more formal definition refers to the process by which an individual acquires the attitudes, behavior, and knowledge needed to participate as an organizational member (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Socialization is a process

that involves not only decisions made by the organization but the actions taken by employees as well. It is an interactive process which involves both organizations trying to influence their members and employees who try to determine their acceptable role within the organization (Fisher, 1986; Reichers, 1987). Although socialization occurs whenever employees change roles or cross boundaries within an organization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), it is most intense when one first enters an organization (Louis, 1980). This newcomer period of entry is a complex and challenging time for employees and organizations alike. The past 10 years have seen a large increase in the amount of research performed examining this important time during the employer-employee relationship. What used to be a relatively fragmented stream of research with relatively few conclusions (Fisher, 1986), has propagated into a larger and more focused area of inquiry (Bauer, Morrison & Callister, 1998)

Socialization is an important area of study for a number of reasons. Wanous (1992) identified premature turnover as the number one reason to study socialization, and organizational entry process in general. Premature turnover, whether voluntary or not can be extremely costly for an organization and unsuccessful socialization is one of the quickest paths to reaching this outcome. In fact, turnover rates are highest for an organization during this entry period (Wanous, 1992). Another major reason is the fact that employees are affected by socialization experiences in ways that will affect their perceptions, behavior, and attitudes for the rest of their time in an organization. Fisher (1986) noted, "the outcomes of this process can vary from outright rebellion to

creative change of the organization by the new member to rigid conformity; from satisfaction and commitment to disillusionment and turnover" (p. 101).

Socialization and the proactive paradigm shift. As mentioned in Chapter 1 of this paper, for various reasons including the shift in organizational practices, the paradigm has shifted in socialization research toward examining newcomers' proactive socialization behaviors. This new stream of research on proactive socialization has examined such topics as feedback-seeking, information seeking and acquisition, and newcomer involvement in work-related activities and their effects on traditional socialization outcomes. In addition, the effects of dispositional variables such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, desire for control, tolerance for ambiguity, and need for feedback have all been studied as individual factors that could affect the way newcomers search for information and/or are socialized into a new organization (Ashford & Black, 1996; Jones, 1986; Saks, 1995; Teboul, 1995).

Interaction with organizational insiders is an important way by which newcomers gain access to information (Reichers, 1987). Ashford & Black (1992) proposed that the more proactive an individual is during the early stages of socialization, the more effective they will be in adapting to their new environment. It has been shown that newcomers that are more involved in their surroundings by participating in task and social activities are more likely to feel accommodated and be productive (Bauer & Green, 1994). Individuals use different sources to gather information relevant to their new surroundings, and these sources have also been found to be differentially effective in acquiring certain types of information (Morrison,

1993a,b; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). By being proactive, those individuals that seek relevant types of information are more likely to master their job, define their role, and learn about their organizational culture, (Morrison, 1993b.)

Since the paradigm shift of socialization research towards the study of proactive socialization behaviors, one of the most studied areas of proactive socialization has been the information seeking behavior of newcomers during organizational socialization. Since information seeking behaviors are the central construct in this proposed study, it is important to fully identify all existing and relevant research on these behaviors. It is important to remember that proactive socialization research is still a relatively new research stream. With a relatively few important exceptions, information seeking was relatively unstudied prior to 1991 (Miller & Jablin, 1991).

Why individuals engage in information seeking behavior.

Uncertainty. Organizational newcomers seek information for numerous reasons. One of the main reasons is that information reduces uncertainty. Information seeking allows newcomers to proactively search out and understand information that is not provided directly to them by the organization for which they work. This information allows organizational members to acquire both feelings of acceptance in their organization/group and develop a sense of competence in their new work roles (Feldman, 1976).

Taken as a whole, the most common theoretical framework to drive socialization research has been uncertainty reduction theory (Berger, 1979; Falcione &

Wilson, 1988; Lanzetta, 1971; Lester, 1987). Uncertainty reduction theory holds that newcomers experience high levels of uncertainty during the organizational entry process. These newcomers are motivated to reduce their uncertainty such that the work environment becomes more predictable and understandable. Information provided via various communication channels (mainly supervisors and peers) reduces this uncertainty. As uncertainty decreases, newcomers become more adept at performing their tasks, more satisfied in their job, and more likely to remain in their organization (Morrison, 1993a). Research has shown that socialization programs influence newcomers' adjustment by reducing their high levels of uncertainty and anxiety (Bauer, Morrison & Callister, 1998).

Miller and Jablin's (1991) model of newcomer information seeking is rooted in uncertainty reduction theory and newcomers' desires to reduce uncertainty. Their theory has provided one of the initial and most thorough reviews of the means by which new hires seek information. Along with Reichers (1987) and Ashford and Cummings (1985), their model was one of the first to recognize the important proactive role that newcomers could play in their own socialization. Miller and Jablin (1991) recognized that regardless of organizational efforts, needed information was not always fully passed on to organizational newcomers. Reasons for these inadequacies in passed information include current organizational members forgetting what it was like to enter the organization, the purposeful sending of equivocal messages, and the inability of newcomers to understand the messages being sent by organizational newcomers (Miller & Jablin, 1991). These information inadequacies

are purported to cause role ambiguity, anxiety, and uncertainty in organizational newcomers. Many researchers have noted the high levels of uncertainty faced by organizational newcomers and the fact that newcomers, in comparison to other socialization passages, are likely to experience the most of it (Louis, 1980; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). The model presented in Miller and Jablin's (1991) theory posited that uncertainty and social costs would be the two major driving forces behind individuals' proactive search for information during the socialization process with each having the opposite effect.

Social costs. Costs of seeking information have long been thought to affect the acquisition of information (Lanzetta, 1971). O'Reilly (1982), for example found that decision makers will use accessible sources rather than higher quality sources due to the cost of acquiring this information. In many circumstances, the acquisition of information simply costs too much to an organizational member to justify proactively seeking such information. However, a decrease in the search for information is due only in part to the reduction of uncertainty or having learned the information. For instance, individuals that have been with the organization for a long time or employees with a significant amount of experience may also respond to social expectations that they should "know the ropes" and not depend on guidance from others (Katz, 1980). They respond to those expectations by infrequently seeking information or by not seeking information in public ways so as to maintain their confidence and self-image with supervisors, co-workers, and others (Baumeister, 1982). In this sense, the ability to ask questions or seek information may be a special privilege offered to those new to

an organization or job (Schein, 1978). Newcomers in particular are concerned with the negative consequences that come with seeking information in direct ways (Miller & Jablin, 1991). It is hypothesized that when newcomers perceive high social costs associated with information seeking they will either not seek the information or they will acquire it by using less overt methods (Ashford, 1986; Miller & Jablin, 1991)

Sensemaking. From an outcome perspective, Louis' (1980) cognitive approach to socialization, in which newcomers attempt to make sense of the surprises they encounter during socialization, is an additional important consideration in research on information seeking and acquisition. Sensemaking is a thinking process in which newcomers interpret and impute meanings to surprises through interactions with insiders, attributional processes, and the alteration of cognitive scripts (Louis, 1980; Reichers, 1987; Weick, 1979, 1995). Louis (1980) stated the importance of access to information as one of the keys to the sense-making process. Newcomers always experience differences between what they expect to find in the organization and what the reality actually is. In her view, surprises are a normal part of the encounter stage, and newcomers become socialized as a function of their ability to explain surprising events and to predict future occurrences in the workplace. This sensemaking and the encounter of unmet expectations is a driving force behind much of the research on both organizational turnover and organizational socialization (Louis, 1980; Wanous, 1977, 1992). According to Katz (1980), newcomers strive to construct situational definitions of organizational reality and role identities through social interactions. This is a process of developing an "interpretive schema" or "cognitive map" of one's

organizational surroundings (Falcione & Wilson, 1988; Weick, 1995). Louis (1980) postulates that individual predispositions are likely to affect the ways and the amount of which individuals seek information to develop these schema.

Schein (1971) depicted newcomer transformations as unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. In the same vein as Louis, he suggested that newcomers are unfrozen due to "reality shock" and upending experiences (embarrassment, failure). Newcomers change aspects of their social selves in order to comply with the norms of the setting. These new selves are then refrozen through reinforcement or other cues that indicate acceptance and approval. This "unfreezing" process that newcomers must go through is particularly important for some of the theoretical arguments regarding work experience presented later in the chapter.

Empirical findings in the information-seeking literature. The increase in research in the area of proactive socialization behaviors has produced much knowledge about information seeking behaviors over the last decade or so, some of which is more important for the purposes of this paper. This section attempts to review the relevant literature by splitting it up into four distinct sections: patterns of information seeking, antecedents to information seeking, outcomes of information seeking and information seeking and socialization content.

Patterns of information seeking. Patterns of information seeking include such topics as the types of information sought, methods by which newcomers seek information, and the sources by which newcomers use to acquire feedback and information. The most thorough theoretical framework is Miller and Jablin's (1991)

model of newcomers' information seeking behaviors, in which they argued that certain types and sources of information, individual differences, and contextual factors affect the use of seven information seeking tactics (overt questions, indirect questions, third parties, testing limits, disguising conversations, observing, and surveillance).

Past research has shown that some of the tactics are particularly helpful in the acquisition of new information during socialization (Chan & Schmitt, 2000; Comer, 1991; Miller, 1996; Morrison, 1993a, 1993b, 1995; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992, 1993; Settoon and Adkins, 1997) For the purposes of this paper, however, the exact pattern of where newcomers receive their information is less important than the fact they differentially seek it in the first place. However, from a social costs perspective, it is important to know whether direct or indirect sources were used to gather information. It is important to note that the majority of these studies found that technical (task) information was the most frequent type of information sought after while organizational information and role information were less used.

Antecedents of information seeking behaviors. Several studies have investigated antecedents of information seeking behavior. Antecedents such as high desire for control (Ashford and Black, 1996), institutionalized socialization tactics (Saks and Ashforth, 1997), task interdependence (Major & Kozlowski, 1997), perceived usefulness of information (Comer, 1991; Morrison, 1995), and perceived social costs (Holder, 1996; Miller, 1996) have all been found to increase information or feedback seeking by organizational members. However, one of the major antecedents lacking, especially in light of Miller & Jablin's (1991) model, has been

perceived level of uncertainty regarding the information. The assumption has been in these studies that individuals have all arrived at the organization or exist in the organization with the same initial levels of information.

Outcomes of information seeking behavior. In order to stress the importance of information seeking behavior, researchers have tried to link information seeking to a number of traditional indicators of effective socialization. Results in this area are inconsistent (positive results – Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Morrison, 1993a, 1993b; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; non-significant results – Ashford & Black, 1996; Bauer & Green, 1998; Holder, 1996; Kramer, Callister & Turban, 1995; Mignery et. al., 1995) however, relatively little research has examined the actual learning of socialization content that is important to the socialization process. This is important to note because although some would argue that information seeking behavior in and of itself helps to drive evaluations of performance (i.e. Morrison & Bies, 1991), it is the adaptation to socialization content areas that should drive most attitudinal outcome measures. The actual learning of socialization content (not information seeking in and of itself) should likely be the main driver of differences in traditional attitudinal socialization work-outcomes.

Information-seeking and socialization content. The purpose of socialization is to facilitate learning about various aspects of the organizational environment. Surprisingly most socialization research dealing with information seeking does not examine the actual learning of socialization content. While not all past research agrees on the exact nature of the content of organizational socialization, there have been

recent attempts to integrate the various viewpoints and examine their validity in the same study (Chao et. al., 1994, Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1993).

One of the most thorough developments of socialization content to date is Chao et al. (1994). These researchers developed a measure of organizational content that examined the extent to which individuals learned about various aspects of their role and their role within a larger organization. By using an amalgamation of research from noted socialization scholars (Schein, 1968, 1971; Feldman, 1981; Fisher, 1986), Chao and colleagues developed a measure of six dimensions of organizational socialization which they showed had effects on traditional work outcome measures: (1) Performance proficiency – learning of how to perform the work task, (2) People – establishing successful and satisfying work relationships with organizational members, (3) Politics – information regarding formal and informal work relationships and power structures, (4) Language – the profession and organization's technical language or "jargon", (5) Organizational goals and values, and (6) History – traditions, customs, myths, and rituals which transmit cultural knowledge.

The interaction between prior work experience, information seeking, and socialization.

As noted by Tesluk & Jacobs (1998) it is important to examine work experience at the same level of the construct you are examining. This paper attempts to explain how prior work experience affects three different levels of socialization (organizational, role, and task) and therefore attempts to examine work experience at each of those distinct levels. All three levels are discussed in further detail below.

Organizational-Level Work Experience. In addition to the changes in knowledge, skills and abilities that organizational experience brings, there is evidence that organizational membership can influence individual attitudes and values (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998). In fact, many would see that as the goal for the socialization process (Anderson & Ostroff, 1997). Chatman (1991) for instance, demonstrated that individuals' outlooks and values changed over time through the socialization processes of the company for which they worked. To that degree, it could be argued that the socialization of organizational newcomers with prior work experience is actually more of a resocialization. Adjustment to a new organization must be viewed as a process of moving away from old patterns of behavior (Adkins, 1995). We would expect that the strength of newcomers' prior experiences is likely to affect their ability to adapt to a new organization. Individuals entering a new organization into a job for which they have a lot of previous similar experience are likely to be confident about how to perform that job in the context of their new organization. To that degree, it would be expected that newcomers are much less likely to recognize environmental cues that signify a need for change. In addition, and in comparison to other forms of socialization into the organization, prior research has shown that individuals are more responsive to job characteristics than to organizational attributes. These findings suggest that people will be more sensitive to external cues for adaptation that are linked to the performance of their job tasks (e.g., changes in job tasks, changes in expectations regarding appropriate methods of work) than to those that exist in the more distant organizational environment. Therefore, those individuals that have

developed schemas about how organizations work and what they expect are likely to have a tougher time socializing to a new organization. It is expected that the more time an individual spends developing organizational level schemas, the more difficult it will be to unfreeze them in order to adapt to a new environment.

> Hypothesis 1a: The length of tenure spent in a newcomer's most recent previous organization will be negatively related to their organizational goal and value socialization in a new company.

Organizations differ greatly in their ability to socialize newcomers and some organizations have considerably stronger cultures than others (Schein, 1996). An organization's culture can indeed be seen as a form of "social control" over organizational members and that control can focus attention, shape interpretations of events, and guide attitudes and behavior (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996). However, not all organizations' cultures are of equal strength. It is likely that individuals coming from past experiences where roles, rewards, and culture are relatively strong will have a harder time adapting (e.g. "unfreezing") to a new organization. From a qualitative measurement framework we could see these cultures as strict in their norms and expectations. Similar in nature to Tesluk & Jacob's (1998) arguments for seeing work experiences as having density, the interaction between length of time spent in an organization and the strength of that prior culture could be an important area of past work experience to examine. A graphic representation of Hypotheses 1a and 1b can be found in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

Hypothesis 1b: The negative relationship between length of tenure in previous organization and organizational goal and value socialization will be moderated by the strength of the culture at the previous organization such that the stronger the culture the stronger the relationship.

FIGURE 1

Organizational-level work experience and its effect on organizational socialization

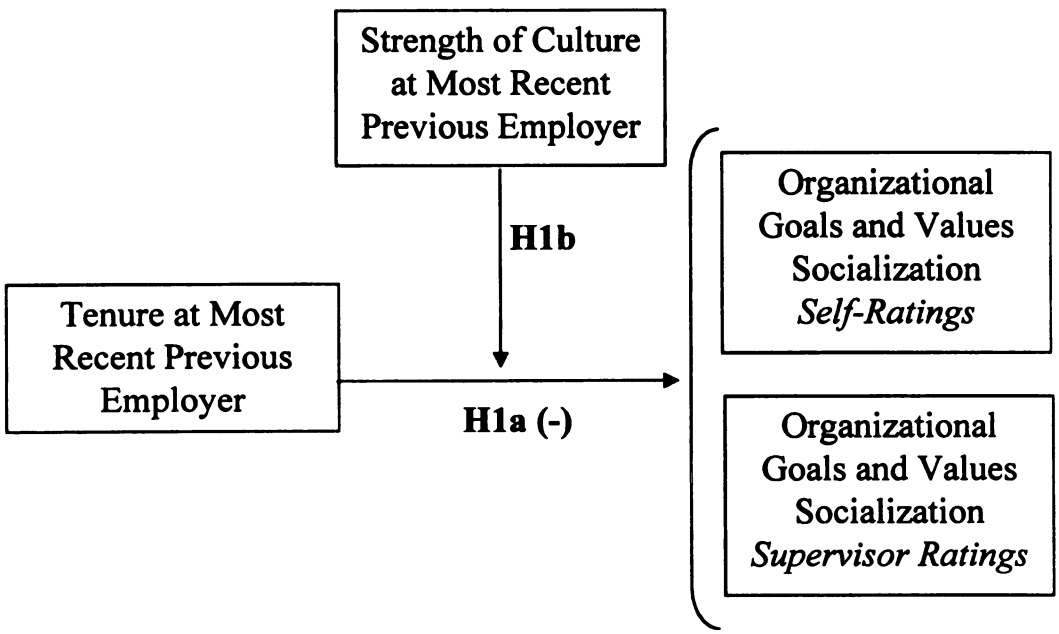
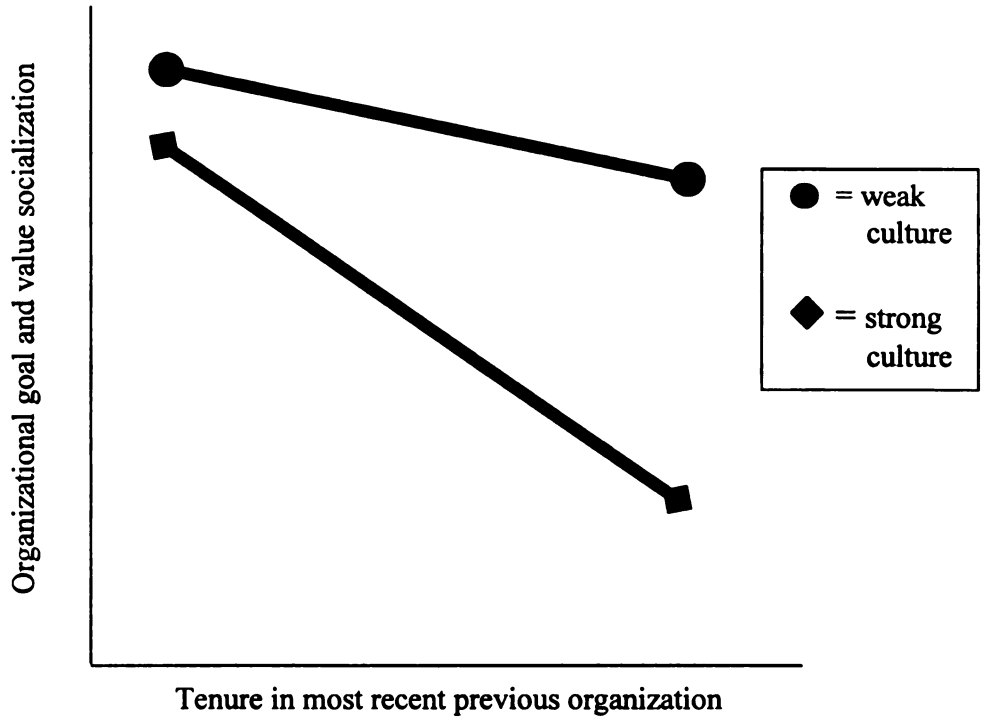


Figure 2

The interaction between tenure in most recent prior organization and strength of culture in prior organization on the organizational goal and value socialization of newcomers



Part of the reason for the relationships hypothesized above can be attributed to the likelihood that individuals with existing organizational schemas are much less likely to seek out information about the organization that would confirm or disconfirm their prior notions of how organizations act and work. Although almost all individuals walk into organizations with expectations that are too high (Wanous, 1992), those expectations are likely to be exacerbated for individuals who walk through the door assuming that their new organization operates in the same way as their old

organization. Newcomers with significant organizational work experiences are likely to feel confident about understanding their new organization as well as the tasks they are going to perform and are therefore unlikely to seek extra amounts of information.

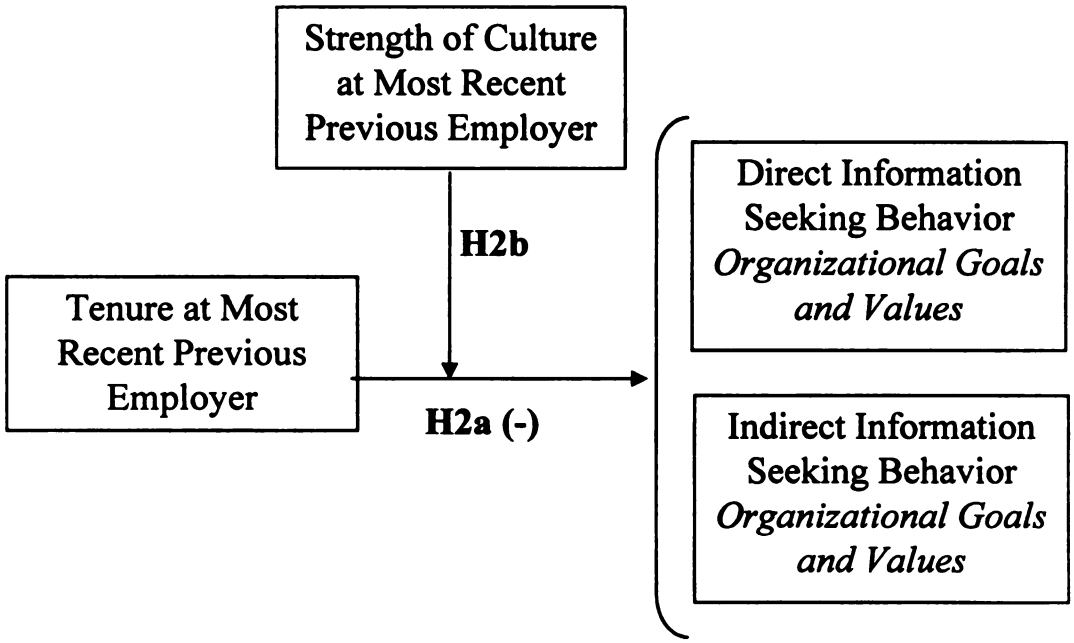
To put the situation in terms of Miller and Jablin's (1991) model, those individuals with significant amounts of prior organizational experience are likely to enter the organization with considerably less uncertainty about their new organization and a perception that there are greater social costs with seeking that information. The greater confidence that comes with work experience will lead newcomers to hold a belief that they know a great deal about their jobs, roles, the organization and how it operates. Research in the feedback seeking arena has given us the knowledge that there are implications for individuals who seek feedback or information from others in the organization. Morrison & Bies (1991) highlighted the fact that individuals will be less likely to proactively seek information or feedback when they believe that the actual feedback they receive will damage their public image. In addition to the actual feedback they might receive, the simple act of trying to acquire information might create negative impressions of the information seeker (Miller & Jablin, 1991). Individuals with longer tenure in strong cultures are likely to have perceptions that are different from those without this experience. Both their lack of uncertainty about socialization content areas and feelings of expertise due to their prior experiences will lead to a perception of higher social costs associated with seeking information. The relationships for hypotheses 2a and 2b can be seen graphically in Figure 3.

Hypothesis 2a: The length of tenure spent in a newcomer's most recent previous organization will be negatively related to their direct and indirect information seeking behaviors regarding organizational goals and values.

Hypothesis 2b: The negative relationship between length of tenure in previous organization and direct and indirect organizational goal and value information seeking will be moderated by the strength of the culture at their previous organization such that the stronger the culture the stronger the relationship.

Figure 3

Organizational-level work experience and its effects on organizational-level information-seeking behavior



Based on the theoretical arguments presented earlier in the chapter we would expect that greater levels of organizational goal and value information seeking would be associated with organizational goal and value socialization into the organization. In addition it would be expected that a lack of information seeking would be a primary

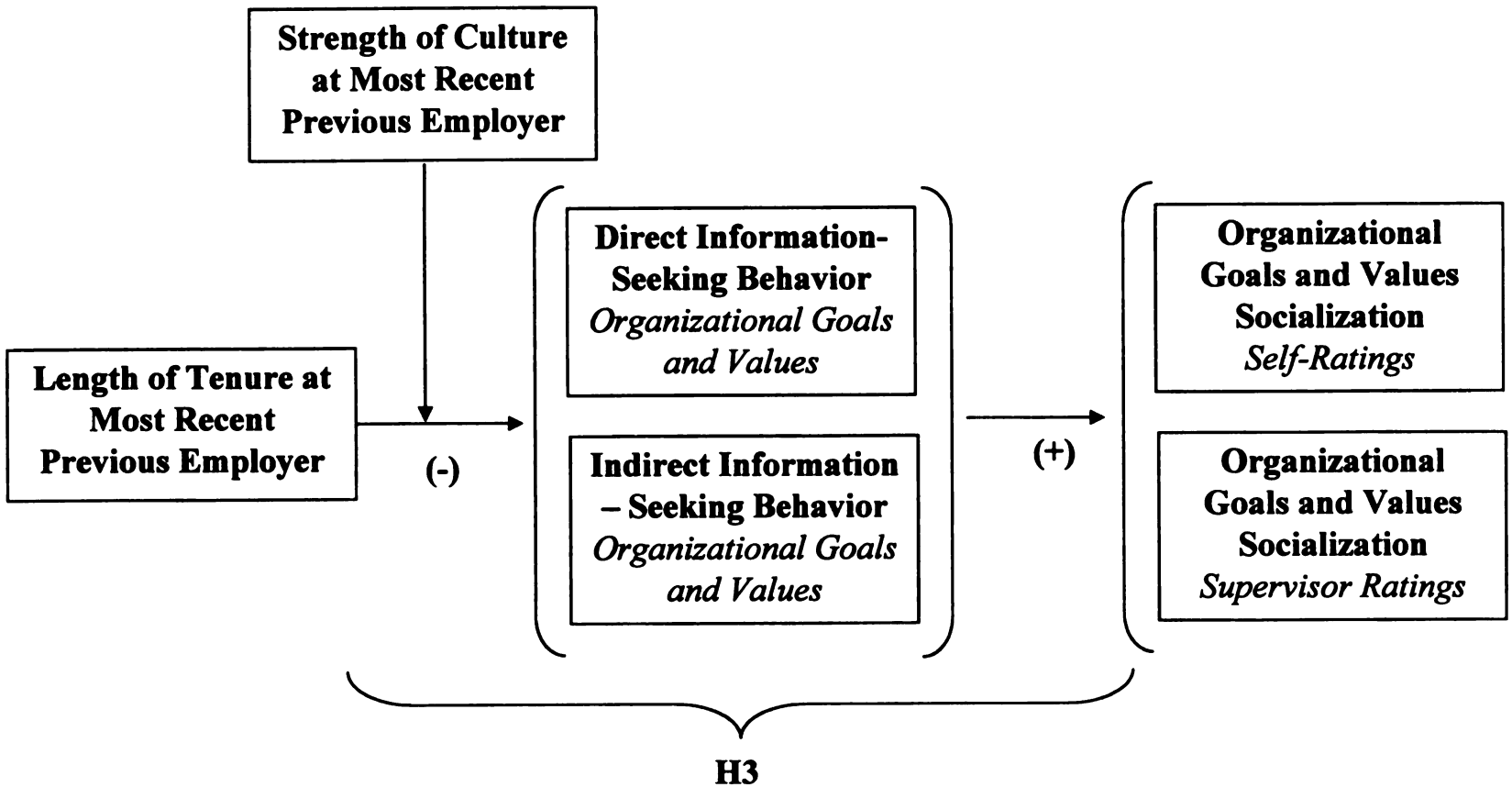
reason why individuals with prior work experience would have a hard time adapting to their new organization. These relationships can be seen graphically in Figure 4.

> Hypothesis 3: Direct and indirect organization goal and value information seeking will be positively related to organizational goal and value socialization and will mediate the relationship between organization-level work experience and organizational goal and value socialization.

Role Level Experience. Similar in nature to prior organizational experiences, prior experiences with specialized jobs could theoretically hinder adaptation to work roles that are different from the newcomers' prior experiences. Both of the previous empirical studies (e.g. Adkins, 1995; Morrison & Brantner, 1992) on work experience and socialization were performed using outcomes at this level of analysis, but neither actually used prior occupational experience as predictors. Both Nicholson (1984, 1998) and Kohn and Schooler (1983) hypothesized that prior occupational experience would have an effect on how individuals adapted to new environments. Just as organizational schema developed due to past organizational experiences, occupational role schema are developed due to experiences with given role sets and situations. In fact, several researchers have found that occupational socialization developed psychological functioning (Mortimer & Simmons, 1978; Mortimer & Lorence, 1979; Frese, 1982). Although dealing with job moves of all types and not just organizational newcomers, Nicholson (1984) argued specifically toward this finding by theorizing that low novelty (i.e. more experience with roles) in a new position would lead to very little personal development on the part of the new jobholder. To that degree, we would expect that a significant amount of prior role experiences would hinder a

Figure 4

The mediating effect of information seeking behavior on the relationship between organizational-level work experience and organizational goal and value socialization



newcomers' ability to change their behavioral routines. They would have problems seeing information that signified roles and responsibilities they had not previously performed and are likely to see information that substantiates their view of the way their job should function within the organization. Therefore, individuals who have spent substantial time performing a distinct occupational role should have developed schemas about how someone in that role is supposed to act or behave. Given that the roles of jobs change from organization to organization even among individuals in the same genre of occupation, it could be expected that prior similar professional experience could hinder the way in which individuals become clear about their roles and responsibilities in their new organization.

> Hypothesis 4: Length of prior similar professional experience will be negatively related to self and supervisor's ratings of the newcomer's role clarity.

Much in a similar vein to the arguments presented about organizational level socialization, part of the reason for the relationship between prior similar professional experience and role clarity can be attributed to the likelihood that individuals with existing role schemas are much less likely to seek out information about roles and responsibilities in their new organization. Newcomers with significant professional work experiences are likely to feel more certain about their roles and responsibilities and are likely to perceive higher social costs associated with role information seeking. Therefore newcomers with substantial professional experience are unlikely to seek extra amounts of role information.

Hypotheses 5: Length of prior similar professional experience will be negatively related to both direct and indirect role and responsibility information seeking behaviors.

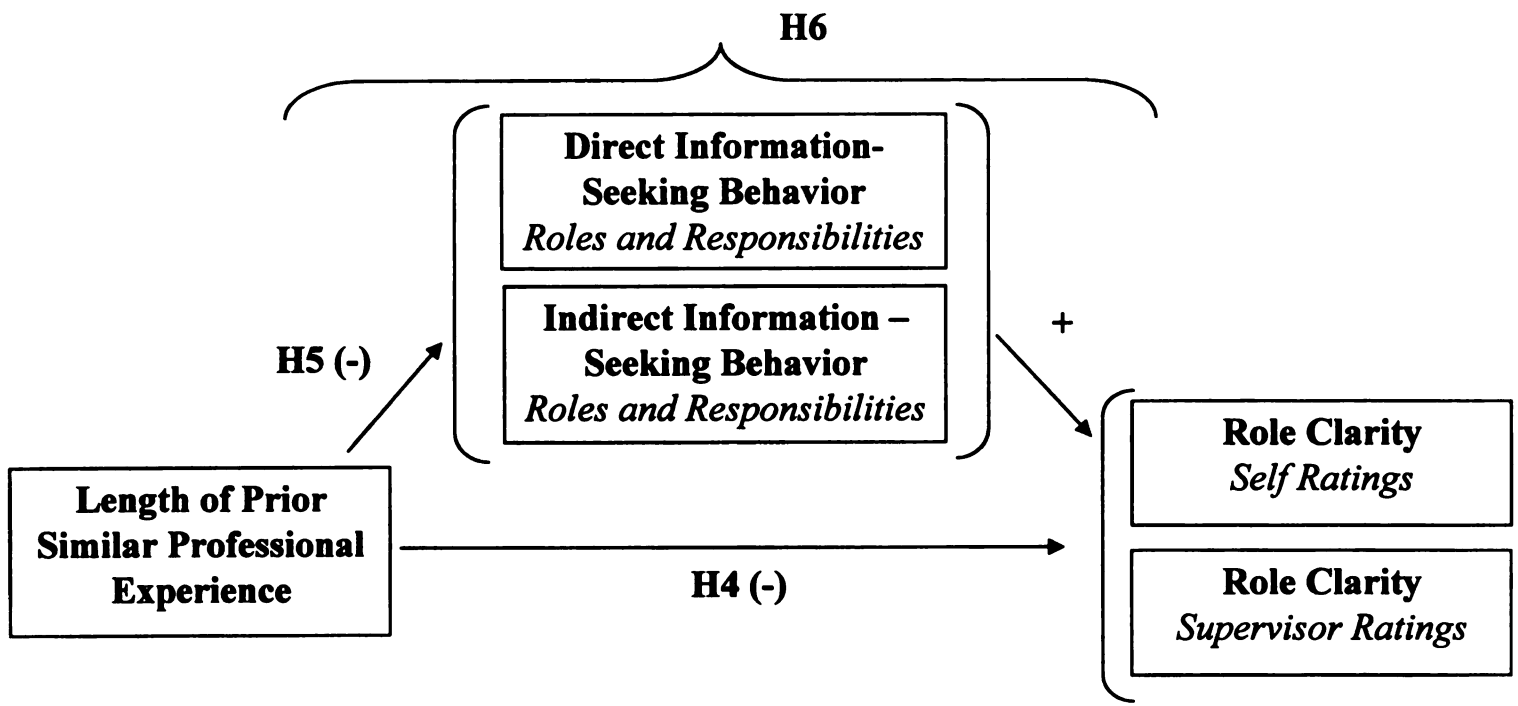
Based on the theoretical arguments presented earlier in the chapter we would expect that greater levels of role information seeking would be associated with higher levels of role level socialization. In addition it would be expected that a lack of information seeking would be a primary reason why individuals with greater amounts of similar professional experience would have a hard time adapting to their new roles and responsibilities. A graphical representation of hypotheses 4-6 can be found in Figure 5.

Hypothesis 6: Role and responsibility information seeking behaviors will be positively related to self and supervisor's ratings of the newcomer's role clarity and will mediate the relationship between similar professional work experience and role clarity.

Task Level Experience. As reiterated throughout this manuscript, the relationship between prior task experience and task performance has been well established. In order to show that the two seemingly contradictory outlooks on work experience can co-exist, it is important to establish that prior work experience at the task level is positively related to task knowledge and performance early in the newcomers' tenure with the organization. However, also well established is the notion that the relationship between task experience and task performance is one that diminishes over a period of time as others with less experience have time to learn and practice task-oriented skills and abilities. This relationship should be indicated in the present study by a positive relationship between length of prior task experience and

Figure 5

The effects of prior similar professional work experience on information seeking behavior and role clarity.



task knowledge/performance and the mediation of that relationship by the proactive information seeking behaviors of organizational newcomers. These relationships for hypotheses 7-9 can be seen graphically in Figure 6.

> Hypothesis 7: Length of prior similar task experience will be positively related to both self and supervisor ratings of job task knowledge and performance.
>
> Hypothesis 8: Length of prior similar task experience will be negatively related to both direct and indirect job task information seeking behaviors.
>
> Hypothesis 9: Job task information seeking behaviors will be positively related to self and supervisor ratings of job task knowledge / performance and will mediate the relationship between prior similar task experience and ratings of job task knowledge and performance.

Traditional Socialization Work-Outcome Variables. Socialization research has tended to center around a specific set of outcome variables. It would be expected to find many of the same types of relationships found in previous socialization studies. As such, individuals having been socialized into the organization at the organizational, role, and task level are likely to have attitudes that reflect that knowledge and level of comfort with their tasks, roles and responsibilities, and organization. Therefore we would expect that the three socialization outcomes previously discussed in this chapter would be positively related to work-outcomes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment and negatively related to their intention to leave the organization. These relationships can be seen graphically in Figure 7.

> Hypothesis 10: Higher levels of socialization (organizational, role, and task) will be positively related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment. These same socialization dimensions will be negatively related to the intention to leave the organization.

Figure 6

The effects of prior task experience on information seeking behavior and job task knowledge/performance.

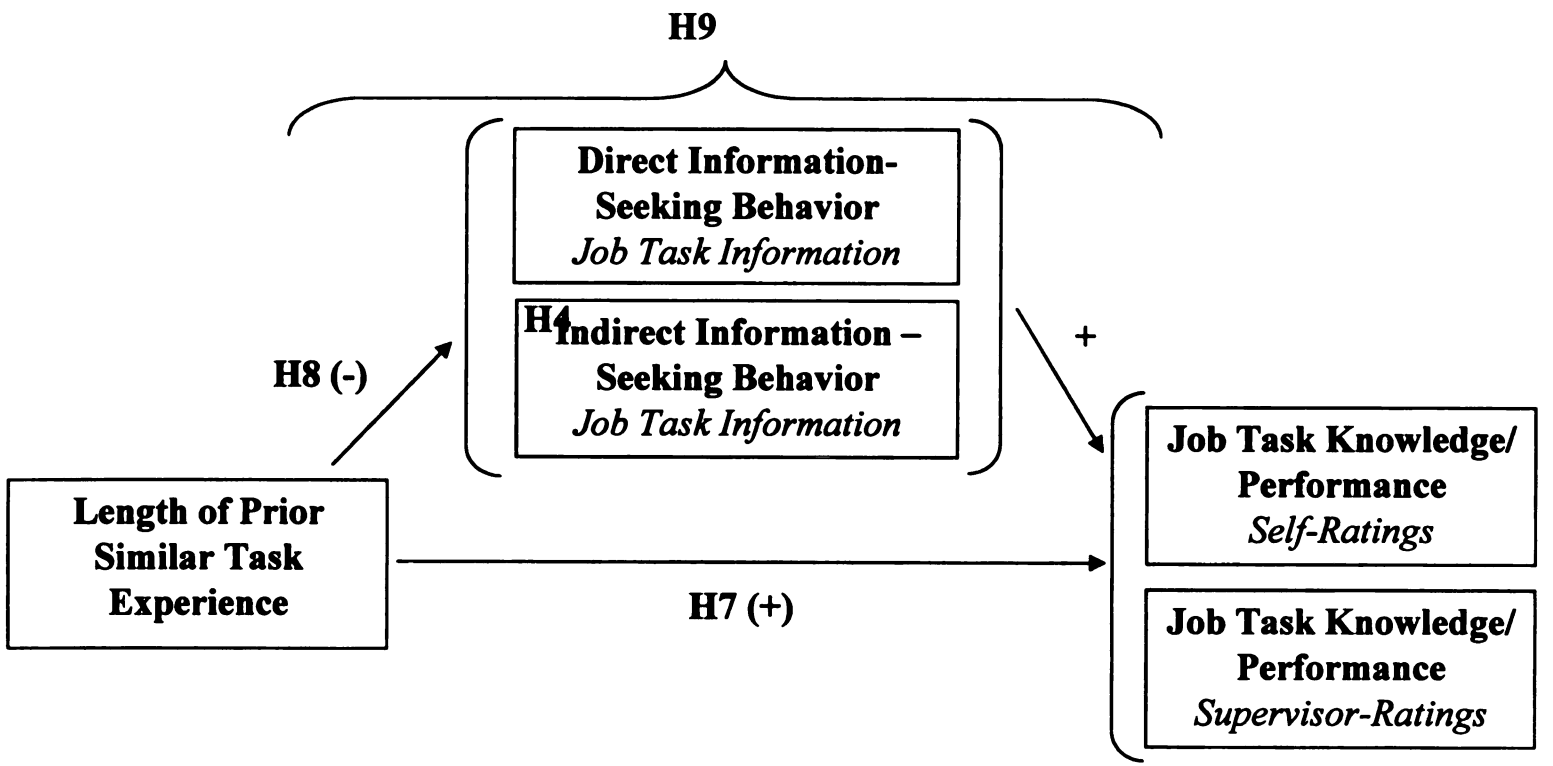
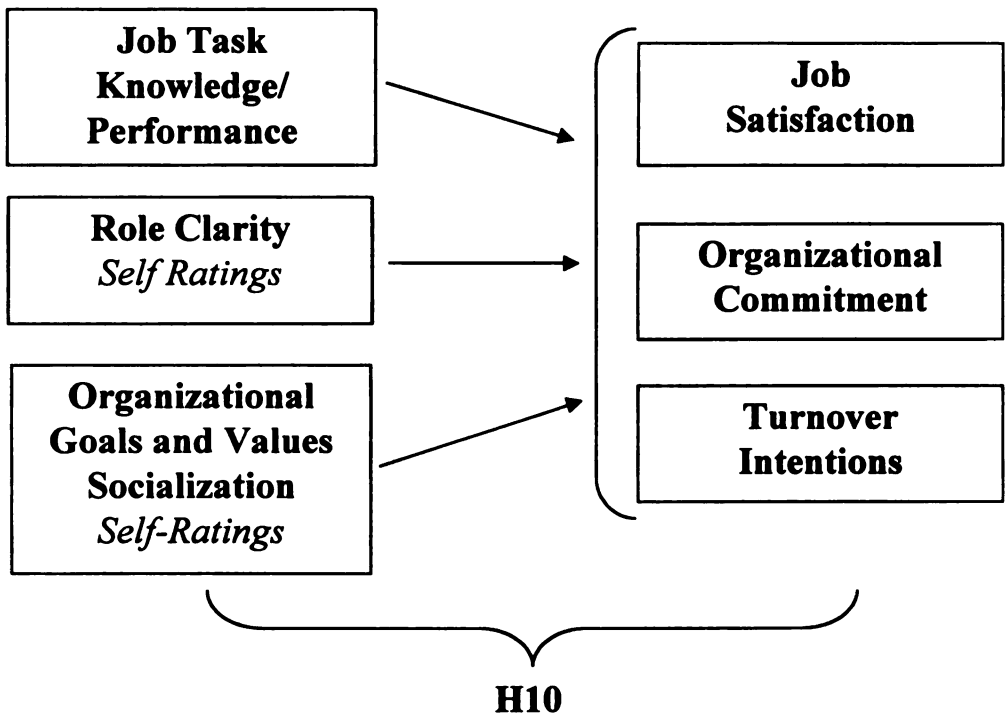


Figure 7

The effects of organizational, role, and task socialization on traditional socialization work outcome measures.



CHAPTER 3

METHOD

In probably the most well known review of socialization research, Fisher (1986) roundly criticized the socialization community for its lack of longitudinal designs, the limited number of occupations it studied, and its primary focus on new entrants (college graduates) into a career or profession. In some ways, the socialization literature has progressed considerably since then (Bauer, Morrison & Callister, 1998). However, although the research designs of studies have become more rigorous and longitudinal, the number of occupations and the types of samples have not changed a great deal. Socialization research still tends to focus on newly entering college graduates and their experiences. While newcomers still represent the group that faces the most uncertainty as they enter organizations (Ashford & Taylor, 1990), socialization research needs to expand to other samples that possibly require more or less change by its participants if it is to become generalizable. The current study overcomes some of the limitations mentioned above and some of the limitations of studies mentioned in previous chapters. This chapter discusses the study setting and sample, design, data collection techniques, and the measurement of study variables.

Participants and Procedure

The sample for this study consists of 423 newly recruited employees of a single, large, nationally-recognized management consulting firm who responded to three surveys following their initial hire. Survey responses were solicited during each newcomer's initial orientation session, 2 months after hire, and four months after hire.

As e-mail addresses were created for the newly hired employees, these addresses were forwarded to the author and an invitation to participate in the study (which was conducted over the company's intranet) was e-mailed to them. During their orientation sessions, as newcomers were introduced to their e-mail software packages, orientation training leaders introduced the study and encouraged participation. Participation in the study was completely voluntary and all subjects were insured of the confidentiality of their responses. Of the 739 new employees hired over an eight month period of time, 582 responded to the initial e-mail by completing the initial online survey resulting in a 79% response rate.

Previous research in the stages of socialization has indicated that most of the learning of job tasks and organizational adjustment is completed in a relatively short period of time (Wanous, 1992). Indeed, many previous studies have shown that newcomer attitudes and perceptions form early and do not change substantially following the first few months on the job. Therefore, initial respondents were solicited to participate in further rounds of the survey at both two months (information seeking items) and at four months (socialization outcomes) after hire. Respondents who did not fill out the surveys within one week of having been sent their respective e-mails were sent up to two subsequent e-mails at one week intervals reminding them of their opportunity to participate. Respondents were sent their third round survey two months following the completion of the second survey regardless of when the second survey was completed. So in reality, respondents filled out the second survey sometime during the second month of employment and their third survey sometime during the

fourth month of employment. Of the 582 initial respondents, 494 responded to all three surveys resulting in a response rate of 84% and an overall three-survey response rate of 67%. To maintain consistency in the newcomers, 33 respondents were removed from the sample due to having worked full-time for the company previously. Listwise deletion of missing data resulted in a usable sample of 423. This final sample used for analyses had a mean age of 33.17, was 76% male, had a mean 3.87 (SD = 2.49; range 0 to 12) years of *task related* experience and had worked for a mean 3.84 (SD = 3.98; range 0 to 24.25) years at their previous organization. 39.7% of the newcomers were hired into managerial/supervisory level positions and 51.6% of the sample had prior consulting experience. When comparing the final sample used (N = 423) to individuals who did not respond to all three surveys, had previously worked for the company, or were removed through listwise deletion (N = 316), only the age difference between the samples was statistically significant (non-respondent M = 31.52 vs. respondent M = 33.17). The samples did not differ statistically on gender (72% male vs. 76% male), rank (37% managerial vs. 40% managerial), time spent in most recent organization (3.36 years vs. 3.84 years), or total task related experience (3.74 years vs. 3.87 years).

During their second survey, respondents were asked to provide the name of their direct supervisor. Of the 531 respondents to the second survey, 519 provided a supervisor's name. At time 3, these 519 supervisors were sent e-mails (gathered from a company e-mail database) soliciting feedback for a company sponsored study that their subordinate was participating in. Supervisors that did not initially respond were

sent up to two subsequent follow-up e-mails at one week intervals. 308 supervisors responded for a response rate of 59% resulting in a usable sample of 291 supervisor ratings following listwise deletion of missing data for supervisors or deletion of their subordinates from the sample.

The sample used for this study is advantageous for numerous reasons. First, unlike most other socialization studies, many of these newcomers had at least some previous work experience. As with most experienced hires, they were hired based on their qualifications to perform the job. Second, each of these individuals only went through a one-week training program to orient them to their new organization. The program was not designed to teach technical skills, but rather to help initiate newcomers to the administrative procedures and methods in the organization. This sample should be very similar to the one in Chatman (1991) in that although there is an orientation session, the majority of socialization experiences will occur once newcomers are located in their new positions. The organization used for this study is a member of the "Big Five" consulting firms and is noted by its employees for having a very strong culture. Many expectations are placed on newcomers within a relatively short period of time. In addition, due to the consulting nature of their jobs and the organization, the roles and the expectations placed on these newcomers are complex, interdependent, and ambiguous at times. Many of these individuals are placed in what insiders refer to as "sink or swim" situations. As a result, turnover for this organization is high during the first two years of employment. The setting placed newcomers in a situation that was well suited for its ability to allow fair examination

of prior work experience and the information seeking behaviors of these organizational newcomers.

Measures (All items and measures can be found in Appendix 1)

Basic employee data was gathered from the company's HRIS database. Specifically, information on age, rank (coded as 0 = non-managerial; 1 = managerial), and gender (coded as 0 = female; 1 = male) was collected to use as control variables if it was found they significantly correlated with any of the variables of interest.

Time 1 Survey

Prior work experience. *Length of tenure at most recent employer*, *length of prior similar professional experience*, and *length of prior similar task experience* was gathered from newcomers on the initial survey. Participants provided quantitative measures of these various forms of experience by indicating both years and months, the amount of time they have spent at previous organizations and completing certain kinds of tasks. Specifically, respondents were asked to indicate the amount of tenure they had at their most recent employer, the amount of experience they had performing a job as a consultant, and the amount of experience they had performing the specific work tasks they believed they were hired to perform.

Strength of Prior Organizational Culture. An eight item measure adapted from Hofstede, Neuijen, Ohayv, & Sanders (1990) and Denison & Mishra (1995) was completed by organizational newcomers at time 1 to determine the strength of the culture at their most recent employer. Sample items include: "There was a high level of agreement amongst employees about the way things were done at my previous

company." and "Only certain types of people fit in my previous organization." A principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation was used to help determine the dimensionality of the eight items. The eight items and the rotated factor loadings can be found in Table 1. Based on the Kaiser criterion, two factors were extracted accounting for 56.8% of the variance. Five items loaded on the primary factor (39.6% of the variance) including the item "In general, I feel like there was a strong culture at my previous employer." and these five items were used for further analyses. The coefficient alpha for these five items was .77.

Time 2 Survey

Information-seeking behaviors. - Information seeking scales were adapted from Ashford and Black (1996) and Morrison (1993). The scales specifically incorporate two ways of seeking information: direct (overtly asking) and indirect (observing and socializing), numerous sources of information (supervisors, peers, others in the firm), and all 3 socialization outcome areas discussed in the paper. Information seeking behaviors were assessed at time 2 during the study. Items were rated using a 7 point scale asking how often each of the information seeking behaviors were used ranging from "Never" to "A few times a day." Since the present study was not concerned with distinct patterns of information seeking per se, two scales were formed from 6 items. Consistent with prior research, the first three items were scaled to form *Direct Information Seeking* for each of the three socialization outcome areas. Coefficient alphas of .73, .80 and .72 were found for the organizational goal and value, role, and task areas respectively. The other three items were scaled to form Indirect Information

Table 1

Item Statistics and Rotated Factor Loadings for Culture Strength

Item	M	SD	Factor 1 Loadings	Factor 2 Loadings
(1) There was a high level of agreement amongst employees about the way things were done at my previous company.	2.69	.98	**.64**	.01
(3) Only certain types of people fit in my previous organization	2.31	1.08	**.78**	.20
(4) Everyone in my previous organization feels like they are part of a group.	1.86	.84	**.72**	.15
(5) There are definite and specific ways to do things at my previous organization.	2.89	1.13	**.65**	.18
(6) In general, I feel like there was a strong culture at my previous company.	2.65	1.01	**.75**	.18
(2) Employees at my previous company had a shared vision of what the company would be like in the future.	2.39	1.08	.18	**.84**
(7) My previous company's approach to doing business was very consistent and predictable.	2.54	.95	.25	**.62**
(8) My previous company has a long term purpose and direction.	3.41	1.0	.01	**.83**

Note. Bolded Items are those included in the five-item scale.

Seeking for each of the three socialization outcome areas. Coefficient alphas of .82, .76 and .85 were found for the organizational goal and value, role, and task areas respectively.

Time 3 Survey

Organizational Goal and Value Socialization (Self and Supervisor Ratings). A modified version of the direct measure from Chao, et. al. (1995) was used at time 3. This scale was designed to measure the degree to which the newcomer has changed to become more like the organization in terms of goals and values. Sample items include: "I support the goals that are set by my organization" and "I would be a good

example of someone that is representative of this organization's goals and values". Both the newcomer and the newcomer's direct supervisor filled out the scale. The scale was slightly adapted for the supervisor ratings to allow the supervisors to rate a third party. The coefficient alphas were .86 and .83 for the self-rated scale and supervisor-rated scale respectively.

Role Clarity (self and supervisor ratings). A six-item role ambiguity scale developed by Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman (1970) was used to measure role clarity. Newcomers and supervisors completed the scale at time three. Direct supervisors completed a slightly modified version of the scale by having the questions changed so they could rate their belief about how well their subordinate understood their roles and responsibilities. The coefficient alphas were .83 and .70 for the self-rated scale and supervisor-rated scale respectively.

Job Task Knowledge/Performance (Self and Supervisor Ratings). Newcomers and direct supervisors were asked to rate how well newcomers understand and perform the tasks associated with their jobs using a 5 item scale from Chao, et al. (1995). Sample items include: "I have learned to successfully perform my job in an efficient manner" and "I have not yet learned the specific work tasks of my job". Direct supervisors completed a slightly modified version of the scale. The coefficient alphas were .78 and .80 for the self-rated scale and supervisor-rated scale respectively.

Job satisfaction. Newcomers were asked to rate how content and satisfied they are with different aspects of their job using a 6 – item scale based on a questionnaire constructed by Hackman & Oldham (1975). Sample items include: "In general, I am

satisfied with my job" and "Most of the time I have to force myself to do my job". Coefficient alpha for the scale was .86.

Organizational commitment. The newcomers completed a six item affective organizational commitment scale developed by Allen and Meyer (1979) at time three. A sample item is: "I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization". Coefficient alpha for the scale was .82. Three of these items that were more appropriate for individuals who had not yet worked for the company were asked during survey 1 as a pre-test measure. Coefficient alpha for the pre-test measure of organizational commitment was .78.

Intent to turnover. Newcomers completed a 3-item scale based on Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins & Klesh (1979) that was used to assess how probable it will be that they will leave the organization within the following year. Coefficient alpha for the scale was .73. One of the three items (appropriate for individuals who had not yet worked for the company), "How long do you intend to remain with this organization", was asked at survey time 1 as a pre-test measure.

Confirmatory Factor Analyses

In order to test the adequacy of the factor structures of the measures in the study, confirmatory factor analyses were performed on all measures in the study, both individually (for measures with more than 3 items) and simultaneously with other the other factors in their time period. These analyses were performed using maximum likelihood estimation in EQS (Bentler, 1995). In order to determine model fit for each of the factors individually and for time period models where multiple factors were

tested simultaneously, a number of statistical indices were used: The chi-square statistic along with the degrees of freedom for each model are presented, along with more popular indices less affected by sample size such as the non-normed fit index (NNFI; Bentler & Bonett, 1980), the goodness of fit index (GFI; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1984), the comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990) and the root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA; Steiger, 1990). Customarily, the NNFI, GFI, and CFI show good levels of fit when the statistic is over .90. The RMSEA shows good levels of fit when the statistic is below .08 (Brown & Cudek, 1993).

Overall model fit results for the analyses can be found in Table 2. All single items used in the study loaded significantly on their intended factor when the factors were examined individually and when included as a set for their respective time period. With few exceptions all measures, whether examined individually or collectively as a time period, showed acceptable levels of fit based on the model fit indices. Two measures, newcomer ratings of organizational commitment (T3) and supervisor ratings of role clarity (T3) did have some indices that presented slightly less than desirable results when the measures were examined independently. However, the decision was made not to modify either of the measures because: (a) both of these factors are well accepted measures in the literature, (b) they both had items with acceptable factor loadings, and (c) they showed no detrimental effects on the fit indices of the time period models.

Table 2

Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for Study Measures[a]

Measure/Time[b]	χ^2	df	NNFI	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Time 1 (2 factors)	27.4	19	.98	.98	.99	.03
Culture Strength	13.6	5	.94	.99	.97	.06
Time 2 (6 factors)	131.8	120	.99	.97	.99	.02
Time 3 (6 factors)	600.9	480	.97	.92	.97	.03
Org. Goal and Value Soc.	34.9	14	.97	.98	.98	.06
Role Clarity	24.1	9	.96	.98	.98	.06
Task Performance	14.7	5	.95	.98	.97	.07
Organizational Commitment	38.4	9	.91	.97	.94	.09
Job Satisfaction	28.8	9	.94	.98	.97	.07
Time 3 Supv. Ratings (3 factors)	130.6	132	.99	.99	.99	.01
Org. Goal and Value Soc.	24.6	14	.96	.98	.97	.05
Role Clarity	31.0	9	.88	.97	.93	.09
Task Performance	12.4	5	.94	.98	.97	.07

[a] Only factors with more than 3 items were assessed for model fit individually for model identification purposes, however all factors were included for time period models.

[b] N = 423 for all model analyses except for supervisor ratings where N = 291.

Data Analyses and Statistical Power

All hypotheses were tested using multiple regression. Moderated multiple regression was used to test the interaction effects presented in hypotheses 1b and 2b. Mediated multiple regression procedures (Baron & Kenny, 1986) were used to test hypotheses 3, 6, and 9. Polynomial regression (Cohen and Cohen, 1983) was used to test the curvilinear effects examined in additional analyses. The direct effects of all variables were assessed by regressing the outcome variable of interest on each of the independent variables. Specific procedures for each hypothesis are discussed in more detail in the results section.

Cohen and Cohen's (1983) Equation 3.7.2 was used to derive the statistical power of the analyses presented in the next chapter. The average total R^2 for self-rated outcomes (using 3-5 independent variables) was .20 resulting in a statistical power of over .99 with an N = 423. In fact, even the lowest level of total R^2 (.09) found resulted in statistical power of over .99. For supervisor rated outcomes, the average total R^2 was .075 resulting in a statistical power of over .99 with an N=291. The lowest level of total R^2 (.05) resulted in a statistical power of .90. Statistical power for the interaction terms is moot given an average ΔR^2 of .00.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the study variables appear in Table 3. Tables 4-9 present the hierarchical regression results that examine the specific hypotheses presented in chapter 2. Recall that hypotheses were presented for three different levels of work experience and their effects on three different levels of socialization which were rated both by the organizational newcomers themselves and their direct supervisor. These effects were expected to be mediated by newcomers' information seeking behaviors.

Examination of the correlation matrix among the different types of prior work experience showed moderate levels of correlations (.28, .31, and .41) indicating that although these variables were correlated with one another they could still be seen as independent constructs. Examination of the potential control variables yielded interesting findings. Gender did not have a significant correlation with any of the other variables in the study; however, age and rank were both significantly correlated with each of the work experience variables. Although there were no obvious connections to the socialization variables of interest from a theoretical standpoint, separate analyses were run for each of the regression equations presented below. In only one instance did the inclusion of age and rank as a control step in the hierarchical regression equations hinder the ability of work experience to predict either information seeking or socialization (i.e. cause a significant predictor to become non-significant after the inclusion of the control variables), this instance is noted in the results below.

In fact, in only two instances, was either age or rank a significant predictor once work experience was entered into the equation (those instances are noted in the results below). Therefore, the following analyses are presented without inclusion of the control variables as a separate step in the analysis for sake of simplicity. Results are presented below for each of the different socialization dimensions.

Examination of Hypotheses

Organizational Level Experience. Hypothesis 1a and 1b proposed a negative relationship between the tenure a newcomer had in their most recent place of employment and organizational goal and value socialization (OGVS). This effect was to be moderated by the strength of the culture at that previous organization. Regression results pertaining to this hypothesis can be found in Table 4. In order to examine hypothesis 1a, most recent employer tenure and culture strength were included in step 1 of a two-step hierarchical regression with OGVS as the criterion. The multiplicative product of the two variables was entered in a second step in order to examine the potential interaction (H:1b) between the two variables. As shown in the table, hypothesis 1a received strong support as the length of tenure at a newcomer's most recent employer had a significant negative effect on the self ($\beta = -.32$, $p < .01$) and supervisor ($\beta = -.18$, $p < .01$) ratings of the OGVS of newcomers. Hypotheses 1b's prediction of a moderating effect for culture strength was not found (Step 2's $\Delta R^2 = .00$, n.s.). However, a strong negative direct effect was found for the prior organization's culture strength on both self ($\beta = -.34$, $p < .01$) and supervisor ($\beta = -.15$,

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations of Study Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Gender	.76	.43	-						
2 Age	33.17	8.39	.00	-					
3 Rank	.39	.49	.07	.62	-				
4 Tenure at most recent emp.	3.84	3.98	.02	.26	.15	-			
5 Strength of prior culture	3.52	.73	-.03	-.03	-.07	.03	(.77)[b]		
6 Length of prior similar professional experience	2.60	4.36	.08	.23	.31	.31	.01	-	
7 Length of prior similar task experience	3.87	2.49	.05	.30	.36	.41	-.01	.28	-
8 Direct Info. Seeking – Org.	3.55	.80	.00	-.09	-.07	-.32	-.19	-.08	-.19
9 Indirect Info. Seeking – Org	4.26	.59	.05	.00	-.05	-.20	-.17	-.03	-.12
10 Direct Info. Seeking – Role	3.92	.60	.01	-.12	-.11	-.20	-.12	-.02	-.15
11 Indirect Info. Seeking – Role	4.35	.52	.02	-.09	-.16	-.18	-.08	-.08	-.14
12 Direct Info. Seeking – Task	5.25	.77	.04	-.25	-.26	-.20	-.02	-.31	-.32
13 Indirect Info. Seeking – Task	3.02	.67	-.05	-.02	-.03	.00	.00	-.06	-.03
14 Org. Goals and Values Socialization (Self-rating))	5.71	.79	.00	-.07	-.06	-.33	-.35	-.14	-.18
15 Org. Goals and Values Socialization (Supv.-rating)	5.57	.66	-.08	-.00	-.06	-.19	-.16	-.17	-.15
16 Role Clarity (Self-rating)	5.87	.60	.01	-.05	-.11	-.11	-.05	-.03	-.07
17 Role Clarity (Supv.-rating)	5.08	.99	.01	-.01	-.06	-.27	-.07	-.16	-.23
18 Job Task Knowledge / Perf. (Self-rating)	5.06	.54	.01	.13	.15	.10	-.02	.30	.24
19 Job Task Knowledge / Perf. (Supv.-rating)	4.01	.53	-.01	.20	.19	.16	-.09	.12	.21
20 Job Satisfaction	4.72	.72	-.01	-.08	-.09	-.09	-.11	.02	-.04
21 Organizational Commitment	4.81	.57	.04	.03	.05	-.14	-.20	.06	.03
22 Intent to Turnover	4.22	.77	.02	.07	.03	.07	.09	-.02	-.01
23 Organizational Commitment (Time1)	5.21	.54	.06	.03	.05	-.02	-.05	-.05	.07
24 Intent to Turnover (Time1)	2.8	1.07	.01	.00	-.03	-.05	.03	.07	-.03

[a] N=423 except for correlations involving supervisor rated variables (12, 14, and 16) for which the N=291. All correlations above .07 are significant at the $p<.05$ level except for correlations involving the supervisor rated variables (12, 14, and 16) for which correlations above .09 are significant at the $p<.05$ level. [b] Reliabilities (coefficient alpha) are shown on the diagonal when available.

Table 3 (cont'd)

Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations of Study Variables

Variable	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1 Gender									
2 Age									
3 Rank									
4 Tenure at most recent emp.									
5 Strength of prior culture									
6 Length of prior similar professional experience									
7 Length of prior similar task experience									
8 Direct Info. Seeking – Org.	(.73)								
9 Indirect Info. Seeking – Org	.24	(.82)							
10 Direct Info. Seeking – Role	.20	.10	(.80)						
11 Indirect Info. Seeking – Role	.09	.40	.14	(.76)					
12 Direct Info. Seeking – Task	.08	.04	.11	.12	(.72)				
13 Indirect Info. Seeking – Task	.02	.02	.09	.07	.19	(.85)			
14 Org. Goals and Values Socialization (Self-rating))	.31	.24	.17	.11	.10	-.04	(.86)		
15 Org. Goals and Values Socialization (Supv.-rating)	.17	.10	.18	.16	.10	.03	.45	(.83)	
16 Role Clarity (Self-rating)	.10	.15	.33	.30	.08	.08	.20	.14	(.83)
17 Role Clarity (Supv.-rating)	.38	.11	.32	.10	.07	.05	.21	.20	.32
18 Job Task Knowledge / Perf. (Self-rating)	-.03	.01	-.02	-.02	-.23	.03	.02	-.07	.04
19 Job Task Knowledge / Perf. (Supv.-rating)	-.15	-.06	.09	-.03	-.14	-.10	.04	.15	.09
20 Job Satisfaction	.06	.08	.13	.10	.05	-.01	.31	.11	.37
21 Organizational Commitment	.11	.15	.14	.14	-.03	.03	.45	.15	.36
22 Intent to Turnover	-.03	-.08	-.10	-.07	-.06	.05	-.18	-.02	-.12
23 Organizational Commitment (Time1)	.09	.00	.03	.00	.01	.04	.10	.02	.05
24 Intent to Turnover (Time1)	-.03	.01	.04	-.02	.00	.04	-.02	.01	.01

Note. [a]N=423 except for correlations involving supervisor rated variables (12, 14, and 16) for which the N=291. All correlations above .07 are significant at the $p<.05$ level except for correlations involving the supervisor rated variables (12, 14, and 16) for which correlations above .09 are significant at the $p<.05$ level. [b] Reliabilities (coefficient alpha) are shown on the diagonal when available

Table 3 (cont'd)

Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations of Study Variables

Variable	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
17 Role Clarity (Supv.-rating)	(.69)							
18 Job Task Knowledge / Perf. (Self-rating)	-.13	(.78)						
19 Job Task Knowledge / Perf. (Supv.-rating)	.07	.15	(.80)					
20 Job Satisfaction	.02	.25	-.07	(.86)				
21 Organizational Commitment	.15	.40	.03	.35	(.82)			
22 Intent to Turnover	.05	-.16	-.09	-.43	-.15	(.73)		
23 Organizational Commitment (Time1)	-.05	.05	.08	.01	.14	-.08	(.78)	
24 Intent to Turnover (Time1)	-.07	.01	.00	-.01	-.03	.03	-.45	-

Note. [a]N=423 except for correlations involving supervisor rated variables (12, 14, and 16) for which the N=291. All correlations above .07 are significant at the $p<.05$ level except for correlations involving the supervisor rated variables (12, 14, and 16) for which correlations above .09 are significant at the $p<.05$ level. [b] Reliabilities (coefficient alpha) are shown on the diagonal when available

$p < .01$) OGVS ratings of study participants. Together, the two variables predicted a significant amount of variance in both self ($R^2 = .23$, $p < .01$) and supervisor ($R^2 = .05$, $p < .01$) ratings of OGVS.

Hypotheses 2a and 2b predicted similar relationships between the same prior work experience variables and direct/indirect organizational goal and value information seeking. Regression results for these hypotheses can be found in Table 5. In order to examine hypothesis 2a, most recent employer tenure and culture strength were included in step 1 of a two-step hierarchical regression with organizational level information seeking as the criterion. The multiplicative product of the two variables was entered in a second step to examine the potential interaction (H:2b) between the

Table 4

Regression Results Testing the Effect of Prior Organizational-Level Work Experience on Ratings of Organizational Goal and Value Socialization

	Criterion – Organizational Goal and Value Socialization	
Predictors	Self-Rating	Supervisor Rating
Step 1		
Tenure at Most Recent Employer (T)	-.32**	-.18**
Culture Strength (CS)	-.34**	-.15**
R^2	.23**	.05**
Step 2		
T x CS	.14	.09
Step 2 R^2	.23**	.05**
ΔR^2	.00	.00

Note. N=493 for self ratings. N=291 for supervisor ratings. * = p<.05. ** = p<.01 (two-tailed)

two variables. The same pattern of results found for hypotheses 1a and 1b was found for hypotheses 2a and 2b. A strong negative effect for most recent employer tenure was found on both direct (β = -.31, $p < .01$) and indirect (β = -.20, $p < .01$) organizational goal and value information seeking thereby providing support for hypothesis 2a, although the effect was more pronounced for direct information seeking. Strength of prior culture had significant but more equal negative direct effects on direct (β = -.18, $p < .01$) and indirect (β = -.16, $p < .01$) information seeking. Together, the two variables predicted a significant amount of variance in both direct (R^2 = .14, $p < .01$) and indirect (R^2 = .07, $p < .01$) information seeking. No support

was found for hypothesis 1b's prediction of moderation (Step 2's $\Delta R^2 = .00$, n.s.) therefore providing no support for hypothesis 2b.

Hypothesis 3 predicted positive relationships between organizational level information seeking and OGVS and that these relationships would mediate the effects of prior work experience on OGVS. Regression results for these hypotheses can be found in Table 6. In order to show the mediating effects of hypothesis 3, both direct and indirect information seeking were included in step 1 of a two-step hierarchical regression with OGVS as the criterion. Both prior work experience variables were

Table 5

Regression Results Testing the Effect of Prior Organizational-Level Work Experience on Organizational Goal and Value Information Seeking Behavior

	Criterion – Organizational Goal and Value Information Seeking Behavior	
Predictors	Direct Information Seeking	Indirect Information Seeking
Step 1		
Tenure at Most Recent Employer (T)	-.31**	-.20**
Culture Strength (CS)	-.18**	-.16**
R^2	.14**	.07**
Step 2		
T x CS	-.27	.08
Step 2 R^2	.14**	.07**
ΔR^2	.00	.00

Note. N=493. * = p<.05. ** = p<.01 (two-tailed)

entered in a second step thereby allowing us to see the effects of these variables after controlling for the variance predicted by the information seeking variables. As shown in the table, direct organizational level information seeking behaviors had a significant positive effect on both self ($\beta = .27$, $p < .01$) and supervisor ($\beta = .15$, $p < .01$) ratings of OGVS. Indirect information seeking had a significant positive direct effect on self ($\beta = .17$, $p < .01$), but not on supervisor ($\beta = .06$, n.s.) ratings of OGVS. Together these variables predicted a significant amount of variance in both self ($R^2 = .13$, $p < .01$) and supervisor ($R^2 = .03$, $p < .01$) ratings of OGVS, although the effect was much more pronounced for self ratings. Even after controlling for the effects of information seeking on ratings of OGVS, both prior work experience variables still predicted significant variance in both self (Step 2's $\Delta R^2 = .14$, $p < .01$) and supervisor (Step 2's $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $p < .01$) OGVS ratings. However, the fact that the variance predicted by these two prior work experience variables was reduced by controlling for information seeking (self: $R^2 = .23$ vs. $R^2 = .14$; supervisor: $R^2 = .06$ vs. $R^2 = .03$) leads to a finding of partial mediation for both self and supervisor ratings of organizational goal and value socialization.

In sum, strong support was found for hypotheses 1a and 2a, mostly positive support for hypothesis 3 and no support for hypotheses 1b and 2b although those hypotheses introduced some potentially important findings. The length of time a newcomer spent working for their most previous employer hindered the newcomers' ability to socialize into their new organization in terms of adapting to the new organization's goals and values. In fact, the strength of the culture in that prior

Table 6

Regression results testing the effects of information seeking behavior and prior organizational-level work experience on organizational goal and value socialization

	Criterion – Organizational Goal and Value Socialization	
Predictors	Self-Ratings	Supv. Ratings
Step 1		
Direct Information Seeking	.27**	.15**
Indirect Information Seeking	.17**	.06
R^2	.13**	.03**
Step 2		
Tenure at Most Recent Employer	-.26**	-.11
Culture Strength	-.30**	-.13*
Step 2 R^2	.26**	.06**
ΔR^2	.14**	.03*

Note. N=493. * = p<.05. ** = p<.01 (two-tailed)

organization also has strong and independent negative effects on the newcomers' OGVS. However, there was no evidence found for the moderating effects of culture strength on the relationship between work experience and OGVS. The amount of time a person spent working for their previous employer also tended to keep newcomers from seeking out information related to their new organization's goals and values, but more so in terms of direct information seeking than indirect. The strength of the previous organization's culture also had independent negative effects on both types of organizational information seeking. Direct and indirect information seeking about

organizational level goals and values helped newcomers to adapt to the organization's goals and values although only direct information seeking was found to influence the supervisor's opinion about the newcomer's socialization. As an explanatory mechanism, the fact that individuals who worked for a previous employer for an extended period of time led to less information seeking was found to be part of the reason for why those individuals failed to socialize into the organization at the organizational level.

Role Level Experience. Partial support was found for the effects of length of prior similar professional experience on the role socialization of newcomers (role clarity/understanding). Hypothesis 4 predicted that prior similar professional experience (prior consulting experience in this study) would be negatively related to self and supervisor ratings of the newcomer's role clarity. Prior consulting experience did not have a significant negative correlation with newcomer's self-ratings of their role clarity ($r = -.03$, n.s.; Table 3, variables 6 and 16) although the correlation was in the predicted direction. However, prior consulting experience did have a significant negative effect on supervisor ratings of their subordinate's understanding of their roles and responsibilities ($r = -.16$, $p < .01$; Table 3, variables 6 and 17). Therefore, hypothesis 4 received partial support. Hypothesis 5 predicted that prior professional experience would have a negative effect on direct and indirect role information seeking behaviors. Again, results were found for only one half of this prediction. Prior similar professional experience had a significant negative effect on indirect role information seeking ($r = -.08$, $p < .01$; Table 2, variables 6 and 11), but not on direct

role information seeking (r = -.02, n.s.; Table 2, variables 6 and 10) leading to a finding of partial support for hypothesis 5. It should be noted though that when running these analyses with a control variable step included, a regression equation including age and rank found that the rank variable was a significant negative predictor of both role clarity (β = -.13, $p < .01$) and indirect role information seeking (β = -.16, $p < .01$) and that once rank was controlled for, prior consulting experience was no longer a significant predictor of indirect role information seeking. This would seem to indicate that individuals in higher ranking positions might have a more difficult time understanding their roles and responsibilities in their new organization.

The regression results testing for the direct effects of role information seeking on role clarity/understanding and the mediating effect of this relationship on the relationship between prior similar professional experience and role clarity/ understanding (Hypothesis 6) can be found in Table 7. In order to show the direct and mediating effects predicted in hypothesis 6, both direct and indirect information seeking were included in step 1 of a two-step hierarchical regression with Role clarity/understanding as the criterion. Both prior work experience variables were entered in a second step thereby allowing us to see the effects of these variables after controlling for the variance predicted by the information seeking variables. Strong positive direct effects were found for direct role information seeking on both self (β = .29, $p < .01$) and supervisor (β = .31, $p < .01$) ratings of role socialization. Indirect role information seeking had a significant positive effect on self ratings of role clarity (β = .26, $p < .01$), but not on supervisor ratings of role understanding (β = .05, p <

Table 7

Regression results testing the effects of role information seeking behavior and prior professional-level work experience on role clarity.

	Criterion – Role Clarity	
Predictors	Self-Ratings	Supv. Ratings
Step 1		
Direct Information-Seeking	.29**	.31**
Indirect Information-Seeking	.26**	.05
R^2	.17**	.10**
Step 2		
Prior Similar Professional Experience	-.00	-.14*
Step 2 R^2	.17**	.12**
ΔR^2	.00	.02*

Note. N=493 for self ratings. N=291 for supervisor ratings. * = p<.05. ** = p<.01 (two-tailed)

.01). Together these variables predicted a significant amount of variance in both self ($R^2 = .17$, $p < .01$) and supervisor ($R^2 = .10$, $p < .01$) ratings of role clarity/understanding. It is certainly not surprising given a non-significant correlation between consulting experience and role clarity that no mediating effect was found after controlling for information seeking (Step 2's $\Delta R^2 = .00$, n.s.) However, even after controlling for the effects of information seeking on supervisor ratings of role understanding, prior consulting experience still predicted significant variance (Step 2's $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $p < .01$). The fact that the variance predicted by prior consulting experience was reduced by controlling for information seeking ($R^2 = .03$ vs. $R^2 = .02$)

leads to a finding of partial mediation although that effect is obviously small from a practical standpoint.

In total, results were mixed at the role level of socialization. No results were seen for the effect of prior consulting experience on the newcomer's feelings of role clarity approximately 4 months after being hired. However, higher levels of prior consulting experience did lead toward supervisors thinking the newcomer had less understanding of their roles and responsibilities in the organization 4 months after being hired. Both direct and indirect role information seeking led to higher levels of role clarity for newcomers, but only direct information seeking behaviors led to supervisors believing that their subordinates had a better grasp of their roles and responsibilities.

Task Level Experience. Hypothesis 7 predicted the relationship we have seen in selection over and over again, namely, that prior task level experience will be positively related to task level knowledge and performance. Consistent with prior meta-analytical findings, the amount of prior task experience was significantly and positively correlated with both self ($r = .24$, $p < .01$; Table 3, variables 7 and 18) and supervisor ($r = .21$, $p < .01$; Table 3, variables 7 and 19) ratings of performance. Hypothesis 8 predicted a negative relationship between prior task experience and task related information seeking since individuals who already know how to perform these tasks will not need to seek out this type of information. Partial support was found for this hypothesis as a strong significant negative effect was found between prior task experience and direct task information seeking ($r = -.32$, $p < .01$; Table 2, variables 7

and 12), but no relationship was found between task experience and indirect task information seeking ($r = -.03$, n.s. ; Table 3, variables 7 and 13). (*It should also be noted that when examining control variables, age was also a significant negative predictor of direct task information seeking ($\beta = -.15$, $p < .01$) and that when included in the regression equation, it lowered the beta of prior task experience from -.32 to -.26.)

Hypothesis 9 predicted positive relationships between task information seeking and task knowledge/performance and the mediating effect of information seeking on the relationship between prior task experience and task knowledge/performance. This would help to explain why the relationship between prior experience and performance tends to decrease over time. Regression results for this hypothesis can be found in Table 8. In order to show the direct and mediating effects, both direct and indirect task information seeking were included in step 1 of a two-step hierarchical regression with self and supervisor ratings of task knowledge and performance as the criterion. Prior task experience was entered in a second step thereby allowing us to see the effects of experience after controlling for the variance predicted by the information seeking variables. Contrary to the predicted direction, direct task information seeking was actually found to have a significant direct negative effect on self ($\beta = -.24$, $p < .01$) and supervisor ($\beta = -.12$, $p < .01$) ratings of task knowledge/performance. Indirect task information seeking was found to have non-significant relationships with both self ($\beta = .07$, $p < .01$) and supervisor ($\beta = -.07$, $p < .01$) ratings of task knowledge/performance when direct information seeking was included in the

regression equation. Even after controlling for direct and indirect information seeking, prior task level experience was still a significant predictor of self (Step 2's $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $p < .01$) and supervisor (Step 2's $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $p < .01$) ratings of task knowledge/performance. In addition, the mediating effects of task-related information seeking were relatively non-existent for both self (no change in R^2) and supervisor ($R^2 = .036$ vs. $R^2 = .03$) ratings of task knowledge/ performance.

Table 8

Regression Results Testing the Mediating Effect of Information Seeking Behavior (Task) on the Relationship Between Prior Task Work Experience on Task Knowledge / Performance

	Criterion – Task Knowledge / Performance	
Predictors	Self-Ratings	Supv. Ratings
Step 1		
Direct Information-Seeking	-.24**	-.12**
Indirect Information-Seeking	.07	-.07
R^2	.06**	.02**
Step 2		
Prior Task Experience	.18**	.18**
Step 2 R^2	.09**	.05**
ΔR^2	.03**	.03**

Note. N=493 for self ratings. N=291 for supervisor ratings. * = p<.05. ** = p<.01 (two-tailed)

In sum, some consistent and some contradictory results were found. Prior task experience indeed does lead to short-term (4 month) performance results. Also, consistent with hypothesized results, greater levels of prior task experience did lead to less direct task information seeking. Indirect task information seeking was not

affected by prior experience, but it is important to note that this type of information seeking had the lowest frequency of all types of information seeking in the study and was significantly lower than direct task information seeking which was the most frequent type of information seeking performed by organizational newcomers (Mean indirect (3.02) < Mean direct (5.25), $p < .01$). However, contrary to the proposed hypothesis, direct task information seeking seems to have a negative effect on the ratings of performance by both newcomers and supervisors. There are a number of post hoc explanations for this, but these will be covered in the discussion section.

Traditional Distal Socialization Work-Outcomes. Hypothesis 10 predicted that each of the three socialization dimensions (newcomer rated) would be significant predictors of the more traditional outcome measures of job satisfaction, organizational commitment and turnover intentions among the newcomers. Since common method variance was a concern with this hypothesis, two of these measures (organizational commitment and intent to turnover) were collected just as newcomers entered the organization at Time 1 to be used as control variables in these analyses. Regression results for these variables can be found in Table 9. In order to control for initial levels of organizational commitment and intent to turnover, a two-step hierarchical regression was used to help partial out the variance that might have already existed at Time 1 of the study. As can be seen in the table, all three dimensions - OGVS (β = .22, $p < .01$), role clarity (β = .33, $p < .01$), and job task knowledge/performance (β = .24, $p < .01$) were significant and positive predictors of job satisfaction (overall R^2 = .24). Organizational commitment was positively and significantly predicted by all

three socialization dimensions – OGVS ($\beta = .44$, $p < .01$), role clarity ($\beta = .29$, $p < .01$), and task knowledge/performance ($\beta = .38$, $p < .01$) even after controlling for prior organizational commitment (Step 2 $\Delta R^2 = .42$, $p < .01$). Two of the socialization dimensions – OGVS ($\beta = -.17$, $p < .01$) and job task knowledge/performance ($\beta = -.14$, $p < .01$) had significant negative effects on turnover intentions while the third, role clarity ($\beta = -.08$, $p < .10$) approached conventional levels of statistical significance. All three of the items together had a significant negative effect on turnover intentions even after controlling for the initial Time 1 turnover intentions of newcomers (Step 2 $\Delta R^2 = .06$, $p < .01$).

Table 9

Regression results testing the effects of socialization on traditional Work-outcome measures

	Criterion – Work-Outcome Measures		
Predictors	Job Satisfaction	Org. Commitment	Turnover Intentions
Step 1			
Pre-Measures	n.a.	.13**	.17**
R^2		.02**	.03**
Step 2			
Org. Goals and Values Socialization	.22**	.40**	-.17**
Role Clarity	.33**	.29**	-.08
Job Task Knowledge / Performance	.23**	.38**	-.14**
R^2	.24**	.44**	.09**
ΔR^2		.42**	.06**

Note. N=493. * = p<.05. ** = p<.01 (two-tailed)

Additional Analyses.

Multidimensionality of the Work Experience Construct. After examination of the correlation matrix, several of the prior work experience variables were found to be correlated with socialization dimensions other than the dimension at the same level of analysis. To examine these relationships, all prior work experience variables were entered into regression equations predicting each of the self and supervisor rated socialization dimensions. The results of these analyses can be found in Table 10. Strongly supporting the multidimensionality of the work experience construct, only length of time at previous employer and culture strength significantly predicted both self and supervisor ratings of organizational goals and values socialization. Also supporting multidimensionality, prior task experience was the only variable to significantly predict supervisor ratings of task knowledge and performance. Prior task experience significantly predicted self ratings of task knowledge and performance, but prior consulting experience was also found to be a significant predictor of that outcome. The role level of analysis was much less clear as none of the prior work experience variables predicted role clarity and length of time spent at most recent organization along with prior task experience both had significant negative effects on supervisor ratings of role clarity. These results are discussed further in the following chapter, but they would certainly indicate stronger dimensionality at the most macro and micro levels of socialization while the role level of analysis seems to be much less clear.

Table 10

Regression Results Examining the Multidimensionality of Prior Work Experience Variables

Predictors	Self Ratings			Supervisor Ratings		
	Organizational Goals and Values	Role Clarity	Task Knowledge and Performance	Organizational Goals and Values	Role Clarity	Task Knowledge and Performance
Organizational Experience	-.29**	-.10	-.06	-.13*	-.19**	.06
Strength of Prior Culture	-.34**	-.04	-.02	-.15**	-.06	-.10
Professional Experience	-.03	.01	.27**	-.10	-.07	.06
Task Experience	-.05	-.04	.19**	-.06	-.13*	.17**
R^2	.23**	.02	.12**	.08**	.10**	.06**

Note. N=493 for self ratings. N=291 for supervisor ratings. * = p<.05. ** = p<.01 (two-tailed)

Curvilinear Effects of Prior Organizational Work Experience. Given that previous studies have shown that organizations can socialize their employees within a relatively short period of time, it made substantive sense to examine the effect of prior organizational work experience on the outcome variables of interest from the standpoint that there might be a curvilinear relationship present. In other words, there could be a point at which prior organizational experience ceases to hinder socialization in new organizations. In order to examine this possibility, previous analyses were reexamined using hierarchical regression as the variable "tenure at most recent employer" was squared and entered in a subsequent step following the initial entry of the main variable. Significance of the quadratic term is measured by the ΔR^2 after the term is entered into the equation. Tenure at most recent employer had a significant curvilinear effect with every outcome variable it had previously been analyzed with. Results for each of the outcomes of interest are presented in Table 11. Plotting the regression equation in each instance indicates a negatively sloping, but concave upward curve. The quadratic term for tenure in most recent employer added a significant increment in R^2 for direct predictions of both self (Step 2 $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $p < .01$) and supervisor (Step 2 $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $p < .01$) ratings of OGVS. In addition, the quadratic term showed a significant increment in R^2 for predictions of both direct (Step 2 $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $p < .01$) and indirect (Step 2 $\Delta R^2 = .01$, $p < .05$) organizational-level information seeking. To examine the same equations presented in Table 5, after controlling for information seeking, the quadratic term (entered in step 3) gave a significant increment in R^2 in the prediction of both self (Step 3 $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $p < .01$)

Table 11

Regression results testing the curvilinear effects of prior organizational-level work experience on selected outcomes.

		Criterion – Organizational Goal and Value Socialization	
Step of Prediction		Self-Ratings	Supervisor-Ratings
Step 2 (Table 3)	R^2	.26**	.07**
	ΔR^2	.03**	.03**

		Criterion – Organizational Goal and Value Information Seeking Behavior	
		Direct Information Seeking	Direct Information Seeking
Step 2 (Table 4)	R^2	.17**	.08**
	ΔR^2	.03**	.01*

		Criterion – Organizational Goal and Value Socialization	
		Self-Ratings	Supervisor-Ratings
Step 3 (Table 5)	R^2	.28**	.08**
	ΔR^2	.02**	.02*

Note. Each step listed in the table above entered the quadratic term for tenure at most recent employer. N=493 for self ratings and information seeking criterion. N=291 for supervisor ratings. * = $p<.05$. ** = $p<.01$ (two-tailed)

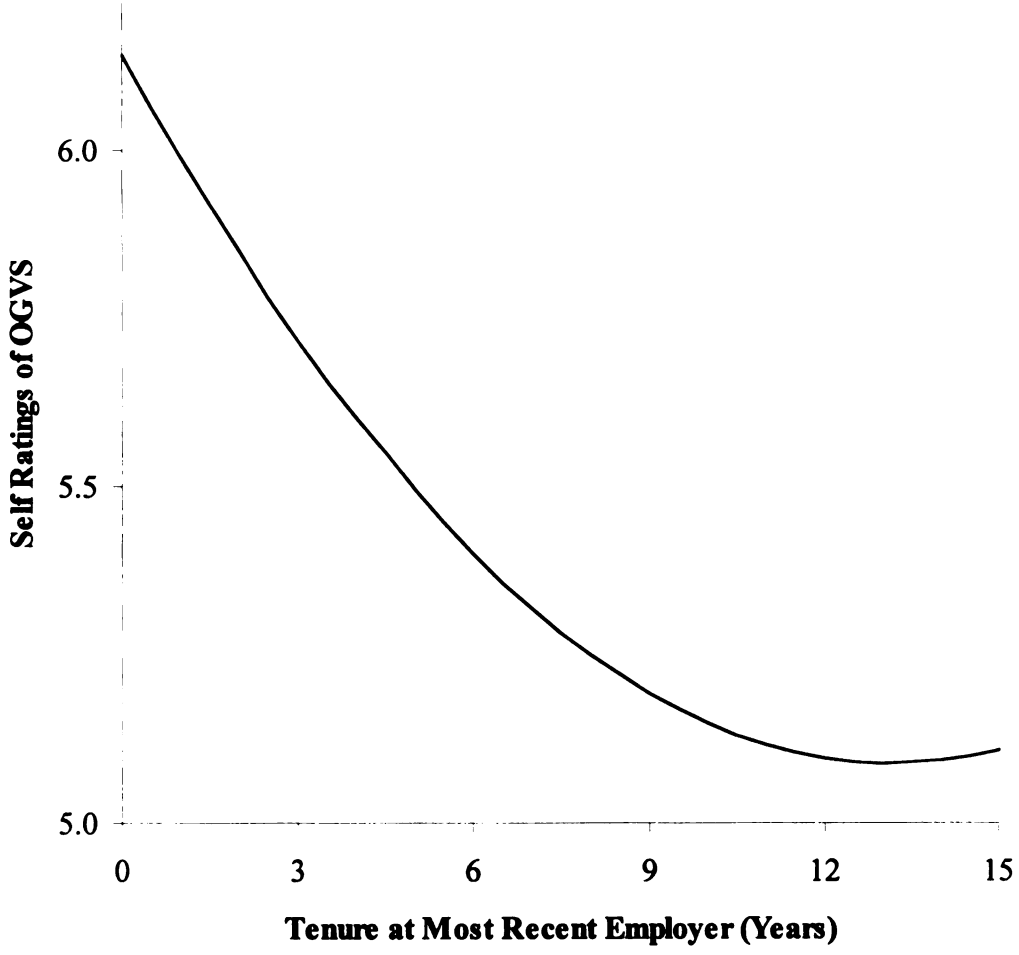
and supervisor (Step 3 $\Delta R^2 = .02$, $p < .05$) ratings of OGVS.

The minima of the polynomial regression equation is certainly of some interest in helping to determine at which point work experience starts to lose its negative effect on organizational goal and value socialization. A plot of the curvilinear relationship found between tenure at most recent employer and self-ratings of OGVS can be found in Figure 8. The minima of the curve in Figure 8 occurs at 13.15 years. In every

examination of the regression plots of the curvilinear effects found in Table 10, the plots looked similar to the one presented in Figure 8 and the bottom of the quadratic curve did not occur until after 10 years of tenure with the most recent organization suggesting that individuals continue to be molded well into their time spent in an organization. However, interpreting those points as population values should be approached with some caution (Cohen and Cohen, 1983). Similar curvilinear effects were not found for either of the other two work experience constructs.

Figure 8

Curvilinear effects of Tenure at Most Recent Employer on Self Ratings of Organizational Goal and Value Socialization



CHAPTER 5

GENERAL DISCUSSION

This study examined the effects of prior work experience on the information seeking behaviors and socialization of 423 organizational newcomers over a five month period of time. The results of the study generally indicated that prior work experience can have both positive and negative consequences for the newcomer depending on the types of experiences acquired. Prior task experience was found to have positive effects on initial task performance in the organization, but prior organizational experience tended to hinder socialization to the organization's goals and values.

Results indicated that individuals spending a longer amount of time in their most recent organization were less likely to seek information about their new organization's goals and values once hired which was a partial reason for why they were much more likely to have a difficult time adapting to their new organization's goals and values. Individuals coming from organizations with stronger cultures also sought out less information and experienced similar problems adjusting to their new organization's goals and values. Consistent with much of the selection literature's findings, prior task experience led to higher levels of task knowledge and performance as rated by both newcomers and supervisors. As expected, prior task experience led to less task related information seeking, but contrary to expectations, seeking out information about tasks actually led to lower task knowledge and performance ratings by both newcomers and supervisors. Results at the newcomer's role level were much

less clear. None of the prior work experience variables had an effect on newcomer's own perceptions of their role clarity, however, the greater the amount of time a newcomer spent in their prior organization and the more task experience a newcomer possessed led to their supervisor believing that they were less clear about their new roles and responsibilities in the organization. All three areas of socialization content measured in the study had significant effects on traditional work outcome measures such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. Implications of these findings for each of the subject areas in the paper are discussed below.

Work Experience. Certainly one of the largest contributions of this study should be that future researchers view work experience as a multidimensional construct. Individuals possess a wealth of knowledge, develop attitudes, and view the world and their work environment through different lenses before ever stepping foot inside the organization. Each individual can possess prior work experiences that both help and hinder adjustment to a new employer. The results of this study support the notion that individuals who work for a long time for any one organization can develop "blinders" or schema that help to develop their perceptions of what an organization should be. Therefore when they enter a new organization, certain assumptions are made that keep them from seeking out information that might disconfirm their notion of the way they believe the workplace is supposed to be. The results of this study clearly point out that neither newcomers or their supervisors feel that newcomers who have spent longer periods of time in their most recent previous organization have

adjusted to the goals and values of the new organization as well as individuals who don't have that length of experience spent in one place. Obviously, we should keep in mind that we are speaking of relatively short-term socialization (4-5 months). Whether these individuals will adapt further over time is a different question. Numerous researchers have found that socialization takes place over a relatively short period of time (Bauer & Green, 1994; Klein & Weaver, 2000; Wanous, 1992), and Morrison (1993) noted that this early socialization seems to be followed by a relatively stable period. To the degree these findings are true, this early lack of socialization could very well be with newcomers and their resulting attitudes toward the organization and their jobs for a very long period time. On the other hand, the curvilinear relationship between prior organizational experience and organizational goal and value socialization found in this sample would seem to suggest that employees continue to be molded by their organization for a long period of time. It could very well be that certain types of attitudes or knowledge develop in employees at a more rapid pace than others. It is certainly important for future research to examine whether some socialization content areas form more quickly than others or whether other aspects of employee development such as a formation of mental models might form over a lengthier period of time.

One of the more interesting findings of the study is that the culture strength of a newcomer's prior organization had independent but yet similar effects on newcomer socialization. These effects are certainly consistent with the ideas that some cultures are stronger than others (Schein, 1996) and that those cultures can be seen as a form of

"social control" over their members by shaping their beliefs and views (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996). The lack of a moderating effect for the two variables together, or the concept of "density" in work experience, is both confusing and enlightening. Certainly if the above argument that newcomers socialize quickly into their new organizations and that their subsequent attitudes stabilize for a period of time holds, then we would not expect length of time spent in a prior organization to matter. However, the results show that the length of time spent in that prior organization matters both for the newcomer and for the new organization that hired them. The interesting finding in a lack of moderation is that for individuals who came from strong cultures, the length of time spent in that culture did not matter. If individuals are forced to adapt more quickly to strong cultures and adaptation takes longer in cultures that are not as demanding, that could be a possible explanation for the current findings. The finding that prior organizational experience has a curvilinear relationship with organizational socialization certainly seems to provide partial support for that argument. Future examinations of prior work experience and socialization should attempt to explicate this relationship. The idea of density of work experience certainly has very high face validity and the fact that prior culture strength was such a significant predictor helps to bolster that argument. It could very well be that stronger effects and the moderating effects sought in this study would be found for similarity of culture rather than simply prior culture strength.

Consistent with much of the selection literature, prior task experience helped to predict self and supervisor rated task knowledge and performance at the four month

mark. Finding this result at the same time as the results presented above helps to show the dimensionality of work experience as well as the dimensionality of socialization and performance. From an organization's perspective, there are definite advantages to hiring individuals with prior task experience as they are able to hit the ground running.

A disappointing result of this study was the lack of results found for prior professional experience. Even though prior consulting experience led toward less role information seeking, there was no significant effect found between it and the newcomer's role clarity. Although a significant relationship was found between prior consulting experience and the supervisor's ratings of the newcomer's role understanding, this relationship did not hold after controlling for other types of prior work experience. Post hoc analyses did show that prior consulting experience had a strong direct effect on newcomer's beliefs about their own task knowledge and performance; it had no effect on supervisor's ratings of the same. Prior research has shown that occupational experience does affect the psychological functioning of individuals (Mortimer & Simmons, 1978; Mortimer & Lorence, 1979; Frese, 1982), so it could very well be that consulting is just not one of those occupations for which stronger effects are found. Consulting by nature is a field that comes in many different forms with high levels of discretion. An individual can "consult" on almost anything. Individuals in this sample focused almost exclusively on technology or computer oriented tasks. It is possible that different results would be found for an occupation with stronger, less discretionary roles. Nicholson (1984) hypothesized that individuals moving into jobs with high levels of discretion that had little novelty (more work

experience) would have little personal development in their new jobs, but would tend to try to change the roles their job entailed. Certainly a little support was found for that in terms of supervisor ratings, but further research is needed to weed out his specific hypotheses.

It could also be that this middle level of socialization, "roles and responsibilities" has as much to do with a mixture of what the organization's goals and values are and what the tasks involved in the job are as it is its own separate construct. The fact that length of time at previous employer and prior task experience both led to supervisors' believing their subordinates were less clear about their roles and responsibilities would tend to support that argument. Newcomers are likely to have a little more leeway in terms of roles and responsibilities in their new job then they are with either task or organizational goals (Nicholson, 1984).

Information Seeking. On the whole, this paper provides much support for the continued examination of information seeking by organizational newcomers. Although not directly measured, the results would seem to show that the expected relationships between prior work experience and Miller and Jablin's (1991) model of information seeking are likely true: Individuals with more experience are less uncertain, have higher perceived social costs to seeking information, and thus are likely to seek less of it. Implications were found for all four major areas of the information seeking literature discussed earlier in the paper. Probably the most important finding is in the area of antecedents of information seeking behavior. One of the most overlooked antecedents of information seeking is, simply, prior

information. As discussed earlier in the paper, much of the information seeking literature has been studied under the assumption that all individuals enter the organization with the same level of information. This study helps to show that assumption is clearly not the case. More importantly, it also helps to show that not all information that newcomers know is good information. Prior information and mental models about the way things are supposed to work are not always correct. There seem to be advantages in some aspects of socialization to entering an organization with a "clean slate". Strong results were found at both the organizational and role level that seeking information helped newcomers to learn and adjust to their jobs and organization. Prior organizational experience (i.e. prior knowledge or information) kept many individuals from seeking out new and probably more correct information.

One of the most confusing findings in the study was the finding that task-level information seeking was found to lead to lower levels of self and supervisor ratings of task knowledge/performance. Given that it is fairly well accepted that individuals with lower levels of experience catch up in performance over time through learning new skills, practice, etc. (Quinones et al., 1995), the finding that individuals who sought out task information had lower levels of performance was not expected. It is possible that not enough time had passed (4 months) for those individuals to catch up in performance to those who already possessed task level experience. In other words, individuals who sought out task-related information were seeking that information because they were not performing as well. This would help to explain the correlations between previous task experience and task knowledge/performance (self, .24;

supervisor, .21) which, frankly, the author of this study expected to be higher at the time period in which it was measured. It could very well be that had performance been measured at two months instead of four months, the correlation would have been higher. Just as equally, it would be expected that the relationship between task experience and task performance will diminish over time. For more complex jobs, the time for that relationship to diminish will be longer and vice-versa for more simple jobs.

Examining the patterns of information seeking leads to some interesting findings as well. As noted earlier in the paper, and consistent with other information seeking studies, task information was sought out the most, followed by role information and then organizational goal and value information (with the exception of indirect task level information seeking which had the lowest average frequency). However, a closer look at the descriptive statistics shows that the variance among those types of information seeking does not substantially change. These results would suggest that just because an individual seeks for a specific type of information at a lower frequency does not necessarily make that information less important in terms of socialization. Another consistent result throughout the study was that direct information seeking had much stronger effects with the outcomes of interest, regardless of direction, than did indirect information seeking. In fact, direct information seeking was the only significant predictor of supervisor ratings across all three content areas. Task level information seeking leading to lower supervisor ratings of performance would be very consistent with the ideas presented by Morrison and

Bies (1991) that information seeking in and of itself can influence ratings because those individuals seeking information are seen as less competent. However, seeking out information directly can't be all be bad from that standpoint as it would seem that supervisors who witness direct seeking of organizational or role level information might see their employees as "trying to fit in" given that they were rated higher in terms of role clarity and adjustment to the organization's goals and values. Implications for both the outcomes of information seeking and information seeking and socialization content are similar. This study shows that matching the type of information being sought with outcomes at the same level of measurement is a major key to showing how and why information seeking is important.

Socialization. Many of the impacts on socialization have been discussed in the previous two sections, however, the current findings have a number of implications for organizational socialization as a field. First, prior work experiences were found to significantly affect the socialization process of organizational newcomers. As discussed in chapter 2, many other researchers have noted that individuals do not enter the organization with the same levels of information or expectations about their organization and work environment. The findings in this study do nothing but help to solidify that viewpoint. Second, information seeking behaviors at various levels were shown to be significant predictors of all three organizational socialization areas in this study. This study supports the fact that organizations affect individuals through socialization, but that individuals play a very important role in that socialization process. Although proactive socialization research has had mixed results in the past

when it comes to finding outcomes, much of the reason for this might be the fact that actual learning or adaptation is not what was being measured as an outcome (Ostroff & Koslowski, 1992). Finally, and along the same lines, this study provides strong support for the continued use of various dimensions of socialization content as outcomes of the socialization process. Individuals are socialized at many different levels within an organization. This study used two of the measures of the socialization dimensions put forth by Chao and colleagues (1994) because they seemed the most theoretically relevant to the study at hand. Further use of these types of content areas should continue, and certainly the six content areas developed in that study are not exhaustive. Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions are well established constructs with a wide nomological network beneath them. However, they are not socialization; they are the byproducts of it. Showing a link between socialization and these more traditional outcomes (as this study does) is a major step in showing the importance of socialization since we know more about the effects of those variables, but many other factors affect these more distal outcomes as well (Chao, et al, 1994; Fisher, 1986).

Limitations of the Present Research.

There are several potential limitations of this research. First, much of the data collected for the study was self-reported by newcomers through the use of surveys. Certainly concerns about the subjective nature of these ratings do need to be considered. Although self estimates of performance have been found to be problematic (Atwater & Yammarino, 1997) it certainly can be argued that how an

individual feels about their own performance and socialization greatly affects their attitudes toward the organization (as results in this study would indicate). Similarly, supervisor estimates of performance can be biased (DeNisi, Cafferty, & Meglino, 1984; Boreman, 1991), but the fact is supervisor ratings are used for compensation, layoffs, and other purposes so, accurate or not, they are important. The fact that these ratings of performance and socialization were limited to specific aspects of performance and socialization and not general performance and socialization does help to alleviate some concerns. The study also helped to reduce those concerns by collecting two independent ratings of the socialization outcome measures which did show consistent results. The longitudinal nature of the research does minimize some of the potential for common method variance since individuals were surveyed at three separate times with more than two months between surveys.

A similar concern involves the lack of a stronger correlation between self and supervisor ratings of performance. Although these ratings do positively correlate with an r of .15, they do not correlate as highly as the self and supervisor ratings of either organizational goal and value socialization (r = .45) or role clarity (r = .32). Part of the reason for this lower correlation could be the fact that at the time of measurement, no formal feedback or appraisal meetings had been scheduled. On the other hand, the high correlation between self and supervisor ratings of organizational goal and value socialization are encouraging that both parties had tendencies to recognize adaptation (or the lack of) on this dimension.

A second concern is the fact that some researchers have voiced concerns about the measurement properties of completing surveys over a computer rather than the traditional survey form. A number of studies have been completed comparing on-line response patterns to traditional paper and pencil surveys (e.g., Church, 2001; Stanton, 1998). These studies have tended to find similar response patterns, levels of variability, and response rates between the two forms of data collection. In addition, the measurement properties found in this study are consistent with other studies that have used the same measures.

A third issue centers around sampling issues. One of the real advantages of this study was that it used a sample with two factors that helped to maximize the possible relationships among study variables, namely, a lack of institutional socialization practices and a strong organizational culture. Although the socialization trends mentioned in chapter 1 would indicate that some companies are moving away from institutionalized socialization, not all companies are. In addition, not all companies have a notably strong culture to which organizational newcomers are required to adapt. In fact, one of the large assumptions made in this study was that the current sample's company had a strong culture that required a significant amount of adaptation for newcomers to adjust. Just because some anecdotal evidence exists that suggests that this is the case, does not make it so. Although the results in the study (which showed stronger relationships than those found in past studies) provide some evidence that this might be the case, there is the likelihood that there are some cultures that require even more adaptation. To the degree that is so, the current results could be

an underestimate of effects that might be found under other circumstances. In sum, there is the possibility that generalizing these findings to organizations that don't meet the same criteria may be problematic. However, trends in both selection and in organizational socialization practices would indicate that the findings in this study will be relevant to many organizations in the future.

Practical Implications.

This study would suggest to practitioners that although it is possible to hire an experienced individual who will provide better short-term task performance, this performance may well be ameliorated by poor organizational and role adaptation. The gains in performance may be reduced by individuals who are dissatisfied with their jobs, less committed to their organization, and ultimately are more likely to leave the organization voluntarily.

This may sound like a prescription to hire individuals with no experience so that they can be more easily molded to fit the organization's goals. Nothing could be further from the truth. The strong implications of this study would suggest not giving up the advantages of performance gains organizations can reap by hiring individuals with prior task experience, but rather that companies must find a way to help them better adapt to their new work environments. Klein and Weaver (2000) showed that an organizational level training program designed to socialize individuals at the organizational level was possible and they found significant, positive results. Orientation programs that are designed to help individuals "unfreeze" their prior ideas about how organizations are supposed to work or be, might help to improve the

socialization of newcomers with prior levels of organizational work experience. It is important to begin to find ways both to increase the amount of information seeking done by these individuals regarding their new organizations and roles and to help them socialize in other ways. These things must be done relatively early in the process by organizations as this and other studies have been consistent in their findings that socialization at the organizational level can occur relatively quickly.

Future Research Directions.

While noting the limitations mentioned above, the study does have numerous implications for researchers. Future researchers should give careful attention to how work experience is measured. Simple measurement of "full-time work experience" is not adequate and will almost certainly understate the effects that prior work experience has on any outcomes of interest. Further research should be done on work experience at all levels with a particular focus on the "density" of prior work experiences (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998; Quinones et al., 1995). As evidenced in this study, quantitative measures of experience are not the only significant predictors of outcomes, the qualitative aspects of experiences are important considerations as well. Future research should use measures of prior experience that are *theoretically* based. Simply throwing in work experience as an extra variable in a study will not provide the results for which researchers should be looking.

Although negative relationships have been found between prior work experience and socialization in almost all of the studies that have examined the two variables together, special attention should be paid in the future to looking at the

differences in organizations that might make it more or less difficult for newcomer adaptation. When trying to replicate the findings of this study, future studies might be wise to look at the relationships not only across organizations that newcomers are adapting from, but also across the organizations that newcomers are adapting to. This would allow for a look at the variance in socialization practices and culture strength both in terms of the "adapting from" organizations and the "adapting to" organizations. In fact, to the degree this is a theory of "relative" strength, future researchers will almost have to begin measuring aspects of culture on both sides of the equation when looking at newcomers across organizations.

Research on how individuals adapt from one type of culture to another would be extremely beneficial. Of course this would require the identification of certain types or the "content" of cultures to begin with, a proposition that is easier said than done. This study examined culture in terms of the strength of the agreement between organizational members on certain dimensions. Future studies should likely focus on what the content is that those organizational members are agreeing on. Regardless of the strength of the newcomer's prior organizational culture, similarities between two cultures on certain dimensions should allow newcomers to adjust more easily and quickly. For instance, moving from an organization that has a decentralized decision making process to an organization with a centralized decision making process would require different adaptation patterns than would moving into another decentralized organization. This study's results suggest that the strength of newcomers' prior organizational culture was a significant predictor across varying culture contents, but

results might likely be stronger if the content of those cultures can be taken into account. A newcomer's other predispositions (non-work experience) might also vary how they adapt to different kinds of cultures. Individuals with certain personalities might adapt better to some cultures than others. Certainly, this is what the entire person-organization fit literature is built around, but rarely is examining the adaptation of individuals to a specific type of culture an area of study. Another similar area of prior work experience that might be of interest is prior socialization experiences (i.e. number of prior organizations worked for). One could certainly argue that multiple experiences adjusting into new organizations might help future such adaptations. Although Schmitt & Chan (2000) found that multiple transitions actually lowered information seeking among new graduate students, a more stringent measure than they used could be examined including examination of the types of adaptation that individuals have had to experience.

It is likely time for socialization research to start recognizing individual differences in newcomers and to begin looking at how to socialize those newcomers in different ways as they enter the organization. It is simply not acceptable for an organization to socialize a new college graduate and a 25 year employee of IBM in the same way. How exactly this is done is both a practical question and one for future study. It is obviously not feasible for organizations to have 15 different orientation programs for individuals with differing levels of prior experiences, but some effort must be made to find ways in which to take the individual differences of organizational newcomers into account. Whether those ways are assigning mentors

with specific guidelines for helping newcomers to adjust or having breakout sessions during orientation programs with different goals in mind, ways must be found to help organizations take advantage of the positive aspects of work experience and other newcomer differences while reducing the negative effects. An examination of how various types of socialization tactics affect different groups of individuals within the same organization would be useful.

Information seeking was only a partial mediator of the effect of prior work experience on the outcomes in the study. In fact, many of the decreases in R^2 after controlling for information seeking were very small. Certainly, future studies could focus more on why work experience has negative consequences for socialization into the organization other than information seeking alone. Perhaps the distinctive mental models that these individuals develop through their past experiences might provide better results (e.g. Chan, 1996). Other possibilities might include how newcomers seek information not just the fact that they do (see below) or the fact that some types of experiences or cultures produce more definite schema than do others.

Research on proactive socialization behaviors should focus more on the antecedents of proactive behavior. From a practical perspective, organizations need to know what individual differences are likely to lead to proactivity on the part of newcomers. Those individuals less inclined to be proactive need to be socialized to the organization in different ways in order to help those individuals adapt more readily to their organizations and jobs. Research using a latent-growth modeling approach to newcomer adaptation (e.g. Chan & Schmitt, 2000) would be useful as it would allow

researchers to examine intraindividual change over time meaning that we could look at how individuals with certain predispositions differentially adapt to their new environment.

Examination of the patterns of information seeking need to be more focused on the quality and not the quantity of those information seeking behaviors. Some of this could be done by examining specific socialization content areas that information seeking is relevant for and the effects those specific content areas of socialization/ learning have on important outcomes. Given the differences in information seeking results found for organizational goal and value information seeking vs. task information seeking, discussed earlier, other areas of information seeking could also be examined. If perceived social costs are a major driver of information seeking (i.e. impression management), how those individuals with high social cost perceptions seek for information is certainly relevant. It is probably time to move past looking at from whom information is sought and the frequency with which that information is sought to better measurement of how that information is sought. If there are actually social costs in terms of lower supervisor ratings to seeking some types of information seeking (task) and not others (organizational), it could be that the content or types of questions asked by newcomers might help to alleviate those poor ratings by managers. For instance, seeking information on the past history of an organization or the politics of the department might be seen as acceptable or even desired from a supervisor's perspective, but seeking information on topics such as task performance is always viewed negatively from a rating perspective. Even some of the "acceptable" forms

might be better predictors of how supervisors rate their subordinates on certain aspects of socialization or performance. Examining the ways in which information is sought might help to explain more of the variance in ratings and help to inform newcomers of appropriate ways to seek information and yet save face in front of important others.

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APPENDIX

Survey Items and Measures for Newcomers and Supervisors

NEWCOMER ITEMS (TIME 1)

(Length of tenure at most recent previous employer)
1. How long were you employed at your *most recent* previous organization?

_____ Years _____ Months

(Length of prior similar professional experience)
2. How long have you spent time working specifically in the role of a consultant?

_____ Years _____ Months

(Length of prior similar task experience)
3. How long have you been working full-time performing tasks similar to those in which you believe you were hired to perform?

(*Please note this question is not asking how long you have been in your current *occupation,* but rather how much time you have spent performing tasks similar to what you believe you will specifically be doing on the job.)

_____ Years _____ Months

(Strength of most recent prior organizational culture)

Please answer the following questions in regard to your *most recent previous employer* along the following scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree.

1. There was a high level of agreement amongst employees about the way things were done at my previous company.
2. Employees at my previous company had a shared vision of what the company would be like in the future.
3. Only certain types of people fit in my previous organization
4. Everyone in my previous organization feels like they are part of a group.
5. There are definite and specific ways to do things at my previous organization.
6. In general, I feel like there was a strong culture at my previous company.
7. My previous company's approach to doing business was very consistent and predictable.
8. My previous company has a long term purpose and direction.

NEWCOMER ITEMS (TIME 2)

Information Seeking (organizational goals and values, roles and responsibilities, job task information)

Each of the following items will be answered on the following scale:

1 = Never
2 = once a month
3 = a few times a month
4 = once a week
5 = a few times a week
6 = once a day
7 = a few times a day.

These items were repeated following each of the 3 socialization dimensions listed below.

1. Directly ask your direct supervisor
2. Directly ask your counselor
3. Directly ask a coworker or someone else in the organization
4. Pay attention to how others behave in order to indirectly pick up this information
5. Socialize with people in the firm in order to indirectly pick up this information.
6. Observe what behaviors are rewarded and use this as a clue to indirectly pick up this information.

Organizational Goals and Values Information
Think about the last two months at work. In order to learn more about the what the *goals of the organization are and what the organization values*, how frequently, in general, have you done each of the following:

Work Role Information
Think about the last two months at work. In order to learn more about *your role in your work group and organization* (e.g. your individual objectives, level of authority and work-related responsibilities), how frequently, in general, have you done each of the following:

Task performance information
Think about the last two months at work. In order to learn more about the *actual work tasks required to perform your job*, how frequently, in general, have you done each of the following:

NEWCOMER ITEMS (TIME 3)

Organizational Socialization Items

Please rate the following items along the following scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree.

Organizational Goals and Values

1. I would be a good example of someone that is representative of this organization's goals and values.
2. The goals of my organization are also my goals.
3. I believe that I fit in well with my organization
4. I do not always believe in the values set by my organization. (R)
5. I understand what the goals and values of my organization are.
6. I would be a good example of an employee who represents my organization's goals and values.
7. I support the goals and values that are set by my organization.

Task Knowledge / Performance

1. I have not yet learned the specific work tasks of my job.
2. I have learned how to successfully perform my job in an efficient manner.
3. I have mastered the required work tasks of my job.
4. I have not fully developed the appropriate skills and abilities to successfully perform my job.
5. I understand what all the duties of my specific work tasks entail.

Role Clarity

1. I feel certain about how much authority I have in my job.
2. I have clear, planned, goals and objectives for my job.
3. I know that I have divided my time properly when it comes to performing the tasks of my job.
4. I know what my responsibilities in my job are.
5. I know exactly what is expected of me.
6. The explanation is clear of what has to be done in my job.

WORK-OUTCOME MEASURES (Time 3)

Please rate the following items along the following scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree.

(Job Satisfaction)

1. My job is usually interesting enough to keep me from getting bored.
2. I consider my job rather unpleasant.
3. I am often bored with my job.
4. In general, I am satisfied with my job.
5. Most of the time I have to force myself to do my job.
6. I enjoy my job more than my leisure time.

(Organizational Commitment)

1. I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it.
2. I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own.
3. I do not feel like "part of the family" at my organization.
4. I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization.
5. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
6. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization.

(Turnover Intent)

Each of the following questions was followed by its respective 7 point scale.

How often do you think of quitting this organization?
1 = I have never thought of quitting this organization; 7 = I frequently think of quitting this organization.

What is the probability that you will look for a new job in the upcoming year?
1 = highly unlikely; 7 = very likely

How long do you intend to remain with this organization?
1 = not very long; 7 = a very long time

SUPERVISOR QUESTIONS (TIME 3)

TASK PROFICIENCY AND PERFORMANCE

INSTRUCTIONS: The following questions ask about your subordinate's ability to perform tasks and their task performance effectiveness. Circle a number to the right of each line using the following responses to indicate the degree to which this individual has met performance expectations for each category over the LAST FOUR MONTHS.

1 – Strongly disagree
4 – Neither agree nor disagree
7 – Strongly agree

1. This individual has learned the specific work tasks of his/her job.
2. This individual has learned how to successfully perform his/her job in an efficient manner.
3. This individual has mastered the required tasks of his/her job.
4. This individual has fully developed the appropriate skills and abilities to successfully perform his/her job.
5. This individual understands what all the duties of his/her specific work tasks entail.

ROLE UNDERSTANDING.
The following questions are designed to assess how well you think your subordinate understands the roles and responsibilities of his/her position or job in the organization and work group. Please circle a number to the right of each line using the following responses:

1 = Strongly disagree; 4 = Neither agree nor disagree; 7 = Strongly agree

1. This individual recognizes the level of authority he/she has in their job.
2. This individual has clear, planned goals and objectives for his/her job.
3. This individual has divided his/her time properly when it comes to performing the tasks of his/her job.
4. This individual knows what the responsibilities of his/her job are.
5. This individual knows what is expected of them.
6. This individual has a clear explanation of what has to be done in their job.

ORGANIZATIONAL GOAL AND VALUE SOCIALIZATION

The following questions are designed to assess how well you think your subordinate has adapted to the company's goals and values over the last four months. Please circle a number to the right of each line using the following responses:

1 = Strongly disagree; 4 = Neither agree nor disagree; 7 = Strongly agree

1. This individual is a good representative of this organization.
2. The goals of this organization are also the goals of this individual.
3. I believe this individual fits in well with this organization
4. This individual does not always believe in the values set by this organization.
5. This individual understands the goals of this organization.
6. This individual would be a good example of an employee who represents the organization's values.
7. This individual supports the goals that are set by this organization.