Newcomer adjustment: The relationship between organizational socialization

tactics, information acquisition, and attitudes

Abstract

A longitudinal study was designed to investigate relationships between socialization tactics, information acquisition, and attitudinal outcomes associated with successful organizational socialization. The research was conducted over three measurements with British Army recruits during their first eight weeks of training. The key finding is the confirmation that information acquisition mediates the relationship between organizational socialization tactics and key socialization outcomes in terms of newcomer attitudes. These results strengthen the conception of organizational socialization as primarily a learning process. In addition, these results importantly show the rapidity with which newcomers can adjust during organizational socialization.

Introduction

Over the past two decades, the focus of organizational socialization research has shifted, changing from a primary concern with the influence of organizational actions on newcomers adjustment through to investigating the effects of individual newcomer actions and perceptions, and in particular newcomer information acquisition (Anderson & Thomas, 1996; Bauer, Morrison, & Callister, 1998; Morrison, 1993b; Saks & Ashforth, 1997a). Yet, as noted by recent reviews, there has been little research integrating these two approaches (Bauer et al., 1998; Chao, Kozlowski, Major, & Gardner, 1994; Fisher, 1986; Morrison, 1993a, b; Reichers, 1987; Saks & Ashforth, 1997a, b; Wanous & Colella, 1989). The current study aims to contribute to redressing this shortcoming by examining the key issue of whether newcomer information acquisition mediates the effect of perceptions of organizational socialization tactics on socialization outcome measures of newcomer attitudes. Chao, Kozlowski et al. (1994) outline the importance of this issue, stating that confirming this mediating role of information acquisition is crucial to proving the utility of the learning approach in organizational socialization research. As a secondary contribution to the organizational socialization literature, this study investigates whether this mediating effect is apparent early on during organizational socialization. Recent research has shown that newcomers adjust rapidly to their new organizational context (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Bauer & Green, 1998; Major et al., 1995; Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 1991; Thomas & Anderson, 1998), with significant changes typically found three or four months after entry. Therefore we examine an even shorter period of the first eight weeks following organizational entry.

The Mediating Effect of Newcomer Information Acquisition on the

Relationship Between Organizational Tactics and Individual Attitudes

Typically, researchers have measured the success of organizational

socialization by asking newcomers to rate their attitudes towards their new role and

organization, with three key measures being job satisfaction, organizational

commitment, and intention to quit (Saks & Ashforth, 1997a; Wanous et al., 1992).

Many researchers have confirmed that newcomer perceptions of the socialization

tactics used by organizations influence these attitudinal outcomes (Ashforth, Saks, &

Lee, 1997; Jones, 1986; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). In proposing a mediating

effect in this research, we suggest that the assumed direct relationship hides a more

complex picture, and in fact that newcomer information acquisition is mediating the

relationship of organizational tactics with attitudinal outcomes. Specifically,

organizations use socialization tactics to enable newcomers to master their new roles.

Thus in using different combinations of socialization tactics, organizations are

attempting to influence primarily newcomer learning. Positive attitudinal outcomes

are a secondary outcome, both in importance and temporally, for both newcomers and

organizations. For example, a newcomer may become proficient in a specific role and

perform to fulfill the organization's needs and, regardless of his or her job satisfaction,

may stay in the role to gain a steady income. Furthermore, as Chao, Kozlowski et al.

note, research showing that learning content provides an explanatory link between

organization tactics and traditional, theoretically relevant attitudinal outcomes is

crucial for supporting a learning content approach to organizational socialization.

To date, only three studies have investigated mediation effects in socialization,

with all three focusing on newcomer information acquisition (Chao, Kozlowski et al.,

1994; Mignerey, Rubin, & Gordon, 1995; Saks & Ashforth, 1997b). In their research

taking a process approach to newcomer learning, Mignerey et al. (1995) found that newcomers' information-seeking behaviors mediated the relationship between perceptions of organizational socialization tactics and two of five outcomes investigated, role orientation and attributional confidence toward supervisor. Saks and Ashforth (1997a) found that newcomers' planned, proactive information acquisition strategies partially mediated the relationship between socialization tactics and attitudinal outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction). Overall, the mediation effects uncovered by Mignerey et al. (1995) and Saks and Ashforth (1997b) suggest that organizational socialization tactics provide the context for successful implementation of newcomer information-seeking strategies.

Differing from these process approaches, Chao, Kozlowski et al. (1994) took a content approach, investigating whether the relationship of various socialization tactics with attitudes was mediated by newcomers' socialization learning. To measure tactics in this mediation analysis, they combined organization socialization tactics with role ambiguity and role conflict to form a set of variables which they proposed to represent formal and informal socialization tactics. As hypothesized, Chao, Kozlowski et al. confirmed that newcomer learning mediated the effects of socialization tactics and role outcome variables, all three being measured at two months, on job satisfaction and organizational commitment measured at six months. Their research is important in confirming the pivotal role of newcomer learning, yet the use of a composite socialization tactics measure including role ambiguity and role conflict, which focus on effects rather than the process, leaves open the role of organization socialization tactics alone as a predictor. Furthermore, Chao, Kozlowski et al.'s choice of a longer time frame over six months leaves open the question of when such socialization effects may be apparent, with some researchers suggesting

that changes may be occurring earlier in the process which longer measurement periods do not capture (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Chatman, 1991; Bauer & Green, 1997; Bauer et al., 1998). Indeed, several recent studies have shown that newcomers adjust even over the first four weeks following organizational entry (Major et al., 1995; Thomas & Anderson, 1998). Few studies have adopted such a short timeframe, however, and hence research is needed to investigate this early period of organizational socialization.

In the present research, we take a content approach, since information acquired can be clearly interpreted as reflecting the learning underlying organizational socialization, whereas information acquisition strategies may be determined by a variety of individual and organizational factors, such as previous socialization experiences and the opportunities afforded by the organizational context (Louis, Posner, & Powell, 1983; Major, 1994; Major et al., 1995). Further, this allows a direct investigation of whether the content of socialization is important as well as the effects of newcomers' perceptions of the context (Black, 1992; 1996; Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 1991). On the basis of this existing research, we hypothesized as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Newcomers' information acquisition will mediate the relationship between perceptions of organizational socialization tactics and attitudes.

The Relationship of Organizational Socialization Tactics with Attitudes and Information Acquisition

This mediation hypothesis relies on three criteria (Baron & Kenny, 1986), namely that (a) variations in the levels of the independent variable significantly account for variations in the mediator variable; (b) that variations in the levels of the

independent variable significantly account for variations in the dependent variable; and (c) that variations in the mediator variable significantly account for variations in the dependent variable. To prove that mediation is occurring, a significant relationship between the independent and dependent variables must be rendered non-significant when the mediator variable is added, although Baron and Kenny propose that "a significant reduction" (p. 1176) suffices to show a mediation effect. These three criteria are detailed below as the hypotheses necessary to support a mediation effect in this research:

> Hypothesis 2a: An institutionalized pattern of socialization tactics will be positively associated with newcomer information acquisition.
>
> Hypothesis 2b: An institutionalized pattern of socialization tactics will be positively associated with attitudes.
>
> Hypothesis 2c: Newcomer information acquisition (content) will be positively associated with attitudes.

We briefly review the research which consistently supports these three hypotheses, and which further confirm the feasibility of a mediation effect being present. Starting with Hypotheses 2a and 2b, Van Maanen and Schein (1979; Van Maanen, 1978) proposed that organizations use various combinations of tactics to convey information to organizational newcomers, which can be associated in different configurations to achieve distinct outcomes. Jones' (1986) subsequent categorization of these as either institutionalized or individualized has been much used by later researchers (see Ashforth et al., 1997c), with most of the confirmatory evidence coming from North American graduate newcomers (Chao, Kozlowski et al., 1994; Jones; Saks & Ashforth, 1997b). Although Van Maanen and Schein's original propositions centred on the organisation's socialisation processes, whether

consciously chosen or not, subsequent researchers have investigated how newcomers

"interpret and respond" (Jones, p. 263) to these tactics, clearly focusing on newcomer

perceptions of the tactics rather than the tactics themselves. Collectively, the research

shows that it is newcomers' perceptions of the tactics, in terms of the message they

provide, rather than the tactics themselves that have the more important influence

(Black, 1992; Mignerey et al., 1995; Van Maanen & Schein).

Research has shown the existence of relationships between the socialization

context, in terms of newcomer perceptions of the organization's socialization tactics,

and both information acquisition and attitudes. Specifically, Chao, Kozlowski et al.

(1994) found that institutionalized tactics predicted information acquisition in various

socialization knowledge domains at both one and six months after entry. In terms of

relationships with attitudes, an institutionalized pattern of tactics (Jones, 1986) is

associated with role replication and more positive attitudes, including job satisfaction,

organizational commitment, and decreased intentions of quitting (Allen & Meyer,

1990; Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Jones; Laker & Steffy, 1995; Mignerey et al., 1995;

Saks & Ashforth, 1997b).

The Relationship of Information Acquisition with Attitudes

Whereas the information-seeking literature is well established (Ashford &

Cummings, 1983, 1985; Ashford & Taylor, 1990), the information content approach is

more recent, and therefore has received less research attention to date (Chao,

Kozlowski et al., 1994; Saks & Ashforth, 1997a). Nevertheless, research has

confirmed that the content of information acquired by newcomers positively predicts

outcomes of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to quit (Chao,

Kozlowski et al.; Ostroff & Kozlowski), adjustment and psychological stress (Ostroff

& Kozlowski), as well as career effectiveness (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly et al., 1994).

The Speed of Organizational Socialization

A second aspect of this research is to investigate the rapidity or organizational socialization. A consistent finding in recent studies has been that patterns of change often show a primacy effect, indicating that most socialization occurs during the early period after organizational entry. For example, Ashforth and Saks (1996) found greater impact of newcomer perceptions of organizational socialization tactics at four months than ten months, and Major et al. (1995) found that newcomers' experiences during their first month predicted socialization outcomes. Explanations for these early effects include a greater impact of reducing uncertainty in the early stages following entry and, relatedly, that expectations and perceptions created early on are robust and affect the interpretation of subsequent events (Ashforth & Saks, Bauer & Green, 1994). This fits well with the newcomer conceived of as desiring to make sense of their new situation as rapidly as possible and to fit in and learn appropriate behaviours and performance standards (Louis, 1980; Mignerey et al., Schneider, 1987a, 1987b; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

With respect to the timeframe, the evidence suggests that tactics have most impact during the early months following newcomer entry, with a gradually lessening impact over time (Ashforth & Saks, 1996). Indeed, Chao, Kozlowski et al. (1994) found that perceptions of socialization tactics influenced outcomes as early as one month, and that tactics were slightly more strongly associated with knowledge domains at one month than at six months after entry. This rapid adjustment is in line with other recent research over shorter time periods (Chao, Kozlowski et al., 1995; Major, Kozlowski, Chao, & Gardner, 1995; Thomas & Anderson, 1998). In addition, there is some evidence that newcomers acquire information rapidly during the early

stages of organizational socialization (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Thomas & Anderson, 1998).

In this research, we used an eight week time frame for both theoretical and practical reasons (Ashford & Black, 1996), with measurements at entry, week four and week eight. Since the setting was British Army Phase 1 Training, a practical limitation was that recruits can leave at ten weeks. To reduce attrition effects in our sample, our measurements remained safely inside this with the last measurement at eight weeks, with a mid-measurement point at four weeks providing two approximately equal tenure measurements between entry and eight weeks (Bauer & Green, 1994). Furthermore, since recruits at ten weeks are ready for active service (although most undergo further training within their regiments), eight weeks is close to the end of this official socialization period.

Method

Sample and Research Design

This research was conducted with new recruits entering the British Army at the lowest level of "private"[1]. Data were collected using questionnaires at day 1, the end of week 4 and the end of week 8. Response rates declined over the questionnaire measurements, from 752 at time 1 to 314 at time 3, with 214 recruits responding at all three measurements. Since recruits cannot quit training during the first eight weeks, non-response was not due to training attrition. To check that attrition was random, we followed Goodman and Blum's (1996) recommendation of using multiple logistic regression (MLR) on the demographic data which were collected at time 1 only. Comparison of recruits responding at time 1 only with those responding at all three measurements on the demographic measures showed no significant differences with respect to their age, gender, education, marital status, and whether they had army

experience through family members or personal membership of a cadet force. ($\underline{X}^2 =$ 6.37, df = 6, $\underline{p}$ = .38).

For the recruits responding at all three measurement, approximately three quarters of recruits were male (160 male and 41 female), with an average age of 19 ($\underline{M}$ = 19.13, $\underline{SD}$ = 2.35), most having left full-time education at 17 ($\underline{M}$ = 16.60, $\underline{SD}$ = 1.21), and being single (77 %).

Measures

Socialization Tactics. The tactics items have been developed for use with graduate populations and pilot testing showed that some were too complex for recruits (Saks, Ashforth & Lee, 1997; Jones, 1986). Hence, these were slightly simplified as necessary and made specific to the Phase 1 training context. For example, the collective item "In the last six months, I have been extensively involved…" was changed to "During my training, I have been frequently involved with other new recruits in common, job-related training activities"; the fixed item "The way in which my progress through this organization will follow a fixed timetable of events has been clearly communicated to me" was changed to "I have been clearly told the fixed timetable of events through which I will progress". Items were measured on a one-to-seven scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". This measure was included on the time 2 questionnaire at four weeks.

Socialization Knowledge. Two measures of the content of newcomer information acquisition have been developed previously (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly et al., 1994; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Taking these chronologically, Ostroff and Kozlowski themselves acknowledge the limitations of their measure, noting in particular the lack of differentiation between the four knowledge domains and proposing that further research is needed. Chao, O'Leary-Kelly et al. developed a six

domain measure which offers "a good beginning" (Saks and Ashforth, 1997a, p. 265), but fails to include role learning. Bauer, Morrison and Callister (1998) provide an additional critique, with the key issue being that at least three of the scales measure multiple concepts (e.g., history).

Given the shortcomings of these previous measures, we used a new measure of socialization knowledge developed by Thomas and Anderson (1999; Thomas, 1999), and based on a review of the key knowledge domains discovered by previous researchers. The measure comprises four dimensions of socialization knowledge: social, role, interpersonal resources, and organization. A Likert scale was used to measure all socialization information items, from 1 "not at all" to 7 "totally". This measure was included in the time 3 questionnaire. A maximum likelihood confirmatory factor analysis with extraction of eigen values greater than 1 showed a good fit to the data ($\underline{X}^2 = 344$ (df 149), $\underline{p} < .01$) and produced the expected four factors which explained 65% of the variance, with Cronbach alphas between .84 - .91.

Attitudinal Outcome Measures

Three attitudinal measures have been used traditionally to indicate the success of organizational socialization, namely job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to quit (Bauer et al., 1988; Fisher, 1986; Saks & Ashforth, 1997a). These were included in the time 3 questionnaire.

Job Satisfaction. Based on previous research, a global rating of overall job satisfaction was used, with a minimum reliability estimated at .70 (see also Sackett & Larson, 1990; Scarpello & Campbell, 1983; Schneider, 1985; Wanous, Reichers and Hudy, 1997). The single item was "How satisfied are you with your job/role in general?" was rated on a 1 to 5 scale from "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied".

Organizational Commitment. Research has shown the scale of Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974, Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979) to be robust for research with organizational newcomers (Schaubroeck & Green, 1989; Vandenberg & Self, 1993). In line with Mowday, Steers, and Porter's (1979) recommendations, only the nine positively-worded items were used, with these rated on a 1 to 7 scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

Intention to Quit. Turnover intentions were measured with Colarelli's (1984) three item scale, using a five point scale from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). Of the three items, the intent to stay item (reverse scored) was not consistent with the intent to quit items, and hence only the two intent to quit items were retained.

<div align="center">Results</div>

The means, standard deviations, internal reliabilities, and correlations among all the variables are shown in Table 1. Looking first at the Army's socialization tactics, the means for these six variables confirm that these are perceived by recruits as comprising an institutionalized pattern involving divestiture (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), with the standard deviations of approximately 1 showing a reasonable amount of variation in perceptions. The six socialization tactics are moderately to strongly associated with each other and moderately associated with all four knowledge domains. The sequential tactic has high intercorrelations (>= .60) with three other tactics, namely collective, formal, and serial. High inter-correlations are typical for the tactics measures (see Ashforth, Saks, and Lee, 1997, for a review); further, all intercorrelations are below .70 and therefore deemed acceptable (Nunnally, 1978). The four knowledge domains are strongly correlated with each other. Further, the majority of both tactics and knowledge dimensions are moderately associated with job

satisfaction and organizational commitment, and to a lesser extent with intent to quit.

The presence of numerous significant correlations justifies further analyses to test the

proposed hypotheses. The mediation effect proposed in Hypothesis 1 requires that a

number of criteria are met (Baron & Kenny, 1986), with these being fulfilled if

Hypotheses 2a, 2b and 2c are confirmed; therefore, Hypothesis 1 is tested last.

Insert Table 1 about here

The Relationship of Organizational Socialization Tactics with Information Acquisition

In Hypothesis 2a, we proposed that an institutionalized pattern of

organizational socialization tactics would lead to information acquisition. Using

regression analyses in which information acquisition at time 3 was regressed on the

tactics measured at time 2, we found that socialization tactics accounted for a

significant proportion of variance for all four information acquisition domains,

confirming Hypothesis 2a. Specifically, socialization tactics significantly predicted

knowledge across the social domain (R = .35, $\underline{R}^2$ = .12, Adjusted $\underline{R}^2$ = .09, $\underline{F}$ = 4.70, $\underline{p}$

<= .001), the interpersonal resources domains (R = .43, $\underline{R}^2$ = .19, Adjusted $\underline{R}^2$ = .16, $\underline{F}$

= 7.89, $\underline{p}$ <= .001), the organization domain (R = .30, $\underline{R}^2$ = .09, Adjusted $\underline{R}^2$ = .07, $\underline{F}$ =

3.48, $\underline{p}$ <= .01), and the role domain (R = .43, $\underline{R}^2$ = .18, Adjusted $\underline{R}^2$ = .17, $\underline{F}$ = 8.00, $\underline{p}$

<= .001). Interestingly, the tactics were stronger predictors of the more directly work-

related information areas (role and organization).

The Relationship of Organizational Socialization Tactics with Attitudes

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to test whether an

institutionalized pattern of socialization tactics would be associated with more

positive attitudes (Hypothesis 2b). Three multiple regression analyses were

conducted, with each attitude measured at time 3 regressed on the six organizational

socialization tactics measured at time 2. An institutionalized pattern of socialization

tactics was a significant predictor of job satisfaction (R = .28, $\underline{R}^2$ = .08, Adjusted $\underline{R}^2$ =

.05, $\underline{F}$ = 2.97, $\underline{p} \le .01$) and of organizational commitment (R = .34, $\underline{R}^2$ = .12,

Adjusted $\underline{R}^2$ = .09, $\underline{F}$ = 4.47, $\underline{p} \le .001$), but they did not significantly predict

intentions of quitting (R = .19, $\underline{R}^2$ = .04, Adjusted $\underline{R}^2$ = .01, $\underline{F}$ = 1.27, $\underline{p} > .05$). Thus,

Hypothesis 2b was supported for two of the three outcomes investigated.

The Relationship of Information Acquisition with Attitudes

        To test Hypothesis 2c, that greater newcomer information acquisition would be

directly related to more positive socialization outcomes, each of the three attitudes

measured at time 3 were regressed, in turn, on information acquisition measured at

time 2. The results were significant across all three attitudes: information acquisition

predicted job satisfaction (R = .44, $\underline{R}^2$ = .19, Adjusted $\underline{R}^2$ = .18, $\underline{F}$ = 12.61, $\underline{p} \le .001$),

organizational commitment (R = .48, $\underline{R}^2$ = .23, Adjusted $\underline{R}^2$ = .21, $\underline{F}$ = 15.34, $\underline{p}$ =

.001), and intent to quit (R = .23, $\underline{R}^2$ = .05, Adjusted $\underline{R}^2$ = .03, $\underline{F}$ = 2.90, $\underline{p}$ = .05).

These results confirm that newcomer learning significantly and positively predicts

variance in these three traditional socialization outcomes, although it is a stronger

predictor of positive attitudes than negative attitudes over the eight weeks studied.

The Mediating Role of Information Acquisition on the Relationship Between

Organizational Socialization Tactics and Attitudes

        In order to assess whether mediation effects are occurring, as we propose in

Hypothesis 1, Baron and Kenny (1986) proposed that prior analyses must be

conducted to assess whether three essential criteria are met. These criteria correspond

to confirming Hypotheses 2a to 2c. The exception to this is that newcomer

perceptions of socialization tactics did not predict intent to quit (Hypothesis 2b), and therefore the mediation hypothesis is examined only for job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Further, to ensure that only the information acquisition domains are having a mediating effect, analyses were conducted investigating the significance of both information acquisition and socialization tactics as mediators.

The results are shown in Table 2, and confirm that information acquisition acts as a mediating variable for the relationship between organizational socialization tactics with both job satisfaction and organizational commitment. For both of these outcomes, it can be seen that information acquisition significantly predicts additional variance to that accounted for by institutionalized socialization tactics. In contrast, the tactics do not add further variance to that accounted for by information acquisition. These results confirm Hypothesis 1 for two of the three proposed outcomes. For both job satisfaction and organizational commitment, information acquisition accounted for a further 14% of variance over that accounted for by institutionalized socialization tactics.

Insert Table 2 about here

Discussion

This study advances our understanding of several important aspects of the socialization process. First, our findings add evidence to support the impact and extent of the mediating role of information acquisition on the effect of organizational socialization tactics on socialization outcomes. This mediation hypothesis (Hypothesis 1) was supported by the analyses undertaken, that is for positive attitudinal outcomes, providing support for the utility of a learning approach in

organizational socialization research. In essence, the results for Hypothesis 1 suggest

that organizational socialization tactics facilitate positive attitudinal outcomes by

providing the context for newcomer learning (see also Black, 1992; Mignerey et al.,

1995; Saks & Ashforth, 1997a; Ashforth, Saks, & Lee, 1997).

Second, our findings suggest a considerably shorter time scale for newcomer

adjustment than many previous studies. Thus, rather than the typical measurement

periods of six or nine months (Bauer et al., 1998), we found significant adjustment in

approximately two months (Ashforth et al., 1997;Saks & Ashforth, 1997b). The fact

that significant results were found over such a short time period is likely to reflect the

intensity of Army Phase 1 Training. Yet this finding is not unique to the Army setting

since previous research has begun to show evidence of a primacy effect in

organizational socialization (Chao, Kozlowski et al., 1994; Major et al., 1995; Saks &

Ashforth, 1996).

Third, in relation to Hypothesis 2a, the results showed that institutionalized

socialization tactics significantly predicted information acquisition across all four

information domains. Stronger relationships were evident for role and organization

knowledge, which makes sense since these correspond to the knowledge areas which

Phase 1 Training focuses on, that is the soldier role and the British Army. This

provides further confirmation for the role of socialization tactics in structuring

learning, with this in turn affecting actual information acquisition (Chao, O'Leary-

Kelly et al., 1994).

Fourth, consistent with past research, an institutionalized pattern of

organizational socialization tactics predicted positive outcomes of job satisfaction and

organizational commitment (Hypothesis 2b) (Jones, 1986; Laker & Steffy, 1995;

Saks, 1996; Saks & Ashforth, 1997b). Yet socialization tactics did not predict

recruits' intentions of leaving, contradicting the results of some past studies (Laker &

Steffy; Mignerey et al., 1995; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Since recruits can choose to

leave the Army after ten weeks, measuring intentions of quitting at eight weeks was

appropriate. The results of the present study suggest, therefore, that the influence of

socialization tactics on outcomes may differ across organizational contexts, types of

role and of newcomer, or a combination of these factors. Finally, information

acquisition was confirmed as positively predicting attitudes, Hypothesis 2c,

confirming the central role of newcomer learning in achieving positive attitudinal

outcomes (Chao, Kozlowski et al., 1994; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992).

<u>Limitations of the Present Research & Future Research Directions</u>

There are three key issues in this research which may be seen as limitations.

First, as previously highlighted by Saks and Ashforth (1997a) as common to

organizational socialization research, we relied on self-report data. Self-report data is

generally accepted in organizational socialization research when the research is

concerned with determining employees' reactions to work (Bauer & Green, 1994;

Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Indeed, past research has argued for the usefulness of

subjective measures over and above objective techniques (Kristof, 1996; Nicholson &

West, 1988), and has shown self-reports to have greater predictive power than more

objective methods (Ashforth & Saks, 1996). Furthermore, Ostroff and Kozlowski

(1992) propose that asking respondents to give a large number of ratings, as occurred

in the current research, reduces the issue of self-report resulting in increased common

method variance through memory effects (see also Howard, 1994).

A second potential issue is that we investigated Army newcomers who, it may

be argued, do not represent a typical newcomer sample. In particular, military training

is designed to be highly replicable and therefore little variation might be expected in

actual or perceived events. However variations do in fact occur, resulting from the

individual him or herself, the composition of the platoon, the platoon commander, and

the site resources available (Cannon-Bowers, Salas, Tannenbaum and Matheiu, 1995).

For example, Eden and Ravid (1982) found variations in the expectations of platoon

commanders had significant effects on the success of recruits. We noted variations in

the approach used by different platoon commanders during our research site visits,

which are likely to have affected both the actual experiences and the perceptions of

Army socialization tactics. The variance in self-reported perceptions of the Army's

socialization tactics, in learning, and in resultant attitudes support the existence of

differences in recruits' experience of military training. Furthermore, the fact that the

results were broadly in line with previous studies, extending and strengthening these,

lends support to the generalizability of the current study. Therefore, we contend that

these results will be generalizable to other settings where newcomers are socialized in

a formal, structured, and collective manner, for example accountancy training in "Big

Five" firms (Chatman & Jehn, 1994; Thomas, 1999; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). .

        A third issue is the attrition over the course of the research. The research

period of eight weeks was chosen as being prior to recruits being able to leave, and

therefore this cannot account for attrition. Since questionnaires were completed by

multiple units at the same time, it is most likely that particular platoons did not make

it to questionnaire sessions. This is likely to have been the Training Sergeants

decision, although a number of factors may have motivated this including: forgetting,

being delayed by previous platoon activities (e.g., putting equipment away), or the

Sergeant using the time for other platoon activities. In the context of the research, it is

important to check whether attrition is random, this being necessary for such research.

We conducted various analyses on the data which suggested that this was the case.

However we would advise future researchers to try to anticipate any factors that could increase respondent attrition and overcome these where possible. In the current research, more frequent visit to the training bases to communicate the rationale for the research and build commitment would probably have had most impact.

Future Research

Nonetheless it is likely that socialization will unfold more rapidly in a military setting relative to a more commercial setting, due to the intensity of military training, and further research is needed to investigate the timeframe of socialization for different types of newcomer and organization. Additionally, more research is needed to answer the question of whether the socialization process unfolds similarly across different types of newcomer and organization since, to date, it appears to have been assumed that this is the case (Aitkenhead & Liff, 1991; Buono & Kamm, 1983; Colella, 1994; Fisher, 1986; Nicholson & West, 1988; Reichers, 1987; Saks & Ashforth, 1997a; Zahrly & Tosi, 1989).

Practical Implications

The current results indicate that an intensive socialization process, as experienced by military recruits, facilitates recruit learning and is associated with positive attitudes. We would suggest that it is the explicit focus on teaching recruits the necessary skills, and providing rapid feedback on both good and poor performance, that leads to more rapid attainment of positive attitudinal outcomes. Related to this, military socialization involves dedicated training staff whose performance is measured against the success of recruit learning. To our knowledge, this is rarely the case in other organizational settings, where the responsibility for socialization is placed more heavily on the newcomer. This is particularly the case for newcomers who enter later in their careers, after any graduate induction activities, and

who are largely left to "sink or swim". Thus, we suggest that socialization processes

might be improved if newcomers' colleagues were given training to understand how

best to help newcomers (see also Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992) and, perhaps more

radically, that the rate and success of newcomers' adjustment contributed to

colleagues' performance evaluations.

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59 - 74.

Table 1.

Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Reliabilities for All Variables.

	M	S.D.	α	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Collect	5.53	0.96	.74	74												
2. Formal	5.17	1.01	.68	56‡	68											
3. Sequent	5.59	0.98	.83	60‡	67‡	83										
4. Fixed	4.87	1.15	.78	41‡	48‡	38‡	78									
5. Serial	5.40	1.12	.69	50‡	46‡	69‡	46‡	69								
6. Divest	4.12	1.09	.70	28‡	27‡	22‡	34‡	20†	70							
7. Social	6.19	.80	.95²	29‡	25‡	26‡	26‡	24‡	06	95						
8. Role	6.32	.74	.88	33‡	30‡	40‡	23‡	35‡	05	69‡	88					
9. I. Res	5.76	1.31	.91	17*	20†	24‡	20†	26‡	-01	54‡	49‡	91				
10. Org'n	5.74	0.86	.84	36‡	32‡	37‡	23‡	33‡	03	67‡	69‡	48‡	84			
11. Satisf	4.16	0.91	.70	13	14*	21†	23‡	22†	02	37‡	27‡	38‡	35‡			
12. Com	5.87	0.97	.91	23‡	22‡	29‡	13	26‡	-06	39‡	43‡	30‡	44‡	47‡	91	
13. Quit	1.79	1.17	.86	-16*	-10	-10	-14*	-08	-01	-16*	-20†	-10	-07	-26‡	-34‡	86

$\underline{N}$ = 214. Decimals have been omitted from correlations.

Collect = Collective; Sequent = Sequential; Invest = Investiture; I. Res = Interpersonal

Resources; Org'n = Organization; Satisf = Job Satisfaction; Com = Organizational

Commitment; Quit = Intent of Quitting.

* $\underline{p}$ < .05; † $\underline{p}$ <= .01; ‡ $\underline{p}$ <= .001

Table 2.

Mediating Effects of Socialisation Knowledge Domains & Organisational

Socialisation Tactics on Traditional Socialisation Outcomes.

Dependent Variable/ Block		R^2	Adj. R^2	$R^2\Delta$	$F\Delta$
Job Satisfaction					
1	Tactics	.08	.05		2.97 [†]
2	Domains	.22	.18	.14	9.22 [‡]
Job Satisfaction					
1	Domains	.19	.18		12.61 [‡]
2	Tactics	.22	.18	.03	1.14
Organizational Commitment					
1	Tactics	.12	.09		4.47 [‡]
2	Domains	.25	.22	.14	9.28 [‡]
Organizational Commitment					
1	Domains	.23	.21		15.34 [‡]
2	Tactics	.25	.22	.03	1.11

Note. $N = 214$. [†] $p < .01$; [‡] $p < .001$. Adj. R^2 = adjusted R^2.

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[1] Full details are available from the first author