Salesforce Socialization Revisited: A Search for Salient Constructs

By Jeffrey K. Sager, Alan J. Dubinsky, Sanghyun Lee, Phillip H. Wilson, Chris Shao, and David H. Rylander

In light of increased competition and escalated importance of maintaining and extending relationships between businesses, salespeople's ability to represent an organization effectively is more important than ever. Socialization is often an overlooked vehicle for instilling in salespeople organizational values and behaviors necessary to represent an organization effectively. To enhance understanding of various aspects of socialization, this article reports the results of a study that examines three major models of socialization as predictors of key salesperson outcomes. Findings suggest that a combination of variables from the stages, tactical, and content socialization models best predicts organizational commitment, job satisfaction, performance, and intention to quit. Congruence, organizational values and goals, and initiation to task were among the more salient predictors of outcomes. The need to explore a reassessment of socialization constructs and refinement of measures is highlighted, as well as implications for sales managers.

INTRODUCTION

Enlisting and developing effective salespeople who accurately reflect the organization's values and behaviors necessitates effective socialization practices (Spiro, Stanton, and Rich 2002). Indeed, Grant and Bush (1996, p. 17) averred that "a well-managed socialization process and salesforce culture are likely to have favorable effects on salesforce [outcomes]...." More efficacious training and indoctrination processes during early socialization increase transfer of values and the organization's culture to organizational newcomers, thus permitting enhanced uniformity of behavior and performance (e.g., Dubinsky et al. 1986). To facilitate

Jeffrey K. Sager (Ph.D., Texas A&M University), Professor of Marketing, College of Business Administration, University of North Texas, Denton, TX, sager@unt.edu

Alan J. Dubinsky (Ph.D., University of Minnesota), Dillard Distinguished Professor of Marketing, Dillard College of Business Administration, Midwestern State University, Wichita Falls, TX, dubinsky@purdue.edu

Sanghyun Lee (Ph.D., Purdue University), Associate Professor of Marketing, Dongguk University, Seoul, Korea, edlee@dongguk.edu

David H. Rylander (Ph.D., University of North Texas), Associate Professor of Marketing, School of Management, Texas Woman's University, Sherman, TX, drylander@twu.edu

Chris Shao (Ph.D., University of Texas at Arlington), Associate Professor of Marketing, Midwestern State University, Wichita Falls, TX, chris.shao@mwsu.edu

Phillip H. Wilson (Ph.D., University of North Texas), Assistant Professor of Marketing, Dillard College of Business Administration, Midwestern State University, Wichita Falls, TX, phillip.wilson@mwsu.edu

learning and retention of newly hired salespeople, sales organizations need to know more about how to shape the socialization process of new salespersons.

The physical, social, and psychological separation of sales personnel from the base organization; the multiple roles of the sales job; the need for self-motivation; the high degree of conflict and uncertainty associated with the salesperson's role; and the often delayed outcomes of salespersons' efforts conduce to the need for deliberate socialization of salespeople by organizations (Dubinsky et al. 1986). Palpably, socialization should assist salespersons to deal with these job conditions. But what is "socialization"? It is "the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role" (Van Maanen and Schein 1979, p. 211). Essentially, then, knowing more about what occurs during a socialization process should help managers and trainers move new salespeople into their roles in an organization.

Admittedly, the import of organizational socialization has not been lost on researchers. A considerable body of knowledge exists on the topic. Morrison (1993) discussed three approaches that researchers have utilized to study socialization. One approach looks at socialization as a series of *stages* (e.g., Feldman 1981; Jones 1983). A second involves *tactical* elements organizations use (either explicitly or implicitly) to facilitate socialization (e.g., use of formal training programs, formal mentoring) (e.g., Van Maanen and Schein 1979). A third, the *content* perspective, entails thoughts, processes, and behaviors a newcomer enacts during socialization.

The foregoing three approaches to the process of socialization will hereafter be referred to as *socialization stages*, *socialization tactics*, and *socialization content*. Considerable evidence supports the institutional tactics aspect of socialization. Although researchers have focused largely on the socialization tactics developed by Van Maanen and Schein, other aspects of the newcomers' environment may well affect adjustment to the organization and accommodation, and ultimately influence behavioral and attitudinal outcomes, as proposed in the stage socialization models (Feldman 1981). For example, drawing from findings from their socialization stage research, Dubinsky et al. (1986) proposed that subsequent research should incorporate personal and job/organization characteristics (i.e., socialization content). More directly critiquing the line of thought in socialization, Louis (1980, p. 234) opined that "...no theoretical framework has been proposed to guide or justify the choice of particular tactical dimensions of socialization to study." This situation still prevails today. In addition, Chao et al. (1994, p. 742) observed that research should focus on "...understanding the different relationships between socialization content areas and their antecedents and outcomes," further noting that effort devoted to theorizing about socialization outweighs effort devoted to evaluating socialization models. It appears that socialization scholars have identified key gaps in the literature, a major one being the absence of knowledge about the *collective* impact of the stages, tactics, and content aspects of socialization vis-à-vis workplace outcomes. This oversight is perplexing given that, as new hires assimilate, the impact of socialization stages, tactics, and content may well influence job-related reactions *jointly*.

Given the foregoing, an investigation was designed to explore the collective impact of the three socialization approaches on *newly hired* salespeople's job reactions. More specifically, the study examined the situational or organizational/institutional context of socialization relative to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, longevity intentions, and performance of salesforce newcomers. These four outcomes have been frequently evaluated in newcomer socialization research (e.g., Ashforth and Saks 1996). Essentially, our focus is on what aspects of the socialization process—stages, tactics, and/or content—*collectively* abet newcomers to enhance their satisfaction, commitment, desire to stay, and performance.

SOCIALIZATION

Researchers ascribe several crucial functions to socialization. Feldman (1981) conceptualized socialization as the process wherein employees are transformed from organizational outsiders to organizational members. Van Maanen (1978) emphasized the idea that through socialization, the new employee surrenders or modifies pre-existing attitudes, behaviors, and values. Caplow (1964) viewed socialization as a vehicle for the acquisition of new self-images and commitments. Schein (1978) contended that the new employee learns and adopts organizational rules and goals during socialization. These perspectives signify that socialization transforms a newcomer. Seemingly, an organization that effectively socializes new employees should experience enhanced retention, commitment, and performance (Major et al. 1995). The notion of managing socialization implies that an organization can actively craft the process to have a decided and favorable impact. Using socialization models developed by Louis (1980), Feldman (1976; 1981), Van Maanen and Schein (1979), and Jones (1986), this study reconnoiters the influence of three sets of socialization variables—socialization stages, tactics, and content—on key salesperson outcomes. Shown in Table 1 is a summary of research focusing on these three socialization perspectives.

Socialization Stages Model

The primary socialization framework applied in both organizational behavior and salesforce research stems from Feldman's (1976; 1981) three-stage model. Feldman's (1976) stages include (a) anticipatory socialization (the point in time when the newcomer learns about the reality of the organization prior to joining); (b) accommodation (the point in time where the newcomer first experiences the reality of organizational membership); and (c) role management (the point when the newcomer enacts role-appropriate long-lasting changes).

Table 1
Research Highlights of Employee Socialization

Authors	Socialization Focus	Sample	Socialization Measures
Feldman (1976)	Stages (contingency theory of socialization)	118 employees from a single hospital (various tenure)	Developed scales for socialization stages
Van Maanen & Schein (1979)	Tactics (introduced six dichotomies of tactics)	monograph	
Wanous (1980)	Stages (newcomer processes and strategies)	book	
Jones (1986)	Tactics (scale development; institutionalized tactics significant)	127 recent MBA graduates from a single university (5 months out)	Six socialization tactics scales developed from Van Maanen and Schein (1979)
Dubinsky et al. (1986)	Stages (derived from Feldman 1976; sales context)	189 "least experienced salespersons" from multiple companies	Feldman (1976) socialization process variables
Allen & Meyer (1990)	Tactics (Jones 1986 scales and replication)	132 recent graduates from a single university (12 months out)	Jones (1986) socialization tactics
Chatman (1991)	General (related to person-organization fit and outcomes)	122 newcomer accountants from multiple firms (10-12 months out)	Pascale's (1985) socialization scale)
Morrison (1993)	General (role of information seeking)	135 newcomers in five accounting firms (3 and 6 months out)	Acculturation (OCP; O'Reilly et al. 1991; Chatman 1991)
Bauer & Green (1994)	Stages (derived from Feldman 1976)	193 science doctoral students from a single university (9 months out)	Realism (new scale); Accommodation (Bandura 1977; Rizzo et al. 1970)
Chao et al. (1994)	Content (content dimensions related to career effectiveness)	594 engineering graduates from two colleges (up to 32 years out)	Developed six scales for socialization factors/content
Ashforth & Saks (1996)	Tactics (institutionalized tactics related to newcomer adjustment; focus on context factors)	Recent business graduates from a single university (295 at 4 months; 222 at 10 months)	Jones (1986) socialization tactics
Grant & Bush (1996)	Tactics (institutionalized tactics related to organizational value congruence)	185 salespeople in multiple firms (up to 2 years out)	Jones (1986) socialization tactics (amended for sales force population)
Ashforth et al. (1998)	Tactics (model relating socialization and adjustment)	223 recent graduates from university in Canada (4 and 10 months out)	Jones (1986) socialization tactics
Klein & Weaver (2000)	Content (focus on orientation training)	116 newcomers in a single educational institution (10 weeks out)	Chao et al. (1994) socialization content scales
Riordan et al. (2001)	Tactics (organization-oriented)	162 new employees from a single banking firm (3 months and 6 months out)	Jones (1986) socialization tactics
Cable & Parsons (2001)	Tactics (fixed and serial tactics most significant)	Recent graduates from a single university (129 at 6 months out; 101 at 1 year out)	Jones (1986) socialization tactics (reduced to 2 items per tactic)
Bravo et al. (2003)	Tactics (emphasis on serial and fixed tactics)	661 European newcomer workers (1st year and 2 years later)	Jones (1986) socialization tactics
Barksdale et al. (2003)	Stages (adapted from Dubinsky et al. 1986; focus on realism)	762 newcomer insurance sales people from multiple firms (6 months, 1 year and 2 years out)	Adapted from multiple scales (mostly Dubinsky et al. 1986)
Tae-Yeol et al. (2005)	Tactics (related to person-organization fit)	279 employee-supervisor pairs from South Korean firms (up to 2 years out)	Jones (1986) socialization tactics (adapted)
Jaskyte (2005)	Tactics (Jones 1986 scales; related to role ambiguity and role conflict)	210 recent graduates from a single university	Jones (1986) socialization tactics
Allen (2006)	Tactics (related to turnover)	newcomers in a single firm	
Cooper-Thomas & Anderson (2006)	General (organizational socialization review and proposed model)	201 British Army recruits (8 weeks out)	Jones (1986) socialization tactics (adapted and simplified)
Bauer et al. (2007)	Meta-analysis (with emphasis on methodology)	70 research samples	Meta-analysis
Menguc et al. (2007)	General (organization-initiated vs. newcomers' proactive socialization tactics related to accommodation and adjustment)	154 newcomer salespeople from multiple firms in South Korea (5-20 months out)	Jones (1986) socialization tactics

At each stage of the socialization process, Feldman (1976) identified component variables, with different variables attaining prominence during each stage. Feldman's (1976; 1981) view of socialization has been further developed and empirically tested in a sales setting (Dubinsky et al. 1986). The Dubinsky et al. (1986) model of salesperson socialization incorporates four key stages: (a) anticipatory socialization stage (the newcomer begins to learn about the organization prior to joining); (b) accommodation stage (the recruit uncovers what the organization is really like and develops into an organizational member); (c) role definition stage (the recruit reconciles work versus non-work conflicts and conflicting demands at work); and (d) outcome stage (the recruit assesses his or her job satisfaction,

work motivation, and job involvement). Dubinsky et al. (1986) determined that salespeople who clearly perceive the reality of the sales organization exhibit enhanced job satisfaction. To the extent sales recruits feel competent and accepted by their colleagues (i.e., the more successful the initiation to their group), the more satisfied they are. Also, Dubinsky et al. (1986) found that congruence (the degree of overlap between the organization's resources and demands and the sales recruit's skills and needs) relates positively to job satisfaction, job involvement, role definition, initiation to group, congruence of evaluation, and mutual influence. Congruence coincides with the notion of person-organization fit (Schneider 1987). Dubinsky et al. (1986) urged that future work look at additional outcomes of socialization (e.g., organizational commitment, performance).

Socialization Tactics Model

The idea behind socialization tactics is that recruits' development depends on the types of socialization practices organizations employ (e.g., Allen and Meyer 1990; Louis 1980). Those tactics determine the type of information newcomers receive and the way the information is disseminated. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) categorized socialization tactics as institutionalized (i.e., collective, formal, sequential, fixed, serial, investiture) or individualized (i.e., individual, informal, random, variable, disjunctive, divestiture). Institutionalized socialization tactics provide a common initiation and learning experience to facilitate newcomers' personal adjustments. For instance, a standardized, group-based (collective) training program for new sales personnel exemplifies formal (institutionalized) tactics. A formalized mentor program embodies serial (institutionalized) socialization tactics. A career ladder or sales training plan reflects sequential (institutionalized) socialization tactics. In contrast, individualized tactics provide a new member with unique initiation and learning experiences, affording newcomers increased opportunity to develop their role more innovatively (Jones 1986). For example, on-the-job training conducted by sales branch managers or by another salesperson typifies individual, informal, random, variable, and/or disjunctive (individualized) tactics.

Substantial work has examined institutionalized socialization tactics. Researchers have found that institutionalized socialization (group based, fixed content, specific sequence) associates positively with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and longevity intent (Ashforth and Saks 1996; Cooper-Thomas and Anderson 2002; Jones 1986). Grant and Bush (1996) discerned that sequential and serial socialization positively influenced salespeople's value congruence perceptions. Using a sample of South Korean salespeople, Menguc et al. (2007) found that investiture was moderately predictive of job satisfaction and predictive of organizational commitment; sequential socialization was predictive of organizational commitment; fixed socialization was predictive of job satisfaction; and serial socialization was predictive of performance.

Socialization Content Model

The content of socialization entails knowledge or material learned during the socialization process (Louis 1980). Chao et al. (1994) proposed six socialization content dimensions: performance proficiency (the tasks involved on the job), politics (informal and formal work relationships and power structures), language (knowledge of jargon unique to the organization), people (establishment of work relationships), organizational goals/values (rules or principles that maintain the integrity of the organization), and history (company history and culture). They determined that job changers' understanding of content dimensions is associated positively with their effectiveness. Chatman (1991) reported that recruits whose values at the time of entry corresponded more closely to or *fit* those of the firm, adjusted faster, felt more satisfied, and intended to stay with the firm longer than the obverse group. Cable and Parsons (2001) and Dubinsky et al. (1986) obtained similar findings.

Outcome Variables

Outcome variables encompass attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors, among them: job satisfaction, organizational commitment, performance, and withdrawal (e.g., Brown and Peterson 1993; Comer and Dubinsky 1985; VanMaanen 1975). Newcomer socialization researchers have incorporated outcome variables (e.g., Bauer et al. 2007; Buckley et al. 1998;

Cooper-Thomas and Anderson 2002; Jones 1986). Job satisfaction, organizational commitment, performance, and job withdrawal are among the outcome variables that have received extensive attention from sales management researchers (e.g., Brown and Peterson 1993; see review by Comer and Dubinsky 1985). The four outcomes have also been evaluated in newcomer socialization research as well (e.g., Buckley et al. 1998; Cooper-Thomas and Anderson 2002; Jones 1986). Therefore, the influence of socialization on these four variables was of interest in this investigation.

METHOD

Data came from a study of new salespersons' socialization in a national advertising products firm. New salespeople were surveyed after six months in the field following two or three weeks of formal, institutionalized training at headquarters. This design was intended to gain a purer perspective on socialization, with minimal retrospective bias, thus providing a distinct advantage over the designs employed by Dubinsky et al. (1986), Grant and Bush (1996), and Menguc et al. (2007). Salespeople came from across the United States. Each subject received the survey immediately after completion of his or her first six months on the job. Completed surveys were returned by mail directly to the researchers. Of 379 surveys sent at the six-month point, 270 were returned for a seventy-one percent response rate. Sixty percent of respondents were male, and almost all had previous sales experience. The company's salesforce annual turnover rate was approximately 40 percent.

To assure that the context of socialization was standardized, the research design sampled newcomers to the sales force within a single organization. All newcomers were tapped six months into the job (corresponding seemingly to the change and acquisition stage in Feldman's [1976; 1981] model). Morrison (1993) employed a similar design, but with a three-month and six-month lifting. None of the newcomers had previous experience with the sample company, thus being organizationally "naïve" and most likely "custodial" in orientation (Ashforth and Saks 1996; Jones 1983). Cooper-Thomas and Anderson (2002, p. 433) offered a compelling rationale for sampling newcomers from a *single* organization:

Table 2
Correlations, Reliabilities, and Descriptive Statistics of Constructs

	IT	IG	CON	REA	FT	ST	XT	LAN	POL	PEO	VG	PP	JS	OC	WT	PER
Initiation to Task (IT)	.70															
Initiation to Group (IG)	.324**	.72														
Congruence (CON)	.321**	.107	.79													
Realism (REA)	.223**	.192**	.287**	.75												
Formal Tactics (FT)	.208**	.167**	.203**	.413**	.46											
Serial Tactics (ST)	.210**	.348**	.259**	.223**	.292**	.54										
Fixed Tactics (XT)	.113**	.061	.324**	.226**	.339**	.252**	.47									
Language (LAN)	.161**	.298**	.061	.230**	.218**	.225**	.101	.89¹								
Politics (POL)	.145**	.246**	.068	.199**	.055	.164**	.181*	.406**	.79¹							
People (PEO)	.219**	.574**	.095	.109	.104	.198**	.062	.312**	.293**	.63¹						
Values and Goals (VG)	.281**	.396**	.472**	.452**	.376**	.330**	.321**	.231**	.090	.278**	.80					
Performance Prof. (PP)	.512**	.167**	.335**	.383**	.261**	.151**	.074	.329**	.245**	.240**	.263**	.66¹				
Job Sat. (JS)	.371**	.248**	.620**	.405**	.312**	.314**	.267**	.127*	.092	.150*	.676**	.362**	.91			
Org. Comm. (OC)	.196**	.322**	.499**	.440**	.413**	.385**	.336**	.130*	.208**	.209**	.714**	.217**	.610**	.87		
Withdrawal Tend. (WT)	-.261**	-.265**	-.624**	-.386**	-.339**	-.314**	-.285**	-.064	-.148*	-.184**	-.664**	-.257**	-.729**	-.688**	.94	
Performance (PER)	.264**	.147*	.127*	.166**	.091	.174**	.038	.150*	.121	.190**	.163**	.242**	.227**	.065	-.136**	1.00
Mean	9.219	10.929	8.881	10.896	10.342	14.561	7.268	10.691	9.628	10.115	20.271	8.364	25.669	27.762	7.740	.855
Std. Dev.	2.52	2.25	3.31	4.23	3.07	3.49	2.70	2.31	2.57	2.50	4.61	2.82	6.43	8.36	5.42	.69

$p < .05$.
$p < .01$.
¹Two-item correlation.
Note: Reliabilities appear on the diagonal.

The variance in self-reported perceptions of the ... socialization tactics, in learning, and in resultant attitudes, supports the existence of differences in recruits' experience of ...training. Furthermore, the fact that the results were broadly in line with previous studies, extending and strengthening these, lends support to the generalizability to other settings where newcomers are socialized in a formal, structured, and collective manner ...

Essentially, then, using a single organization controls for variation attributable to organizational differences.

Measures of Research Constructs

Shown in Appendix A are the items used to measure the model constructs. Depicted in Table 2 are correlations, reliabilities, and descriptive statistics for constructs in the study. All items came from established scales representing socialization and outcomes constructs. Some of the socialization measures were used in abbreviated form to accommodate length constraints mandated by the subject company and based on previous research where measurement characteristics were reported. In light of possible distortion resulting from use of abbreviated measures, a second-order factor analysis was conducted. The analysis used individual socialization constructs (e.g., knowledge of organizational goals and values) as indicators of global socialization models (e.g., content model). The second-order factor model converged, thus supporting the dimensions (Appendix B). Shown in Appendix C is the average variance extracted for the socialization items.

Socialization Stages Measures. Items from the Dubinsky et al. (1986) socialization stages measure were employed to capture congruence (two items), realism (three items), initiation to task (two items), and initiation to group (two items). Results of factor analysis supported an underlying structure consistent with the hypothesized dimensions. As portrayed in Table 2, coefficient alpha reliabilities for the stage measures exceeded the .70 threshold suggested by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994).

Socialization Tactics Measures. Items drawn from Jones' (1986) measures of formal socialization tactics (two items), serial socialization tactics (three items),

and fixed socialization tactics (two items) were employed. The three tactics portray the institutionalized approach to socialization. Investiture, sequential, and collective socialization tactics were omitted from the study because of the sample context.

Initial analysis supported a two-factor rather than the three-factor socialization tactics expected. Reliabilities for the measures of socialization tactics were below accepted norms (Table 2). Therefore, dimensionality of the measures was questionable, so a two-stage measurement model was run, as noted above. Although interpreting the tactics as operationalized is questionable, they represent critical constructs in the socialization literature. These previously used measures were important to include in order to adequately compare the three models of socialization. Indeed, second-order factor analysis of the tactics measures in concert with content and stages measures supported the proposed measurement model (Appendix B).

Socialization Content Measures. Items developed by Chao et al. (1994) were used to measure five socialization content constructs: performance proficiency (2 items), politics (2 items), language (2 items), people (2 items), and organizational values and goals (4 items). As shown in Table 2, measures of the five content dimensions reflected acceptable reliabilities. Factor analysis supported the five dimensions as unique.

Outcome Measures. Items used to measure *job satisfaction* were taken from the five-item measure developed by Curry et al. (1986). *Affective organizational commitment* items were drawn from the six-item measure developed by Allen and Meyer (1990). *Intention to quit* was operationalized as a general construct consisting of three items tapping thoughts about quitting, intention to search, and intention to leave (Sager et al. 1998). Measures of these three outcomes exhibited reasonable reliabilities (Table 2). Confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated discriminant validity among these outcome measures. *Performance* was operationalized using an index of budgeted performance (percent-to-budget) supplied by the subject company over the six months following initial sales training.

Table 3
Results of Regression-Based Test of Socialization Models

	Job Satisfaction	Organizational Commitment	Withdrawal	Performance
Results of Multiple Regression Analysis for Combined Models				
Initiation to Task	.088	-.090	.024	.182*
Initiation to Group	.000	.056	-.033	-.062
Congruence	.332**	.203**	-.396**	.002
Realism	.052	.079	-.046	.082
Formal tactics	.023	.151**	-.107*	-.050
Serial tactics	.056	.108*	-.047	.105
Fixed tactics	-.032	-.001	.047	-.052
Language	-.057	-.136**	.154**	.035
Politics	.019	.172**	-.129**	.034
People	-.053	-.015	-.003	.115
Org. Values and Goals	.459**	.522**	-.437**	.048
Performance Proficiency	.080	-.031	.014	.072
Adjusted R^2	.583	.604	.582	.078
d.f.	268	268	268	256
F ratio	32.207**	35.042**	32.037**	2.801**
Condition index	27.77	27.77	27.77	27.38
Results of Multiple Regression Analysis for Stage Model Constructs				
Initiation to Task	.125*	-.083	.018	.218**
Initiation to Group	.113*	.248**	-.174**	.058
Congruence	.508**	.415**	-.554**	.028
Realism	.210**	.291**	-.198**	.107
Adjusted R^2	.466	.390	.456	.073
d.f.	268	268	268	256
F ratio	59.527**	43.809**	57.090**	6.304**
Results of Multiple Regression Analysis for Socialization Tactics				
Formal tactics	.199**	.277**	-.224**	.049
Serial tactics	.220**	.260**	-.201**	.168*
Fixed tactics	.144*	.177**	-.157**	-.021
Adjusted R^2	.161	.266	.177	.021
d.f.	268	268	268	256
F ratio	18.085**	33.328**	20.239**	2.833*
Results of Multiple Regression Analysis for Socialization Content Constructs				
Language	-.091	-.117*	.177**	.024
Politics	.034	.190**	-.137**	.039
People	-.068	-.017	.012	.103
Org. Values & Goals	.652**	.723**	-.667**	.083
Performance Proficiency	.229**	.023	-.109*	.179**
Adjusted R^2	.495	.534	.467	.066
d.f.	268	268	268	256
F ratio	53.617**	62.379**	48.049**	4.635**

* $p \leq .05$
** $p \leq .01$

Figure 1
Relationships Emerging from Tests of Socialization Models
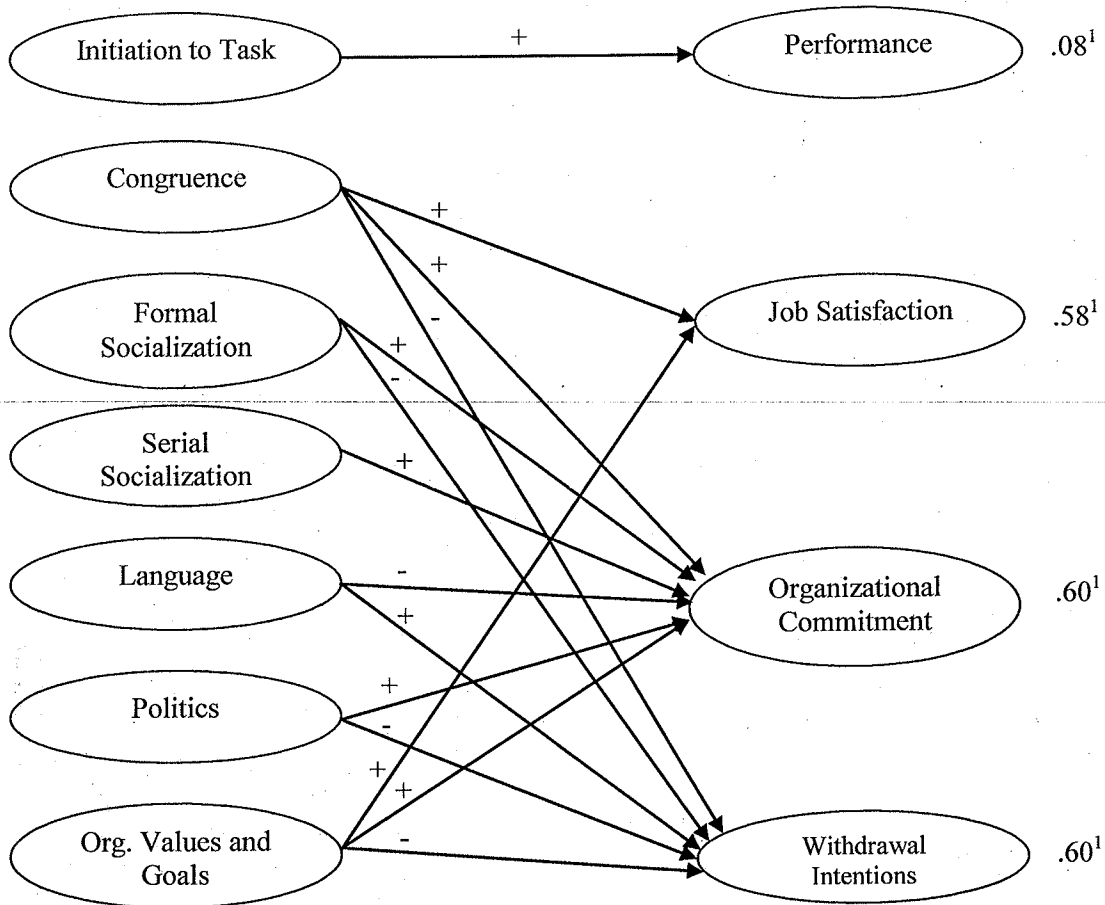
[1]Proportion of variation in outcome variable accounted for by the socialization variables depicted here.

RESULTS

As noted earlier, socialization researchers have identified key gaps in the literature, particularly the absence of knowledge about the *collective* effect of the stages, tactics, and content aspects of socialization vis-à-vis workplace outcomes. Accordingly, regression analyses were conducted with the goal of identifying salient socialization constructs. Regression analyses findings of the study are shown in Table 3 for the three socialization models and for the *combined* models. Findings of the combined regression model appear at the top of Table 3 and in Figure 1.

Regressed by itself, the *stages* model revealed that realism, congruence, and initiation to group related positively to organizational commitment and negatively to intention to quit. Initiation to task and group, congruence, and realism were predictive of job satisfaction. Initiation to task was the only stages model variable predictive of salespersons' performance. Regressed along with tactics and content variables, only congruence and initiation to task stage constructs remained significant predictors of the selected outcomes (Table 3). Congruence positively predicted job satisfaction and organizational commitment and exhibited a negative relationship with intention to quit. Initiation to task was the sole consistent predictor of salesperson performance.

Formal, serial, and fixed socialization *tactics* related positively to job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and negatively to intention to quit. Serial tactics were moderately predictive of performance. When the influence of the *other* socialization models was included, formal tactics remained positively predictive of organizational commitment and negatively related to intention to quit, and serial tactics were predictive of organizational commitment.

In the *content* regression equation, knowledge of organizational values and goals was predictive of three of the outcomes; performance was the exception. Performance proficiency predicted job satisfaction, intention to quit, and performance. Knowledge of organizational politics was related positively to organizational commitment and negatively to intention to quit. The language dimension of socialization content was predictive of organizational commitment, but the direction of the relationship was opposite to that expected, as was that for language and intention to quit. Only the organizational values and goals content dimension remained a predictor of the outcomes when *all* socialization model constructs were employed as predictors (Table 3).

DISCUSSION

Findings of the second-order factor analysis project the idea that socialization constructs as measured interrelate strongly. The tactics and content models overlap considerably. Seemingly, the techniques and information organizations use to socialize salespeople intertwine with the tools used to effect the training (language, politics, and people). Researchers should seek to specify more clearly the separate vehicles used to provide information to newcomers relative to the means used to socialize newcomers. Some type of hierarchy may exist. Considered in light of recent findings, the second-order factor model suggests that content aspects of socialization correspond largely with information seeking as described by Bauer et al. (2007) and proactive tactics discussed by Menguc et al. (2007). Information seeking may feed into certain socialization tactics. That is, particular types of information needs newcomers deem important to learning a kind of job may well be associated more strongly with specific types of socialization tactics. Presently, socialization

researchers treat information seeking and socialization tactics as complementary rather than integral or causal constructs (Bauer et al. 2007; Menguc et al. 2007).

Another implication that emerges from the combined predictive model and earlier work is that a set of overarching concepts dominate socialization (i.e., congruence of goals and values and some systematic structure). Congruence and values and goals dimensions of socialization were predictive of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intention to quit. Riordan et al. (2001) reported similar findings using longitudinal data. The two measures correlated ($r=.47$, $p<.01$, Table 2). As such, a rethinking of the role of congruence and values matching in tandem with a participant observer type of research design akin to that used by Van Maanen (1975) would provide a more robust basis for inferences as to the roles of values and congruence in socialization.

Researchers need a clearer conception regarding how newcomers look at the organization. Wanous (1980) and Major (2000) observed that newcomers personalized the organization. Personalizing corresponds to the perception fit with the organization that exists in the mind of the new salesperson (Wotruba and Tyagi 1991). Initial fits with personal expectations, values, and goals predicted both longevity intent and loyalty (e.g., Riordan et al. 2001). Major (2000) suggested newcomers' needs have included personal and social meaningfulness, opportunity for development, and respect for family and pursuits outside the workplace. To what extent fit is established through formal and serial institutionalized tactics vis-à-vis informal mentoring, peer mentoring, or other individual means also is difficult to say.

Initiation to the task's relationship with performance is consistent with social learning theory (Bandura 1986) and with findings concerning the role self-efficacy beliefs play in socialization reported by Bauer et al. (2007). And its strength in this study is understandable in light of the performance measure used by the host company. Knowing whether or how such a relationship between task competency and performance exists in a selling context where development of a marketing program with a business partner is a chief strategic goal would be valuable. In support of that observation,

findings reported by Posdakoff and MacKenzie (1994) suggested that other variables, usually associated with prosocial citizenship behaviors, influence salespeople's performance.

To what extent does the organization clarify, communicate, and reinforce its goals through its interactions with salespeople and customers? To convey the values and goals of the organization to customers, a cadre of trained and experienced salespeople exist is necessary.

Managerial Implications

The findings offer practitioner insights. First, congruence or fit between new salesperson and the organization drives job satisfaction, commitment, and intention to quit. These findings reinforce some of what Dubinsky et al. (1986) reported concerning congruence between newcomers and organization. A key implication here is that efforts devoted to assessing candidates' fit with the organization are well founded. Use of such tools as realistic job previews, in-depth interviews with both management and current job incumbents, assessment tests, and role playing with job candidates should be beneficial to assist the firm in identifying candidates who seemingly are well matched with the company environment and to aid prospective sales personnel in ascertaining whether the organization is appropriate for them.

Second, initiation to task—the way trainees are familiarized with task aspects of the job (expectations, behaviors, learning curve)—affects performance. A variety of company interventions could be employed to abet this process. For instance, pre-employment job and company previews, on-the-job training, early provision of sales manager coaching and counseling, shadowing of sales personnel, and candor about job expectations provided early in the socialization process should help the new salesperson perform more effectively. These findings are compatible with research concerning role clarity and salespeople (e.g., Kohli 1985; Sager 1994).

Third, apparently institutional socialization tactics (formal and serial) strengthen commitment of newcomers and also inhibit intention to quit. Formal socialization entails sending sales trainees through a common, standardized training program. Sales cohorts are all exposed to the same training material and conditions, are subjected to identical training stimuli, and are physically proximal to each other. This training milieu affords opportunity for trainees to work together, experience training vicissitudes, and coalesce. Such interaction can foster development of trainee bonding and esprit de corps. Serial socialization pertains to training that is carried out in the field by trainers, sales managers, and other mentors; such efforts can aid in solidifying the allegiance acquired in the formalized training program. Given the salutary impact both kinds of institutionalized training tactics can have on salespeople's loyalty and attitudes, companies should consider launching standardized training programs through which their trainees pass and supplement this practice with mentoring programs targeted to new salespeople.

Fourth, the finding that cognizance of organizational language relates negatively to organizational commitment and positively to intention to quit seems puzzling. Why would an understanding of an organization's language associate positively with withdrawal intent? The finding could be peculiar to the host company. That organization utilized a surfeit of specialized terminology for coding the host firm's ads. The coding material was conveyed to new salespeople during the first three weeks of training. An account management group audited the ad orders. New salespeople often had to resubmit ad orders to the account management group before getting credit for a sale. As such, new salespeople may have seen the elaborate language of the publishing organization as an impediment to their performance. Assuming that the foregoing conjecture is true, then companies need to ensure that sales trainees capture the language which is unique to their firm milieu. To achieve this outcome, trainees must be immersed in the company jargon early on, from the outset of the formalized training program all the way through to on-the-job training interventions and mentoring processes. Trainees must be given sufficient time with which to learn the specialized vocabulary and that learning should be reinforced regularly through instructional exercises, written tests, and role playing.

Finally, cognizance of organizational values and goals (rules or principles that maintain the integrity of the organization) facilitates job satisfaction and

commitment and reduces withdrawal tendencies. Furthermore, awareness of company politics (informal and formal work relationships and power structures) enhances commitment and decreases propensity to leave the firm. Conceivably, salespeople need to identify where the organization is going and how it will get there; ideally, sales personnel should concur with those means and ends. Helping salespersons become aware of this information could be achieved in a panoply of ways. Germane organizational knowledge could be disseminated through such mediums as initial and continuous training programs, sales department meetings, company handbooks, written or electronic missives, and conference calls between sales staff and upper-level management. Also, sales personnel evidently need to know the organizational networks (both formal and informal) to abet loyalty to and desire to stay with the firm. Familiarity with organizational interrelationships could be acquired through utilization of organizational charts, discussions with a salesperson's sales manager and mentor, on-the-job observation, and interaction with sales peers.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study examined three socialization models using a sample of newly hired salespeople. It extends salesforce-based model tests conducted by Dubinsky et al. (1986), Grant and Bush (1996), and Menguc et al. (2007) in two key ways. First, these earlier studies focused on value congruence and evaluated stages and tactics socialization models, respectively. The present investigation, though, was conducted to compare three socialization models relative to a set of outcome variables commonly researched in the sales management literature. As such, this is the first empirical attempt to *integrate* three socialization models and examine their *collective* impact on salesperson work outcomes. Second, past research in sales has employed *non-novitiate* salespeople who *retrospectively* responded to questions concerning their socialization experience. The current research effort, however, utilized *newly hired* sales personnel as respondents—all of whom were going through the socialization process.

The study was designed to compare frameworks of socialization and to suggest directions for future theoretical development in that area. The sample was drawn from a single company. This design provides a stringent test of socialization frameworks within a homogenous environment, but generalization is limited to similar subpopulations of salespeople. Also, the results emphasize the need for more rigorous research designs and measurement of socialization constructs. They also point to a need for integrated models that link the three socialization models to outcomes in a testable structural format. However, before structural models are tested, the socialization models themselves need to be examined. Whether the tactics constructs are viable from a theoretical perspective is uncertain. Correlations between the stages and content variables suggest conceptual overlap, as did the second-order factor analysis. Such conditions mandate subsequent efforts devoted to evaluating the constructs relative to each other (ideally based on development of hypotheses).

Another limitation pertains to the measurement of the socialization constructs. Comprehensive and exhaustive scales were not used to tap components of the three socialization models (e.g., socialization tactics) so some variance may remain undetected. Furthermore, certain psychometric properties of the socialization scales were less than desirable (e.g., reliability < .70). Therefore, more robust measures are needed in the future to operationalize aspects of socialization.

The limitations suggest directions for future research. Because of the dynamic nature of socialization, longitudinal research beginning in the early employment period and extending twelve to eighteen months into employment would enhance the ability to capture the process (e.g., Cable and Parsons 2001). Ideally, the same constructs would be tapped at each lifting. Although the existing socialization frameworks appear to have merit, opportunity exists to integrate other related constructs, such as motivation, into socialization process models. Core self-evaluations such as locus of control and self-efficacy may also be useful to understanding how personal traits influence the process. Moderators of relationships within socialization should be proposed and investigated. For example, certain tactics may be more beneficial in delivering specific content dimensions of socialization (e.g., formal socialization in concert with indoctrination concerning values and goals of the organization may facilitate greater commitment).

The limited utility of the socialization constructs as predictors of performance is a concern. Yet, if the role of socialization is viewed as accommodating newcomers and attracting them to an organization, then the limited nature of the relationship between socialization and performance is understandable. Perhaps trait-oriented learning concepts, such as performance orientation or learning orientation, would be useful for explaining variations in performance (Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar 1994). Maximizing the speed of performance improvement in a sales force setting to hasten return on investment is critical. Future research should examine constructs that may be predictive of salesperson performance.

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Appendix A
Survey Items [1]

Job Satisfaction (Curry et al. 1986)
Q126 I find real enjoyment in my job.
Q127 I like my job better than the average worker does.
Q128 I am seldom bored with my job.
Q129 Most days I am enthusiastic about my job.
Q130 I feel fairly well satisfied with my job.

Organizational Commitment (Allen and Meyer 1990)
Q53   I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to the company. (R)[2]
Q54   I do not feel emotionally attached to the company. (R)
Q55   The company has a great deal of personal meaning to me.
Q56   I do not feel like a part of the family at the company. (R)
Q57   I would feel very happy to spend the rest of my career with the company.
Q58   I really feel as if any problems the company may have are my own.

Withdrawal (Sager, Griffeth, and Hom 1998)
Q136 During the next six months, I intend to search for another full-time job.
Q132 I intend to leave this company during the next six months.
Q133 I regularly think about quitting my job.

Stages:
Initiation to Task (Dubinsky et al. 1986)
Q75   I wonder if people who work with me have confidence in my abilities. (R)
Q76   I am sure that people around me are pleased with my work.

Initiation to Group (Dubinsky et al. 1986)
Q77   My coworkers actively try to include me in conversations about things at work.
Q78   I don't think my coworkers feel relaxed when they are with me. (R)

Congruence (Dubinsky et al. 1986)
Q84   I am sure there must be another job in my company for which I am better suited. (R)
Q85   In some ways, I feel like this is not the right type of work for me. (R)

Realism (Dubinsky et al. 1986)
Q86   I knew the good and bad points of this job by the time if finished my initial training.
Q87   I did not know what to expect when I came to work for this company. (R)
Q88   I had a pretty good idea of what my particular job would be like before I began the job.

Institutionalized Tactics:
Formal Tactics (Jones 1986)
Q89   I have been through a set of training experiences which are specifically designed to give newcomers a thorough knowledge of job related skills.
Q90   I did not perform any of my normal job responsibilities until I was thoroughly familiar with company procedures and work methods.
Q91[3]   Much of my knowledge has been acquired informally on the job.

Serial Tactics (Jones 1986)

Q92 Sales managers see advising or training newcomers as one of their main job responsibilities.

Q93 I am gaining a clear understanding of my role in this organization from observing other people's experiences.

Q94 I have received little guidance from experienced sales reps as to how I should perform my job. (R)

Fixed Tactics (Jones 1986)

Q96 I have been informed about the way in which my progress through this organization will follow a fixed timetable of events.

Q97 Most of my knowledge of what may happen to me in the future comes informally, through the grapevine, rather than through regular organizational channels. (R)

Q9[3] I can predict my future career path in this organization by observing other people's Experiences.

Content :

Language (Chao et al. 1994)

Q114 I have mastered the specialized terminology and vocabulary of my profession.

Q115 I have mastered this organization's slang and special jargon.

Politics (Chao et al. 1994)

Q116 I have learned how things "really work" on the inside of this organization.

Q117 I have a good understanding of the politics in this organization.

People (Chao et al. 1994)

Q118 Within my division, I would be easily identified as "one of the gang."

Q119 I am usually excluded in informal networks or gatherings of people within this division. (R)

Organizational Values and Goals (Chao et al. 1994)

Q120 The goals of the company are also my goals.

Q121 I believe that I fit in well with the company.

Q122 I do not always believe in the values set by the company. (R)

Q123 I support the goals that are set by the company.

Performance Proficiency (Chao et al. 1994)

Q124 I have mastered the required tasks of my job.

Q125 I have not fully developed the appropriate skills and abilities to successfully perform my job. (R)

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[1] A seven point Likert-type response format was used for each item (Strongly Agree—Neutral—Strongly Disagree).
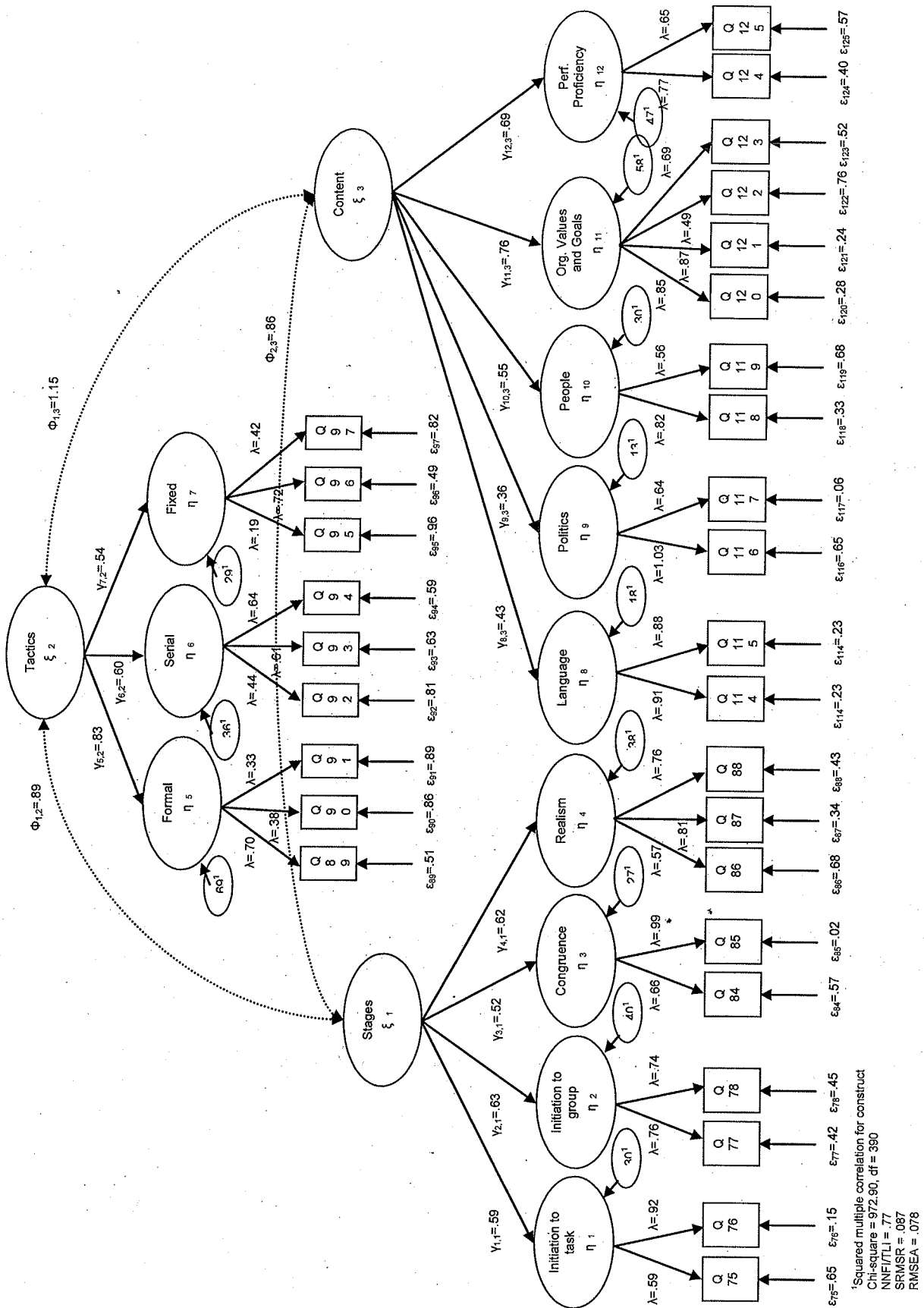
[2] (R) indicates items that were reverse coded.

[3] Dropped from summed measure.

Appendix B
Results of Second-Order Factor Analysis for Socialization Items

¹Squared multiple correlation for construct
Chi-square = 972.90, df = 390
NNFI/TLI = .77
SRMSR = .087
RMSEA = .078

Appendix C
Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for Socialization Construct Items

	λ	λ^2	AVE
Socialization Stages Items			
Initiation to Task			
Q75	0.59	0.35	**0.60**
Q76	0.92	0.85	
Initiation to Group			
Q77	0.76	0.58	**0.56**
Q78	0.74	0.55	
Congruence			
Q84	0.66	0.44	**0.71**
Q85	0.99	0.98	
Realism			
Q86	0.57	0.32	**0.49**
Q86	0.81	0.66	

Socialization Tactics Items

Formal			
Q89	0.70	0.49	**0.25**
Q90	0.38	0.14	
Q91	0.33	0.11	
Serial			
Q92	0.44	0.19	**0.33**
Q93	0.61	0.37	
Q94	0.64	0.41	
Fixed			
Q95	0.19	0.04	**0.24**
Q96	0.72	0.52	
Q97	0.42	0.18	

Socialization Content Items

Language			
Q114	0.91	0.83	**0.80**
Q115	0.88	0.77	
Politics			
Q116	1.03	1.06	**0.74**
Q117	0.64	0.41	
People			
Q118	0.82	0.67	**0.49**
Q119	0.56	0.31	
Organizational Values and Goals			
Q120	0.85	0.72	**0.51**
Q121	0.87	0.76	
Q122	0.49	0.24	
Q123	0.58	0.34	
Performance Proficiency			
Q124	0.77	0.59	**0.51**
Q125	0.65	0.42	