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RUNNING HEAD: Changes in P-O Fit

Changes in Person-Organization Fit:  
The Impact of Socialization Tactics on Perceived and Actual P-O Fit

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### Abstract

This study examines the impact of socially-oriented socialization tactics on changes in newcomer perceived and actual value-based person-organization (P-O) fit, and on the relations between these two measures of fit. Newcomers' fit was measured at entry (T1) and again after four months (T2) using the organizational culture profile (OCP; Chatman, 1991). The results show that socialization tactics influence perceived fit, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, but not actual fit. As hypothesized, perceived and actual fit become more congruent over time, suggesting a shift in newcomers' perceptions of the organization. Additional analyses were conducted to investigate the mediating influence of perceived fit on the relationship of investiture with job satisfaction and with organizational commitment and, for both outcomes, this was found to be significant. We discuss the implications for organization socialization procedures, research into newcomer entry using measures of actual and perceived fit, and HRM practices during the initial few months of organizational entry.

## Changes in Person-Organization Fit:

### The Impact of Socialization Tactics on Perceived and Actual P-O Fit

New employees enter their organization with specific and often positive expectations about how they will fit with their new job and organization (Wanous, 1992; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). In this study, we refer to the concept of fit as the match between an individual's own values and the values of their organization. Several studies have shown evidence for the relationship between individuals' value fit and individual outcomes (Chatman, 1991; Major, Kozlowski, Chao, & Gardner, 1995; Saks & Ashforth, 1996; 1997).

Newcomers' experiences during the first months after organizational entry are crucial for consolidating their initial good person-organization (P-O) fit or for further improvement of initial weaker fit. It is, therefore, important to understand how organizations' socialization tactics help to establish newcomers' perceived and actual fit with the organization. The literature distinguishes several socialization tactics, but we were particularly interested in socialization tactics that have been found to be relevant for P-O fit (Cable & Parsons, 2001). These are socialization tactics that reflect the social aspects of socialization, with experienced organizational members acting as role models for newcomers (serial tactic), where newcomers receive positive social support from experienced organizational insiders (investiture tactic), and where they receive support from a mentor (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979; Kram, 1983).

The current study examines changes in newcomers' fit perceptions. Changes in initial fit perceptions during the crucial initial period of socialization can be caused by three mechanisms. First, newcomers' *own values* may change as a result of socialization. If newcomers are confronted with the different values of others in their work environment, they may reflect on their own values and they may eventually adapt them to those of others.

Second, newcomers' initial *perception of organizational values* may change as a result of their experiences in the organization. Third, the organization's values may change over time, in response to external or internal events (Chatman & Jehn, 1994). However, given the short four-month time frame of the present study and the fact that the research organization was not undergoing any change initiatives, we do not consider organizational value change further. From previous studies it is known that applicants' or newcomers' initial expectations about their future job sometimes hardly reflect their actual experiences later in the job (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994; Wanous, Poland, Premack, & Davis, 1992). The question remains as to what processes establish such changes in fit, i.e. through adaptation of values or through adaptation of job perceptions, is highly relevant. During selection procedures, interviewers are much concerned with assessing candidates' future fit with the organization (Cable & Judge, 1996; 1997). They may do so by asking applicants for their values and compare these with organizational values. Researchers in Europe and the USA have strongly advocated such an assessment of applicants' future fit with the organization on the grounds that P-O value fit is an important consideration in addition to assessment of more micro-analytical person-job fit (Anderson, Born, & Cunningham-Snell, 2001; Herriot & Anderson, 1997; Ryan & Ployhart, 2000). However, if individuals' own values are relatively flexible in that they can adapt to those of others, assessment of applicants' values may not have much predictive power for future functioning in the job.

#### *Actual and Perceived P-O Fit*

Specific adaptation processes are difficult to examine through the use of individuals' subjective fit perceptions (e.g. by asking them to evaluate their fit with the organization), because these fit measures conceal the unique contribution of individuals' own values and both their own and others' perception of the organizational values. Some researchers, therefore,

choose to measure organizational actual values and compared these with individuals' own values (Van Vianen, 2000). One argument in favor of using individuals' subjective perceptions is that these perceptions are more important for people's attitudes and behaviors than actual environments (Endler & Magnussen, 1976; Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Moreover, studies of person-environment fit consistently find that fit with perceived environmental characteristics is a better predictor of attitudes and behaviors than is fit with actual characteristics (Cable & Judge, 1997; Kristof-Brown & Stevens, 2001). However, in the context of personnel selection, researchers will be particularly concerned with measuring actual P-O fit, because individuals' initial perceptions of fit may change due to their experiences after organizational entry.

In the present study, therefore, we examined both *actual* P-O fit and *perceived* P-O fit. A thorough review of the literature (see below) revealed only a couple of recently published studies that examined both of these important aspects of fit (most notably Cable & Judge, 1997; Judge & Cable, 1997), and so the present study attempted to add to this critically restricted body of evidence. Actual P-O fit was established through an independent assessment of individuals' own values and those of the organization, while perceived P-O fit was established through asking individuals to evaluate their fit with the organization. Both these fit measures were included using a longitudinal design with fit assessed at organizational entry (T1) and after the first stage of socialization (T2). Moreover, the different fit measures were related to employees' affective outcomes (job satisfaction and organizational commitment) after the first period of socialization.

The present study has two primary goals. The first is to examine the influence of specific socialization tactics on changes in employees' fit perceptions, and the second goal is to investigate the process underlying the changes in fit perceptions during the first stage of socialization.

*Person-Organization Fit*

Person-environment fit has a relatively long history in psychology in various forms (Holland, 1976; Pervin, 1968; Schneider, 1978), with one aspect, namely person-organization (P-O) fit, generating considerable research in recent years (Kristof, 1996; Schneider, 2001). In particular, Schneider's (1987a, b; 2001; Schneider, Goldstein & Smith, 1995) attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) theory has been investigated as an explanatory framework for P-O fit. This framework describes the mechanism of mutual adaptation between the person and the organization. People are not randomly assigned to organizations, but they select themselves into and out of organizations. This selection process includes several steps. First, people find organizations differentially attractive as a function of their judgment of the congruence between the characteristics of the organization and their own characteristics (Cable & Judge, 1997; Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995). A second step in the matching process is the selection procedure through which those people are hired who have the attributes the organization desires. Finally, once people have become citizens of the organization and they do not fit their work environment, they will tend to leave. Most research confirms Schneider's ASA model (Bretz, Ash & Dreher, 1989; Cable & Judge, 1994, 1997; Edwards & Cooper, 1994; Van Vianen, 2000; for reviews see Schneider, et al., 1995; Schneider, Kristof, Goldstein, & Smith, 1997). Yet, there does not appear to be general agreement on two issues in particular. The first issue concerns the question of how to measure P-O fit, as objective or actual fit, or as subjective or perceived fit. The second issue concerns the stability of P-O fit over time. Schneider's (1987a) ASA model does not explicitly allow for changes in P-O fit, with no mention of the processes that occur between selection and attrition that may lead to improvement or deterioration in fit. We address these two important but notably under-researched issues in this paper.

P-O fit has been conceptualized and operationalized in numerous ways, with no specification of the correct measurement of fit (Schneider et al., 1995). Although this may be viewed positively, providing a healthy diversity of views (Schneider, 2001), it is important to understand the inter-relationships and implications of different measures of P-O fit. If perceived and actual measures of P-O fit are equivalent, or at the least have significant overlap, this simplifies research and allows findings for each type of fit to be extrapolated to the other. However, if P-O fit measures are not equivalent, researchers must carefully consider the theoretical and practical implications of this. Indeed, perceived fit is argued to be superior by some researchers on the basis that we act in accordance with our perceptions rather than reality and, therefore, that they have greater predictive power in terms of individual outcomes (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Cable & Judge, 1997; Nicholson & West, 1988). On the other hand, measuring actual fit offers advantages of enabling the person and the organization to be measured independently, allowing for commensurable measurement, and reducing problems of consistency bias (Edwards, 1991; Kristof, 1996). Moreover, some researchers have proposed that actual fit is the true measure, with perceived fit providing a proximal representation of this that may be biased by cognitive and motivational factors (Judge & Cable, 1997; Kristof-Brown, Bono & Lauver, 1999). We note, also, that there are two main approaches to measure actual fit: The polynomial regression approach with using the interaction of the P(erson) and O(rganization) components representing fit (see Edwards, 1993, 1994a) and the profile matching approach that uses the correlation between the P and O components to represent fit (see Chatman, 1991). In order to be able to build and extend on previous research investigating P-O fit over time and comparing various fit measures, we used the profile matching approach in the current research.

Few researchers have investigated different measures of P-O fit in the same study, with the exception of Cable and Judge's research (Cable & Judge, 1997; Judge & Cable,

1997). Cable and Judge (1997) measured actual congruence between applicant and organization values to predict interviewers' P-O fit evaluation and hiring recommendation. Interestingly, actual fit and interviewers' perceived fit were not significantly correlated. In a complementary study taking the job applicants' perspective, Judge and Cable (1997) investigated the relationship between objective and subjective fit. They measured objective fit as the similarity in applicants' own values and other applicants' ratings of the organization's values, noting that the use of other applicants' ratings introduces a degree of subjectivity into the supposedly objective measure of fit. They found that applicants' objective and subjective fit were moderately correlated ( $r = .37$ ), with subjective fit mediating the relationship between objective fit and organizational attraction. These studies have shown weak to moderate relationships between the different measures of fit for candidates prior to organization entry.

Recently, Cable & Parsons (2001) used several indices to measure individuals' fit before and after organizational entry, but they only took individuals' perceptions into account and not those of organizational representatives. Pre-entry and post-entry values congruence was operationalized as the correlation between individuals' values and their perceptions of their organizations' values. The results showed that pre-entry values congruence scores were significantly correlated with both post-entry subjective fit perceptions (directly measured) and post-entry values congruence.

However, to date, no studies have examined relationships between both actual and perceived fit at organizational entry on the one hand and post-entry actual and perceived fit, and post-entry affective outcomes on the other hand. This is an important shortcoming in the research into organizational socialization for several reasons. First, it is important to understand the similarities and dissimilarities between measures of actual and perceived fit. Most previous research, as noted above, has relied solely upon measures of perceived fit

elicited from newcomers. There has been a notable absence of research using measures of actual value fit, leaving open to question the possibility that there may be real gaps between perceived and actual fit in both newcomer and insider evaluations. Second, existing research has left open questions over the impact of socialization procedures upon newcomer value change during organizational entry. There is no research investigating to what extent, and on what dimensions (e.g., core or peripheral) newcomers change their values toward those expressed by important others in the organization as a result of their socialization experiences. This is a notable limitation as socialization tactics have often been argued to possess the capacity to change newcomer values, implicitly toward the prevailing values within their newly joined organization (e.g., Wanous, 1992). Third, existing studies have not explored the influence of changes in actual and perceived fit upon crucially important outcome variables for newcomers. In the present study we examine these impacts upon two such outcomes: organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

### *The Influence of Socialization Tactics on P-O Fit Perceptions*

We turn now to the processes that occur between entrance and attrition that may lead to changes in P-O fit. There is evidence that fit changes with increased tenure, such that individuals' goals and values are closer to those of their organization (Ostroff & Rothausen, 1997). Such changes are particularly likely to occur during organizational socialization, a period of significant change for organizational newcomers (Cable & Parsons, 2001; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002b, Louis, 1990; Schneider, Smith, Taylor, & Fleenor, 1998).

Early socialization research by Van Maanen and Schein (1979) provides a framework of the various tactics that organizations may use to socialize newcomers, and this has been widely influential in subsequent research. While Van Maanen and Schein (1979) were careful to point out that their initial list of tactics was not exhaustive, six of these have

commonly been used, with research confirming their influence on organizational outcomes (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002; Jones, 1986). Although research has confirmed that the six tactics are independent (Ashforth, Saks, & Lee, 1997), many researchers use Jones' (1986) categorization of the six tactics into three dimensions of context, content, and social (see also Cable & Parsons, 2001). The context dimension concerns the way in which organizations provide information to newcomers (collective – individual, formal – informal). Content socialization tactics relate to the order in which information given to newcomers (fixed – variable; random - sequential). The social dimension focuses on newcomers' access to and learning from insiders (serial – disjunctive; investiture – divestiture). Specifically, whether a senior colleague is present to act as a role model for the newcomer (serial), or not (disjunctive), and whether the newcomer receives social support from insiders (investiture), or not (divestiture).

In one of the earliest empirical studies of socialization tactics, Jones (1986) showed that institutionalized socialization tactics (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) were associated with higher levels of organizational commitment, with the two social tactics of serial-disjunctive and investiture-divestiture having the strongest relationships. Subsequent research has largely confirmed that the two social tactics of serial and investiture have a greater positive influence on outcomes, including organizational commitment, relative to the other tactics (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Allen & Meyer, 1990; Chao, Kozlowski, Major, & Gardner, 1994; Saks & Ashforth, 1997b). In addition, a recent study by Cable and Parsons (2001) found that newcomers' *perceived* P-O fit, several months after organizational entry, was associated with the content and social dimensions of socialization tactics, with particularly strong results for the social factor.

Informal interactions with organizational insiders that enable newcomers to learn about their organization are likely to lead to higher levels of P-O fit (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly,

Wolf, Klein, & Gardner; Chatman, 1994; Kristof-Brown, Bono & Lauver, 1999). Mentoring is a specific socialization tactic that provides newcomers with an opportunity to learn about the organization and be socialized by senior organizational members (Kram, 1983; Louis, Posner, & Powell, 1983; Nelson & Quick, 1991; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993). Kram (1983) proposed a four-stage model of mentoring, comprising initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition. In this, she proposes that mentors provide career (e.g., sponsorship) and psychosocial (e.g., friendship) functions, and that these increase during initiation and peak during cultivation phases. Research by Chao and her colleagues (1994; Chao, Walz & Gardner, 1992) has shown that mentored individuals report greater learning relative to non-mentored individuals, including the area of organizational goals and values (see also Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993). Further, Furnham (1994) proposes that mentoring is an explicit technique designed to shape and mould employees' behavior to achieve a better level of fit. In the only study investigating this to date, Chatman (1991) provided initial evidence of the role of mentoring in enhancing *actual* P-O fit. Thus, in addition to organizational socialization tactics of serial and investiture processes, mentoring will influence newcomers' P-O fit. In this study, we therefore investigate the effects of both social socialization tactics and mentoring on changes in P-O fit and on affective outcomes.

The Cable and Parsons (2001) study combined the two social tactics of serial and investiture into one measure. In our study we examine each of these social tactics separately in order to further explore more specific relationships with the criterion variables. Previous studies that investigated socialization tactics as related to P-O fit, exclusively focused on measuring *actual* P-O fit (Chatman, 1991) or *perceived* P-O fit (Cable & Parsons, 2001). In our study we incorporate both fit measures in a longitudinal design. This approach allows us to comprehensively examine the influence of different socialization tactics on changes in *perceived* P-O fit after the first stage of socialization, controlling for initial *actual* and

*perceived* fit at entry. Furthermore, the inclusion of both objective and subjective fit measures provide us with better opportunities to investigate the underlying processes that contribute to changes in fit perceptions in the first stage of socialization. Based on the literature presented above, we hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 1.* Newcomers who experience mentoring, investiture and serial organizational socialization tactics will show higher levels of perceived fit, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and actual fit after controlling for perceived and actual fit at organizational entry.

#### *Changes in Newcomer Values*

Most P-O fit research is based on measuring individual and organizational values Kristof (1996). Values have the advantages of being fundamental and reasonably permanent for both people and organizations (Chatman, 1989, 1991), and also providing basis for the organization's culture and resultant employee behaviors (Posner, Kouzes, & Schmidt, 1985; Schein, 1990). Although individual values remain relatively stable over time as indicated by test-retest reliabilities (Chatman, 1991), research also suggests that newcomers change their values after being tenured in the organization. Chatman (1991) found small value changes after a period of one year after organizational entry (mean change from .23 to .19,  $r = .62$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and Cable & Parsons (2001) found personal value changes in a period of two years (while there was no change in the mean level of fit, which was .20 at both times, the correlation and regression results indicate change occurred:  $r = .59$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\beta = .65$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, and Gardner (1994) found that newcomers learn about organizational values during their first year. These results suggest that employees adapt their own values to those of the organization after they have been tenured for a

considerable amount of time. Organizational socialization research has consistently shown that the first three to four months following entry are critical for newcomers longer term adjustment (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Bauer & Green, 1994; Bauer, Morrison, & Callister, 1998). Therefore, it is likely that much of any value change which does occur, does so in this period. However, in previous studies the relationships between individuals' initial values and their values after tenure were still strong (Cable & Parson, 2001; Chatman, 1991). Thus, values do change, but probably quite slowly.

Kristof and her colleagues (1996; Kristof-Brown, Bono & Lauer, 1999) argued that the learning process underlying organizational socialization makes it likely that individuals' perceived P-O fit will show more correspondence with actual P-O fit over time, although both may change (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein & Gardner, 1994; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002b). Hence, we expect that perceived and actual fit will become more aligned following socialization, as newcomers come to base their fit on the same reality as experienced organizational insiders (Feldman, 1976; Louis, Posner & Powell, 1983; Morrison, 1993; Thomas & Anderson, 1998). Our second hypothesis is therefore as follows:

*Hypothesis 2.* Newcomers' perceived and actual P-O fit will be more strongly associated after the first four months of socialization as compared to their association at organizational entry.

## Method

### *Procedure*

The research was conducted with newcomers entering the London office of a global professional services firm, ABC, over a six-month period. Data were collected during newcomers' first week and again four months later (T1 and T2 respectively). A gap of only

four months was chosen since this is similar to past socialization research which typically uses periods of three or four months (Bauer, Morrison & Callister, 1998; Fisher, 1986). All measures were administered by survey, with the exception of the value measure that we used, the Organizational Culture Profile (OCP). Due to the complexity of this instrument, we decided to administer these face-to-face to ensure that the instructions were clear. On a small number of occasions (e.g., where newcomers were working abroad), we posted the OCP to respondents with thorough instructions and telephone support. In addition, we were not notified about a significant number new employees joining the organization and therefore we only conducted OCP profiles with a sub-sample of ABC's new employees, whereas all new employees received the questionnaires, which was distributed by ABC's Human Resources department.

### *Respondent Sample*

Of the one hundred and ninety-eight newcomers who joined ABC during the research period, one hundred-and-five newcomers responded at T1 and T2. However, complete data was available for 80 newcomers (76% of respondents). This attrition was due to 25 respondents not having a mentor, and therefore not responding to this scale. Complete responses for the OCP at T1 and T2 were obtained for 45 and 44 newcomers, respectively representing 42% of the sample of 105. For the 80 newcomers who responded in full to both questionnaires, these were 66% men and 33% women (54 men, 26 men). The average age was 26 years ( $M = 26.27$ ,  $SD = 5.27$ ). ABC has a hierarchical structure with five broad bands, with newcomers predominantly entering at the lowest two levels (80%). We adapted Goodman and Blum's (1996) recommendation of using multiple logistic regression to assess for demographic differences between the total population and our respondent sample, conducting individual logistic regressions for the four demographic variables of gender, age, years of work experience, and level of entry into ABC. All of these analyses were non-

significant ( $X^2 = 1.25$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .27$ ,  $n = 177$ ;  $X^2 = 1.10$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .30$ ,  $n = 143$ ;  $X^2 = 1.46$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .23$ ,  $n = 76$ ;  $X^2 = 0.50$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .48$ ,  $n = 143$  respectively).

### *Measures*

*Value Profiles.* Chatman (1989, 1991) and her colleagues (Caldwell, Chatman & O'Reilly, 1990) developed the Organizational Culture Profile (OCP) as a value-based measure allowing a comparison of individual and organizational values. It provides an idiographic assessment of individual and organizational values whilst enabling commensurate comparison across these levels. Further, using the OCP with a Q-sort methodology requires respondents to rank values into specific categories. This provides ipsative measurement, reducing the opportunity for respondents to respond in socially desirable ways. We also note the debate over the use of ipsative measures, in particular their lack of norms and, therefore, independent psychological meaning (Kline, 2000). However, the correlation of Q-sort profiles as separate independent measures does have psychological meaning, as evidenced in previous research (Chatman, 1991), with the resulting correlation coefficient allowing interpretation (i.e., the degree of actual fit). In addition, Chatman and her colleagues (1991, Chatman & Jehn, 1994; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991) have shown the OCP to have good consensual, construct and criterion-related validity. Research has also shown the OCP to have good test-retest reliability, ranging from .61 to .87 (Cable & Judge, 1997; Chatman, 1991). We confirmed this with a UK sample of 5 non-ABC respondents, all in stable full-time employment and aged 24 – 28 years (three female, two male) whose average test-retest correlation over a one month period was .77.

Looking at the OCP in more detail, it comprises 54 items that represent the full range of values that may be present in an organization's culture. Chatman's (1991) research showed that the final set of 54 items was neutral, free from social desirability biases, and met

criteria of completeness, relevance, readability and non-redundancy. Sample items are: flexibility, being innovative, being supportive, and high expectations for performance.

*Organization's values* were measured with a sample of 20 senior insiders, all of whom had worked for ABC for at least five years and who were in the top two of the five broad seniority levels. All senior insiders agreed to participate, and completed the OCP according to the following instructions: "Important values may be expressed in the form of norms or shared expectations about what's important, how to behave or what attitudes are appropriate. For each item, please consider the question: How characteristic is this aspect of the culture of ABC? Sort the 54 values into a row of nine categories from most characteristic to least characteristic, according to the categorization scheme given". Participants were then given a card showing the categorization scheme: 2-4-6-9-12-9-6-4-2. Chatman (1991) defines the "crystallization" of an organization's culture as its strength or homogeneity. This is examined by calculating an overall mean insider rating for each of the 54 items in the OCP and then computing the mean insider-total insider correlation. Chatman refers to the resulting statistic as an alpha coefficient, representing how similar each insider's rating of the organization is to the total organization profile. The alpha coefficient for ABC, calculated using Pearson correlation, is .94. This indicates a high level of crystallization within ABC. Further, of 210 inter-rater correlations, all but 18 were significant at  $p < .05$  showing that raters had similar views of ABC. These were then used as the organization's values, against which newcomers' values at T1 and T2 were matched.

*Newcomers' values* were also measured with the OCP, at T1 and T2. They were asked: "How important is it for this characteristic to be part of the organization you work for?". Newcomers were requested to sort the items into categories ranging from most desirable to least desirable. At T1, newcomers were aware that they would have a second

interview, but they were not explicitly told that they would be doing the card-sorting task again at T2.

*Actual P-O fit.* Consistent with past research (Chatman, 1991; O'Reilly et al., 1991), we measured actual P-O fit for each newcomer by computing the profile correlation between their personal value profile and that of the organization.

*Perceived P-O fit.* Following previous researchers, we used a single item to provide a global assessment of perceived P-O fit (Cable & Judge, 1997; Saks & Ashforth, 1997b). Newcomers were asked "How well do you think you fit into the culture at ABC?", measured on a 1 - 7 scale from "not at all" to "totally", at T1 and T2. Specifically, Cable and Judge (1997) showed this single item measure to have a high correlation with a similar, second item ( $r = .83$ ), indicating that the one-item measure was adequate (see also Judge & Cable, 1997)

*Organizational Socialization Tactics.* Three organizational socialization tactics were measured at T2. First, the two social scales were taken from Jones' (1986) six socialization tactics scales, namely serial – disjunctive and investiture - divestiture (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Items were measured on a one-to-seven scale, from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Cronbach alphas for serial – disjunctive and investiture - divestiture tactics were .74 and .64 respectively; we deemed these acceptable, with the lower Cronbach alpha for investiture-divestiture typical to socialization research (Jones, 1986). In addition to these, a mentoring scale developed by Noe (1988), and conceptually based on Kram's (1983) research, was used to measure the psycho-social dimensions of this specific tactic, with this scale previously used with newcomers (Chao, Walz & Gardner, 1992). At ABC, a formal mentoring program exists with newcomers assigned to mentors outside their work area, and a mentoring focus on support and guidance. Noe's psycho-social mentoring scale contains 14 items, and was measured with a 7 item Likert type scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "strongly agree". The Cronbach alpha for this scale was .92. In spite of ABC's policy on

mentoring, preliminary research revealed that some newcomers did not have a mentor, for example when an assigned mentor left the firm or moved onto a project with the newcomer. Thus, an initial screening question was added asking respondents whether or not they had a mentor. Finally, 81 newcomers responded to the mentoring items.

Several studies have shown relationships between fit perceptions and individual affective outcomes when measured simultaneously (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Cable & Judge, 1997; Nicholson & West, 1988). Job satisfaction and commitment were therefore included in this study, measured at T2. *Job satisfaction* was measured with a single item: “How satisfied are you with your job in general?”, scored on a 1 to 5 scale from “very dissatisfied” to “very satisfied”. We chose to use a single item instead of a multiple-item scale based on previous research comparing different measures of job satisfaction (Scarpello & Campbell, 1983; Wanous, Reichers, & Hudy, 1997). *Organizational commitment* was measured with nine items, derived from the OCQ (Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979). An example item is “I am proud to tell others that I am at ABC”. The items were rated on a 1 to 7 scale, from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Cronbach alpha was .91.

## Results

The means, standard deviations, and correlations among the variables are shown in Table 1. Looking first at the various measures of fit, the means for *actual* fit show a moderate positive fit between newcomers and ABC ( $M = .26$  and  $.21$ , at T1 and T2 respectively), which is similar to previous research by O’Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell (1991) ( $M = .23$ ) and Chatman (1991) ( $M = .23$  at entry, and  $M = .19$  after one year). Newcomers’ *perceived* fit is relatively high at T1 ( $M = 5.08$ ), but appears to decrease slightly over time ( $M = 4.71$  at T2). Looking at the inter-correlations over time, *actual* fit is strongly positively correlated between T1 and T2 ( $r = .74, p < .01$ ), and *perceived* fit is moderately positively correlated

between these times ( $r = .42, p < .01$ ). In the case of *actual* fit, this correlation is similar to the test-retest reliability estimate in the current study ( $r = .77$ ), suggesting a high degree of stability in personal values. In line with previous P-O fit studies, significant relationships exist between the fit measures at T2 and individual outcomes, but correlations with job satisfaction and commitment were higher for perceived fit ( $r = .48, p < .01$  and  $r = .71, p < .01$ , respectively) as compared to actual fit ( $r = .35, p < .05$  and  $r = .50, p < .01$ , respectively). Furthermore, similar to other research, the correlation between job satisfaction and commitment is relatively high ( $r = .64, p < .01$ ).

Hypotheses were tested with using ordinary least squares regression analyses with hierarchical entry. This provides information regarding the percentage of variance in the criterion measures accounted for by socialization tactics (second block) after other variables are controlled for (first block), with the latter being perceived and actual fit at T1 (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). Because the number of respondents differed for some of the variables we used pairwise deletion; since our hypotheses predict the direction of relationships, we report one-tailed significance tests. Table 2 presents the results when predicting P-O fit and affective outcomes at T2 with the T1 P-O fit measures and socialization tactics. Newcomers' perceived fit and actual fit at T1 are both positively related to perceived fit at T2 ( $\beta = .41, p < .05$  and  $\beta = .27, p < .05$ , respectively) and commitment ( $\beta = .38, p < .01$  and  $\beta = .54, p < .01$ ). Moreover, newcomers' actual fit at entry is significantly related to job satisfaction ( $\beta = .39, p < .05$ ). No significant relationship is found between perceived fit at entry and job satisfaction ( $\beta = .15, ns$ ).

*Hypothesis 1* proposes that changes in fit perceptions (from T1 to T2), and job satisfaction and organizational commitment (T2), are related to the three socialization tactics. This is confirmed (see Table 2, column 2). The block with socialization tactics significantly contributes to the variance in perceived fit (T2) beyond and above the block with T1 fit

measures ( $\Delta R^2 = .29, p < .01$ ). Particularly, the investiture socialization tactic is significantly related to perceived fit at T2 ( $\beta = .57, p < .05$ ). Socialization tactics significantly contribute to the variance in job satisfaction and organizational commitment (T2) beyond and above the block with T1 fit measures ( $\Delta R^2 = .20, p < .05$  and  $\Delta R^2 = .17, p < .05$ , respectively). We examined whether newcomers' values remain stable in the first months after organizational entry. We first entered actual fit T1 into the regression equation predicting actual fit T2, as a second step perceived fit at T1, and in a third step the socialization tactics. Because a common referent measure was used to establish both actual fit at entry (T1) and actual fit at T2 (i.e., the organization's values), any differences between the measures reflect changes in newcomers' own values (see Cable & Parsons, 2001). Table 2 (column 8) shows that socialization tactics cannot explain additional variance in actual fit at T2 after controlling for actual fit and perceived fit at T1 ( $\Delta R^2 = .05, ns$ ). Thus, organizational socialization tactics do not cause newcomers to change their personal values toward the organization's values in the first four months after organizational entry.

In *Hypothesis 2* we propose that perceived and actual P-O fit will be more strongly related after significant socialization has taken place. We tested the difference between the two correlations for actual and perceived fit at T1 ( $r = .03$ ) and T2 ( $r = .36$ ) respectively using Hotelling t-test for the difference between two correlation coefficients from one sample. The difference between the two correlations was significant ( $t = 1.73, p < .05$ ). Hence, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

#### *Summary and additional analyses*

Taken together, our findings confirm our hypotheses. In summary, on average newcomers rated their fit at T2 as lower than at T1. Socialization tactics, in particular investiture, contribute to perceived fit, job satisfaction and organizational commitment after the first stage of socialization. They do not change newcomers' own values, but rather their

perceptions of organizational values. Perceived fit and actual fit become more strongly related after the first stage of socialization.

The results, as illustrated in Tables 1 and 2, suggest possible mediation of perceived fit (T2) in the relationship between socialization tactics and individual outcomes. This would parallel research on socialization tactics which has shown that their influence on such outcomes is mediated by newcomer learning (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002a; Chao, Kozlowski, Major, & Gardner, 1994). This analysis is opportunistic, investigating this interesting possibility. The basis for this analysis is that, first, significant and substantial relationships exist between perceived fit (T2) and individual outcomes (see Table 1). Second, socialization tactics are related to both perceived fit (T2) and individual outcomes, after controlling for the fit measures at T1 (see Table 2). Possible mediation was tested with several regression analyses, following the procedure as indicated by Baron and Kenny (1986). We included investiture as the independent variable, because this socialization tactic showed to have a significant and substantial relationship with perceived fit (T2) after controlling for both fit measures at T1. Furthermore, the first step in each regression equation included these control variables of perceived and actual fit at T1. The results are shown in Table 3. Investiture is significantly related to perceived fit (T2) (see model 1) and individual outcomes (see model 2 for job satisfaction and organizational commitment). However, investiture is not related to individual outcomes when it is included as the final step in the regression equations (see model 3 for job satisfaction and commitment). The beta coefficients of investiture dropped from model 2 to model 3 (from .41 to .28 and from .38 to .12 in the equations with job satisfaction and commitment as the dependent variables, respectively). These results suggest a (partial) mediating role of perceived fit (T2) in the relationship between investiture and individual outcomes.

## Discussion

This study offers several interesting results, three of which are particularly noteworthy. *First*, actual fit as measured at organizational entry is a significant predictor of perceived fit and individual outcomes after the first stage of socialization. This implies that interviewers can assess applicants' future fit with the organization through asking them about their values and comparing these values with those of the organization as derived from insiders. *Second*, the stability in *actual* fit over time suggests that newcomers do not change their own values in the first months of socialization. Thus, rather than changing their values, as supposed by other researchers (Wanous, 1992), it seems that they are concerned with validating their initial perceptions of organization values. Indeed, newcomers' perceptions of organizational values grow to be more realistic, because perceived fit and actual fit become more congruent over time. Also, on average newcomers' initial fit perceptions become less positive during socialization. *Third*, the degree to which initial fit perceptions change depends on newcomers' experiences with socialization tactics, in particular the investiture tactic. Newcomers who received social support from insiders show higher perceived fit after the first four months as compared to newcomers having received less social support. Hence, the drop in perceived fit from T1 (organizational entry) to T2 (after 4 months) is less for those newcomers that have experienced social support from others, which goes together with higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Researchers have used both subjective (or perceived) and objective (or actual) measures to investigate the effects and implications of P-O fit, yet largely without exploring the links between these (Cable & Judge, 1997; Kristof, 1996). In this respect, it is relevant to consider that actual fit is more stable over time and that it is less affected by specific socialization experiences than perceived fit. Indeed, the high intercorrelation of the OCP over time at a similar level to test-retest reliability suggests minimal change in personal values.

This is in line with Kristof-Brown et al.'s (1999) proposal that actual fit reflects true fit and, since this is based on relatively enduring values, it is more stable than perceived fit. Thus, it seems that actual fit is closely matched with "true" fit, and that perceived fit, while initially being loosely related to actual fit and with increased congruence over time, actually remains a distinct construct. Recent research has shown that objective measures of fit have less influence on individual and organizational outcomes than subjective or perceived measures (Cable & Judge, 1997; Judge & Cable, 1997). Our study suggests that this is not true at entry, where actual fit has stronger relations with individual outcomes than perceived fit. However, this pattern reverses after the first few months of socialization, with perceived fit more strongly related to individual outcomes than actual fit. It can be argued that, since these fit concepts appear to be relatively distinct, in terms of both the factors influencing them and their effects, there is no need for greater accuracy to increase the congruence between fit measures. Rather, researchers should use whichever measure matches the theoretical aims of their study. From the attraction – selection – attrition perspective (ASA, Schneider et al., 1998), our results and those of other P-O fit studies suggest that: (a) perceived fit is relevant for attraction, (b) actual fit should be established during selection, and (c) perceived fit affects attrition.

Given the preponderance of shorter time frames in socialization research to investigate newcomer change (Bauer et al., 1998), we investigated the effects of socialization tactics several months after entry. The investiture and serial tactics were strongly related, but the investiture tactic had the largest impact on perceived fit. Investiture may be associated with better fit due to newcomers feeling valued for what they bring to the organization and therefore particularly experiencing positive organizational values. However, an alternative explanation is that those who fit better are in turn the recipients of more positive behaviors from their colleagues, so this acts as a virtuous circle to enhance fit. Nonetheless, the fact that

investiture predicted improvements in perceived fit provides stronger support for the first explanation, that newcomers who feel appreciated focus on the positive aspects of organizational values.

Contrary to our expectations, mentoring was not significantly related to perceived fit at T2 and individual outcomes. A previous study by Chatman (1991) found that time spent with a mentor predicted both fit and changes in fit after one year. Taking these results together, they provide some support for Kram's model (1983), with clearer benefits from mentoring occurring further into the relationship from six months to one year from initiation.

#### *Limitations and Strengths of the Present Study*

The main limitation of this research is the reduced sample size for actual fit. Unfortunately, this was largely due to the use of the OCP and the Q-sort methodology, requiring intensive personal interviewing and thus restricting the possibility of involving a large group of respondents.

Another potential limitation of our findings is that they relate to the single, professional services organization in which we conducted the current study. This is unlikely, however, as the job function concerned is fairly common across other, similar, organizations that also use comparable socialization tactics and mentoring procedures. Thus, it is likely that the results from this study will generalize at least to other similar organizations and job functions. Moreover, the similarities between our results and those of previous P-O fit studies suggest that the present findings can be generalized further.

This study could also be criticized for the choice of P-O fit measures. Proponents of the polynomial regression approach argue that this is a more valid measure of P-O fit as an interaction, rather than a profile similarity index such as the OCP (Kristof, 1996; Edwards, 1993, 1994a). Looking first at why we used the OCP, this allowed us directly to build and

extend on previous research investigating P-O fit over time and using various fit measures (Cable & Judge, 1997; Chatman, 1991; Judge & Cable, 1997). Further, the OCP enables ipsative, idiographic measurement of the fit between person and organization values as a “constellation”, which was expected to correspond with the global views represented by perceived fit measures (Cable & Judge, 1997; Schneider, 2001). In contrast to this, the polynomial regression approach represents a different view of P-O fit where this is the remaining interaction of the person and the organization after each of their main effects have been accounted for (Edwards, 1994b). In addition, from a practical perspective, the polynomial regression approach requires a larger sample than achieved in the current research (Edwards, 1991, 1994b). Thus, there were valid theoretical and practical reasons for our selection of fit measures.

A final potential limitation of the present study is our decision to use values as the basis for P-O fit, viewing these as the elements underlying organizational culture. Although values are the most common basis for P-O fit research (Kristof, 1996), investigating other aspects of fit, particularly goals and personality, might have strengthened the impact of our findings, especially with regard to ASA research (Pervin, 1992; Schneider, 2001; Schneider et al., 1998). Moreover, investigating the relationships of the different fit measures with both individual and organizational level outcomes would have provided further evidence of their distinctiveness, and this should be investigated in future research. In particular, the relationship between actual fit with organizational effectiveness outcomes is needed to prove the practical utility of objective fit (Schneider et al., 1995).

In spite of these weaknesses, this research has a number of strengths. First, our use of subjective and objective fit measures, each coming from different sources, partly reduces the possibility of common method bias, which is typically a weakness of organizational socialization research (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986; Saks & Ashforth, 1997a). Specifically,

newcomers were investigated with a combination of self-report survey and face-to-face measures, each at two time points, with experienced insiders investigated with posted Q-sorts (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Second, this is the first study investigating two different measures of fit over time, providing evidence of their distinctiveness. It should also be noted that we used both measures of perceived and actual P-O value fit whereas previous studies have been restricted to using solely perceptual measures. This allowed us to explore interrelationships between the two sources of measures, and over the longer-term, to examine their impact upon important individual level outcomes, namely job satisfaction and organizational commitment. That this combination of measurement sources allowed an analysis of the changes in actual newcomer values, and whether individuals' own values or their perceptions of organizational values change as a result of socialization in the first stage after organizational entry, is an important contribution to research in this field. Further, our research shows that the organization has a key role to play in facilitating fit, according to the socialization tactics employed. These three key strengths of the current study, we believe, are important methodological and pragmatic contributions.

#### *Practical Implications for HRM Practices in Newcomer Socialization*

Our results suggest that organizations can have an important role in bringing about newcomer fit both in selecting newcomers with higher levels of actual and perceived P-O fit, and in the tactics used to improve fit. This corresponds with other organizational socialization research that accords the organization with a significant role in enabling newcomer learning and adjustment (Bauer, Morrison & Callister, 1998; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002a; Louis, 1990; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Our findings provide initial support for the link between socialization and organizational homogeneity, with organizational socialization tactics predicting improvements in perceived but not actual P-O fit (Schneider et al., 1998).

This suggests that ASA theory requires revision to explicitly acknowledge the role of organizational socialization in achieving P-O fit. Further, the fact that the socialization tactics predicted changes in perceived P-O fit shows the importance of socialization in addition to selection. First, this suggests that the two processes are complementary but not necessarily interchangeable (Anderson & Ostroff, 1997; Anderson, 2001). Second, this yields positive news for Human Resources in that, when labor markets are restricted, they may be able to improve perceived fit through socialization, rather than relying solely on hiring (Anderson & Herriot, 1997; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2002b). Thus, socialization potentially provides a flexible means of achieving fit (Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Schein, 1990; Schneider, 2001), which could be used to help tenured employees adjust during organizational change, such as downsizing or top team turnover.

#### *Future Research*

Our research confirms that the organization's actions, particularly in terms of investiture tactics, influence newcomers' P-O fit. This relationship may be specific to the organization studied, and therefore, it would be of practical benefit to investigate whether investiture and other tactics are effective in achieving improved P-O fit in other organizations. These might include the other four socialization tactics outlined by Van Maanen and Schein (1979; Jones, 1986; Van Maanen, 1978), as well as other objective factors such as size of the new workgroup, work experience and seniority of colleagues, and frequency of interaction with supervisor and colleagues (Lievens et al., 2001). Moreover, research on the effectiveness of such tactics in bringing about value change for longer-tenured employees would be beneficial, since successful tactics could be implemented to support organizational changes.

Turning to the person side of fit, further research is required to investigate whether individuals can employ tactics to improve their own P-O fit. This is in line with the recent emphasis on individual proactivity in socialization research (Ashford & Black, 1996; Major & Kozlowski, 1997; Saks & Ashforth, 1996; Morrison, 1993a). Although changes in P-O fit can occur through either individual or organizational value change (Kristof, 1996), research has shown that individuals' values change somewhat after being tenured for a while (Cable & Parsons, 2001; Chatman, 1991). However newcomers may increase their fit by changing the organization to fit them (Anderson & Thomas, 1996; Feij, Whitely, Peiro, & Taris, 1995; Nicholson, 1984; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). The latter poses interesting research possibilities, especially for newcomers entering in senior positions (Schneider et al., 1995). Hence, research is needed that investigates individual tactics that promote individual and also organizational change.

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Table 1.

Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations of Socialization Tactics, Fit measures, and Affective Outcomes

|                       | M    | SD   | N  | 1     | 2     | 3   | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8     | 9 |
|-----------------------|------|------|----|-------|-------|-----|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---|
| 1. Investiture        | 4.46 | 1.05 | 80 | -     |       |     |       |       |       |       |       |   |
| 2. Serial             | 4.09 | 1.13 | 80 | .63** | -     |     |       |       |       |       |       |   |
| 3. Mentor             | 3.44 | 0.76 | 80 | .32** | .27*  | -   |       |       |       |       |       |   |
| 4. Perceived fit (T1) | 5.08 | 1.10 | 80 | .26*  | .18   | .03 | -     |       |       |       |       |   |
| 5. Perceived fit (T2) | 4.74 | 1.37 | 80 | .67** | .47** | .09 | .42** | -     |       |       |       |   |
| 6. Actual fit (T1)    | 0.26 | 0.17 | 45 | .18   | .29   | .30 | .03   | .31*  | -     |       |       |   |
| 7. Actual fit (T2)    | 0.21 | 0.22 | 44 | .08   | .06   | .19 | .10   | .36*  | .74** | -     |       |   |
| 8. Job satisfaction   | 3.51 | 1.01 | 80 | .50** | .52** | .02 | .16   | .48** | .37*  | .35*  | -     |   |
| 9. Commitment         | 4.86 | 1.16 | 80 | .58** | .53** | .17 | .40** | .71** | .55** | .50** | .62** | - |

*Note.* N ranges from 44 (actual fit measures) to 80 (other measures); \*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$

Table 2  
Regression Analyses Predicting P-O Fit Measures and Individual Outcomes

| Variable                       | Perceived fit (T2) |                      | Job satisfaction |                      | Organizational Commitment |                      | Variable                       | Actual fit (T2)        |                      |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
|                                | $\beta$ (block)    | $\beta$ (full model) | $\beta$ (block)  | $\beta$ (full model) | $\beta$ (block)           | $\beta$ (full model) |                                | $\beta$ (blocks 1 & 2) | $\beta$ (full model) |
| Block 1: Fit T1                |                    |                      |                  |                      |                           |                      | Block 1: Actual Fit (T1)       | .71**                  | .75**                |
| Perceived fit (T1)             | .41*               | .25*                 | .15              | .04                  | .38**                     | .28*                 | $\Delta R^2$ for Block 1       | .51**                  |                      |
| Actual fit (T1)                | .27*               | .06                  | .39*             | .26                  | .54**                     | .38**                |                                |                        |                      |
| $R^2$ for Block 1              | .24**              |                      | .16*             |                      | .45**                     |                      | Block 2: Perceived fit (T1)    | .08                    | .11                  |
|                                |                    |                      |                  |                      |                           |                      | $\Delta R^2$ for Block 2       | .00                    |                      |
| Block 2: Socialization tactics |                    |                      |                  |                      |                           |                      | Block 3: Socialization Tactics |                        |                      |
| Investiture                    |                    | .57*                 |                  | .21                  |                           | .28*                 | Investiture                    |                        | .02                  |
| Serial                         |                    | .06                  |                  | .31                  |                           | .21                  | Serial                         |                        | -.23                 |
| Mentor                         |                    | .12                  |                  | -.05                 |                           | .12                  | Mentor                         |                        | -.07                 |
| $\Delta R^2$ for Block 2       | .29**              |                      | .20*             |                      | .17*                      |                      | $\Delta R^2$ for Block 3       | .05                    |                      |
| Total $R^2$                    |                    | .53**                |                  | .38*                 |                           | .62**                |                                |                        | .56**                |

Note: N ranges from 44 to 80; standardized beta weights; \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$  (one-tailed).

Table 3

Regression Results for Testing Whether Perceived Fit (T2) mediates the Relationship Between the Investiture Tactic and Individual Outcomes

|  | Perceived Fit (T2) |              |             | Job satisfaction |              |             | Organizational Commitment |              |             |
|--|--------------------|--------------|-------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|
|  | $\beta$            | $\Delta R^2$ | Total $R^2$ | $\beta$          | $\Delta R^2$ | Total $R^2$ | $\beta$                   | $\Delta R^2$ | Total $R^2$ |
| Model 1 (Perceived fit T2)                 |                    |              |             |                  |              |             |                           |              |             |
| Controls                                   |                    | .24**        | .24**       |                  |              |             |                           |              |             |
| Investiture                                | .57**              | .28**        | .52**       |                  |              |             |                           |              |             |
| Model 2 (Individual outcome <sup>1</sup> ) |                    |              |             |                  |              |             |                           |              |             |
| Controls                                   |                    |              |             | .18*             | .18*         |             | .45**                     | .45**        |             |
| Investiture                                |                    |              |             | .41**            | .14**        | .32**       | .38**                     | .12**        | .57**       |
| Model 3 (Individual outcome <sup>1</sup> ) |                    |              |             |                  |              |             |                           |              |             |
| Controls                                   |                    |              |             | .18*             | .18*         |             | .45**                     | .45**        |             |
| Perceived fit T2                           |                    |              |             | .22              | .12*         | .30*        | .46**                     | .22**        | .67**       |
| Investiture                                |                    |              |             | .28              | .04          | .34**       | .12                       | .00          | .67**       |

*Note.* N ranges from 44 to 80;  $\beta$  = standardized beta weights; controls are perceived fit at T1 and actual fit at T2. The individual outcomes<sup>1</sup> are job satisfaction and organizational commitment, respectively. \*\*  $p < .01$  (one-tailed), \*  $p < .05$  (one-tailed), for t values (for regression coefficients of the full model) or F values.