

Fitting In or Making Jobs Fit: Factors Affecting Mode of Adjustment for New Hires

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This study tested a theoretical framework of work role transitions by examining the impact of individual factors (personal need for control and need for feedback), job factors (job discretion and job novelty), and organizational factors (organizational socialization tactics) on two modes of adjustment for new hires. In this study, need for control and need for feedback had a significant impact on self change as a mode of adjustment but not on job change. Job novelty and job discretion had little impact on either mode of adjustment. Investiture-divestiture organizational socialization tactics had a significant impact on self change as a mode of adjustment and fixed-variable socialization tactics had a significant impact on changing ones' job as a mode of adjustment. In general, the results of this study suggest that variables hypothesized by past theoretical work may only be moderate predictors of changing self or job as modes of adjustment for new hires.

KEY WORDS: adjustment; new hires; socialization; work role transitions.

INTRODUCTION

Researchers as well as managers have long been interested in the topic of individual adjustment following work role transitions. Scholars such as Pinder and Das (1979) have argued that this interest is partly a function of economics. That is, because the inducements provided by the corporation (for example, salary) typically exceed the contributions made by individuals for some time after the initiation of the work role transition, the speed and effectiveness of the adjustment have important economic implications. Managerial employees start with a full salary but do not necessarily begin with a full understanding of the organization, work unit, or job, and there-

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fore cannot produce or contribute at a full level for some period after beginning their new jobs. Consequently, the quicker the adjustment to the new job, the better the ratio of inducements and contributions; the slower the adjustment, the worse the ratio. Scholars have been particularly interested in the adjustment and socialization of new hires into the organization (e.g., Jones, 1986; Van Maanen & Schein 1979; Zahrly & Tosi, 1989). This interest is partly a function of the importance of new hires as a group of future managers in the firm and because of the impact that their early adjustment and socialization can have on such important outcomes as organizational commitment, turnover, and job performance.

A variety of scholars have proposed theoretical perspectives and frameworks concerning the work role transitions of new hires (e.g., Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Feldman & Brett, 1983; Nicholson, 1984; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Of these, Van Maanen and Schien (1979) were some of the first to argue that individuals could make adjustments to their new jobs by changing aspects of their jobs, something they referred to as role innovation. They suggested that this mode of adjustment could range from no changing of the job, what they termed a "custodial" response, to radical changing of the job's mission, procedures and goals, i.e., "role innovation." In addition to making work role transitions by changing aspects of the job, Nicholson (1984) argued that individuals could adjust by changing aspects of themselves. Individuals might change how they appear, interact with other, or behave in general in order to fit in. Because new hires enter existing organizations that have histories, cultures, and structures that are not easily overcome by a given individual, Nicholson (1984) argued that self-change would be as prevalent as job change as a mode of adjustment. Therefore, both self and job change are important modes of adjustment for new hires.

These same scholars have also proposed that a variety of factors influence an individual's mode of adjustment during a work role transition. Van Maanen and Schein (1979) argued that organizational socialization practices were an important category of variables that could affect mode of adjustment. Nicholson (1984) argued that in addition to organizational variables job and individual variables could also influence mode of adjustment.

Empirical studies such as Allen and Meyer (1990), Jones (1986), Zahrly and Tosi (1989), have examined the relationship between organizational and individual variables and the job change mode of adjustment. Others, such as West (1987), have examined the relationship between individual and job variables with the job change mode of adjustment. However, no study has simultaneously examined variables from all three categories as predictors of both job change and self-change modes of adjustment. Consequently,

the relative explanatory strength of particular variables across categories remains unknown.

The purpose of this research is to examine longitudinally the impact of variables from all three antecedent categories on both modes of adjustment (i.e., job change and self-change). This test should increase our understanding of how individuals adjust to their new work situations.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Past literature suggests that both job change and self-change are feasible means by which new hires could adjust to new jobs. Based on the literature, a broad view of work role transitions would also suggest that variables at the individual, job, and organization level can have an impact on two different modes of adjustment discussed above. Furthermore, a review of the past theoretical literature reveals that arguments have been advanced suggesting that specific variables can have differential effects on job and self-change modes of adjustment. In the next sections, we discuss specific variables that have been theorized to be related to both modes of adjustment and formulate specific hypotheses to be tested in a longitudinal research design.

Individual Factors

Organizational entry has often been described by scholars as a stressful period of uncertainty in which individuals experience feelings of lessened personal control (i.e., the ability to predict and/or influence cause and effect contingencies in their immediate environment) (e.g., Feldmen & Brett, 1983; Jones, 1986; Katz, 1985; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Van Maanen, 1977). Because organizational entry is generally a situation involving uncertainty, it can create feelings of loss of control (Katz, 1985). Consequently, the level of a person's need for control would theoretically be expected to relate strongly to mode of adjustment during organizational entry. Additionally, as a person tries to navigate in this uncertain environment, their need for feedback concerning how they are doing relative to expectations has also been argued to be a salient individual variable (Nicholson, 1984).

Need for Control. Individuals with high needs for control seek to construct environments in which the consequences of their actions can be accurately predicted. Consequently, individuals with high need for control are likely to seek to gain or increase a sense of personal control by changing the job to better suit their known capabilities and preferences rather than trying to change themselves to meet the needs or requirements of the job.

This suggests that individual need for control will be positively related to the job-change mode of adjustment and negatively related to the self-change mode (Nicholson, 1984). Zahrly and Tosi operationalized this construct in terms of locus of control and Jones (1986) operationalized it in terms of self-efficacy, while Nicholson (1984) argued that the best variable for capturing this issue was simply a person's need for control (a variable that has been operationalized and measured in a wide variety of settings). Although West (1987) found a positive relationship between need for growth and job change, and Jones (1986) found a positive relationship between self-efficacy and job change, we know of no research that has examined the relationship between need for control and job change, and we know of no studies that have examined the impact of need for control or similar variables on self-change.

Hypothesis 1. *Need for control will be positively related to job change and negatively related to self-change.*

Need for Feedback. Individuals with a high need for feedback want to know how they are doing relative to the expectations others have of them. Because the orientation of individuals with high needs for feedback is toward the expectations of others, their focus is other-oriented. Consequently, individuals with high needs for feedback would be more likely to try to correct "gaps" between others' expectations and their own performance by changing aspects in themselves rather than by trying to change the job or the expectations of the job they perform (Nicholson, 1984). Zahrly and Tosi (1989) operationalized this in terms of self-monitoring, while Nicholson (1984) argued that it should be measured directly. That is, it is a person's need for feedback which is the source of self-monitoring behavior, and therefore, the relationship between need for feedback and mode of adjustment ought to be examined by directly measuring individuals' need for feedback. Although Zahrly and Tosi (1989) found no significant relationship between self-monitoring and various outcomes and Ashford and Cummings (1983) have proposed that individuals will differ in the needs for feedback, to date there have been no empirical tests of the relationship between differing levels of need for feedback and the two modes of adjustment. The following hypothesis reflects the theoretical relationship expected between need for feedback and mode of adjustment.

Hypothesis 2. *Need for feedback will be negatively related to job change and positively related to self-change.*

Job Factors

In addition to individual characteristics, aspects of the job are also likely factors that would influence mode of adjustment. Given that a fun-

damental issue in organizational entry is uncertainty, a key factor that could affect the level of uncertainty confronted by the new hire is job novelty, or the extent to which the new job is similar to or different from the previous one. Additionally, the level of uncertainty could also be affected by the extent of discretion in the job. Jobs with greater discretion provide an opportunity for individuals to focus on familiar aspects and to emphasize or de-emphasize aspects of the job as a function of the person's current capabilities and interests.

Discretion. Nicholson (1984, p. 178) stated that "discretion constitutes the incumbent's opportunities to alter the components and relationships" of the job. He noted that discretion was similar to Stewart's (1982 a,b) notion of "choice" in her model of managerial jobs. Because of the greater inherent flexibility in jobs with greater discretion, individuals entering jobs with higher job discretion are likely to make adjustment to the new job by changing aspects of their job rather than by changing themselves. This suggests that job discretion would be positively related to job change and negatively related to self-change. West (1987) found a significant and positive relationship between job discretion and job change but did not examine the relationship between discretion and self-change.

Hypothesis 3. *Job discretion will be positively related to job change and negatively related to self-change.*

Novelty. Generally, job novelty is thought to be extent of difference between the new job and the previous ones. Specifically, Nicholson (1984, p. 178) defined job novelty as "the degree to which the role permits the exercise of prior knowledge, practiced skills, and established habits" or "how generally similar the new role is to roles previously occupied." The greater the job novelty, the less the individual would be able to use prior knowledge and routines so that some change in the person as a means of adjusting is likely. Further, with more job novelty it will be more difficult for the new entrant to determine appropriate job changes, at least initially. This suggests that job novelty would be negatively related to job change and positively related to self-change. In his study, West (1987) did not find any significant relationship between job novelty and job change, but did not examine the relationship between novelty and self-change.

Hypothesis 4. *Job novelty will be negatively related to job change and positively related to self-change.*

Organizational Factors

The final category of variables that might influence mode of adjustment is organizational. As mentioned, Van Maanen and Schein (1979) provide a comprehensive theoretical model of how organizational sociali-

zation practices would related to the job change mode of adjustment. Van Maanen and Schein identified six specific organizational socialization tactics—i.e., collective-individual, formal-informal, sequential-random, fixed-variable, serial-disjunctive, and investiture-divestiture socialization tactics. Collective tactics involve socializing a distinct group of newcomers together, such as the sessions all new hires at Disneyland go through, while individual tactics involve newcomers being socialized separately. Formal tactics are those, such as required, official classes and self-study courses that all new hires at Mitsubishi Bank must complete, while informal tactics are more *ad hoc* in nature. Sequential tactics involve a specific order of assignments or positions, while random tactics involve no set pattern, such as a set movement in marketing from sales, to customer services, to new product design, to marketing strategy. Fixed tactics, such as timed rotations through certain units in the lending operations of a bank, are those that have specified time tables, while variable tactics have no such set timetables. Series tactics, such as the assignment of a mentor, involve experienced organizational members or role models in the socialization of newcomers, while disjunctive socialization represent situations in which there either is no predecessor or newcomers are not provided mentors or role models even if they exist. Finally, investiture socialization tactics communicate that the knowledge and skills newcomers bring with them are appropriate for the new job, while divestiture tactics seek to communicate the opposite.

Jones (1986) offered a three-part framework for conceptualizing these six sets of tactics. He argued that collective and formal socialization tactics can be thought of as concerned most with the context of the socialization. Sequential and fixed tactics can be thought of as concerned primarily with the content of the socialization. Finally, serial and investiture tactics both involve social aspects of the socialization process.

Because the hypothesized relationships between these six sets of socialization tactics and the job change mode of adjustment have been clearly formulated by Van Maanen and Schein (1979) and Allen and Meyer (1990), they are not restated here. However, it is important to note that in general the results of Jones (1986) and Allen and Meyer (1990) support the relationships between socialization tactics and job change proposed by Van Maanen and Schein (1979). However, these studies also found relationships not completely consistent with that hypothesized by Van Maanen and Schein (1979). Contrary to what Van Maanen and Schein (1979) hypothesized, Jones (1986) and Allen and Meyer (1990) found that fixed organizational socialization tactics led to low job change (i.e., custodial response) and that investiture tactics also led to low levels of innovation or change in the job. Based on this past theoretical and empirical literature,

one would expect individual, informal, disjunctive, random, variable, and divestiture tactics to be positively related to change job.

Hypothesis 5a. *Individual, informal, random, variable, disjunctive, and divestiture tactics will be positively related to job change.*

Unlike the job change mode of adjustment, few have explored the relationship between these socialization tactics and the self-change mode of adjustment. Because of the relative lack of attention focused on the relationship between these organizational tactics and self-change, we provide a more expanded discussion compared to that presented for the relationship between job-change and these socialization tactics. Tentative hypotheses can be formulated concerning each of the six organizational socialization tactics by examining the message that a given tactic may be communicating to newcomers and therefore the impact it may have on adjustment through self-change. Several tactics convey the message that the existing situation in the organization is fixed. Jones (1986) has argued that individuals will tend to conform rather than innovate when they receive such messages. Consequently, we can expect self-change (in order to better fit in) rather than job change to be more likely when socialization tactics convey a message of a set organizational environment.

Collective tactics involve common experiences shared by a group of new hires. The general arguments put forward by Becker (1964) and Van Maanen and Schein (1979) suggest that when individuals experience socialization collectively, they tend to change and adopt the norms presented to them.

Formal tactics involve putting newcomers through a explicit set of experiences tailored for them. One would expect that if specific experiences have been designed for newcomers, their general response will be to accept the situation as presented to them.

Sequential socialization efforts make explicit the order and steps that result in the fulfillment of role expectations. One would expect that sequential socialization efforts might lead individuals to conform with the specified sequence of role fulfillment.

Fixed tactics involve the specification of the precise timing of moves or assignments within the organization. These tactics send the message that things are set and that individuals are not to "rock the boat."

Serial tactics require experienced organizational members to serve as role models or mentors to newcomers. Arguments by Jablin (1987), Jones (1986), and Van Maanen and Schein (1979) suggest that having an expert (i.e., a role model who can "show the ropes" to the newcomer) will lead the newcomer to accept the situation and norms as defined and presented.

Finally, investiture socialization tactics communicate that the knowledge and skills newcomers bring with them are appropriate for the new

job. One would expect a strong negative relationship between investiture tactics and the self-change mode of adjustment precisely because the message of investiture tactics is that "you fit this job; don't change a thing." In contrast, divestiture tactics send a direct message regarding the need for self-change.

Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis concerning the relationship between socialization tactics and adjustment through self-change can be articulated.

Hypothesis 5b. *Collective, formal, sequential, fixed, serial, and divestiture tactics will be positively related to self-change.*

METHODS

This study utilized a longitudinal design to examine the impact of individual, job and organization variables on changing job or self as modes of adjustment for new hires. Data on need for control and feedback were collected after respondents had accepted positions but prior to actual organizational entry. The job variables (i.e., job discretion and job novelty) and the organizational variables (i.e., the organizational socialization tactics) were measured after the person had been in the organization for approximately 6 months in order to allow some time for individuals to both experience the level of job discretion and novelty and also for the organization to exercise socialization efforts. The dependent variables (i.e., job change and self-change) were measured 12 months after the individual joined the organization.

Sample

The sample consisted of students who responded positively to a memo asking for their participation in a research study that was not part of their a required or elective course. Although surveys were coded to facilitate matching of individual information over time, respondents were assured that their responses were be held in strict confidence.

These students were all about to graduate from a small, east coast MBA program. Of the 165 graduating students, 103 (62%) completed the initial questionnaire and were interviewed. Subsequently, 83 of the 103 completed the second questionnaire, and 69 completed the third questionnaire. The 69 graduates providing data at all three time periods represent a 42% overall response rate.

One-third of the sample were female. On average these graduates had 3.53 years of previous full time work experience ($SD = 1.65$) and were 27.23 year old ($SD = 2.04$). Respondents entered the following industries

in percentages that were not significantly different from the entire graduating class: Financial Services 27%; Business Services (primarily consulting) 22%; Computer 7%; Manufacturing 6%; Marketing 6%; Not-for Profit 4%, and other 28%.

Measures

The general questionnaire for this study was constructed primarily using existing measures of specific variables whose psychometric properties concerning reliability and validity have already been demonstrated in the literature. Given that nearly all of the variables of concern in this study were not new constructs *per se*, but were simply new in their relationship to an emerging theoretical framework, we felt that it was prudent to use existing scales and measures.

Need for Control. Need for control was measured prior to organizational entry using the 11-item, 7-point Likert-format (strongly disagree to strongly agree) control desired scale developed by Greenberger (1982). This scale examined need for control for a variety of work-related issues such as variety of tasks performed, timing of task performance, performance standards, and physical arrangement of their work area. The scale's reliability in this study (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$) was similar to that in past studies (e.g., Greenberger, 1982).

Need for Feedback. Need for feedback was measured prior to organizational entry using a five-item, 5-point Likert-format scale developed by Ashford and Cummings (1983). This scale measured respondents' need for feedback about how they were performing and fitting in. This scale exhibited high reliability in this study ($\alpha = .82$).

Job Discretion. Job discretion was measured using a four-item, 5-point Likert-format scale developed by West, Nicholson, and Rees (1987). This scale was linked to the conceptual work by Stewart (1982a,b) and examined job discretion in terms of discretion over the sequence in which tasks got done, over task objectives, over independence from one's boss, and over the people with whom one works with in completing tasks. The scale exhibited high reliability in this study ($\alpha = .92$).

Job Novelty. Job novelty was measured using a three-item, 5-point Likert-format scale also developed by West, Nicholson, and Rees (1987). The scale assessed the similarity between the current job and previous jobs in terms of the tasks involved, the skills required, and the methods used to do the job. The scale exhibited adequate reliability ($\alpha = .84$).

Organizational Socialization Tactics. The six organizational socialization tactics described by Van Maanen and Schein (1979) were measured by a 22-item, 5-point Likert-format (strongly disagree to strongly agree)

scale initially developed by Jones (1986) and slightly modified by Black (1992). This scale met the minimum requirements for reliability for each of the six tactics, though some estimates were low enough to warrant caution in interpreting the results. The estimates were as follows: collective ($\alpha = .65$), formal ($\alpha = .87$), serial ($\alpha = .76$), sequential ($\alpha = .61$), fixed ($\alpha = .69$), and divestiture ($\alpha = .68$).

Mode of Adjustment. Job-change was measured by a four-item, 5-point Likert-format scale initially developed by Jones (1986) and slightly modified by Allen and Meyer (1990). These items examined the extent to which the respondent re-defined the role, altered procedures, instituted new work goals, and changed the mission of the role. This scale also had a high reliability ($\alpha = .90$). Self-change was measured with a scale developed for this study based on past arguments by scholars that individuals might change how they appear, interact with others, or behave in general (e.g., Nicholson, 1984). The measure consisted of four items that examined the extent to which the individual had made changes in their dress, in behavior, in interpersonal style, and overall in order to fit into the new organization. This scale was a 5-point Likert-format (strongly disagree to strongly agree) measure that exhibited an adequate level of reliability ($\alpha = .75$).

RESULTS

Table I provides means, standard deviations, and correlations for all variables examined in this study. Of note in Table I are the modest correlations among the independent variables of need for control and need for feedback ($r = .30$, NS) and job discretion and job novelty ($r = .13$, NS). The dependent variables, job change and self-change, were also uncorrelated ($r = -.05$, NS).

The hypotheses were tested by using multiple regression analysis. The relationship of all independent individual, job, and organizational variables were examined relative to each of the two outcome variables while controlling for the other. Table II provides the results of the multiple regression analysis. For both self-change and job-change, the set of individual, job, and organizational variables explain a significant portion of the variance in the dependent variables.

Individual Variables

Hypothesis 1 argued that need for control would be positively related to job change and negatively related to self-change. The results from Table

Table I. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of All Variables

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Need for control	4.92	.846	(.87)											
2. Need for feedback	3.89	.690	.30	(.82)										
3. Sequential tactics	3.27	1.44	-.17	-.01	(.61)									
4. Serial tactics	4.09	1.27	.01	.00	.63	(.76)								
5. Collective tactics	3.08	1.41	-.12	.00	.39***	.26*	(.65)							
6. Formal tactics	2.78	1.50	-.01	.12	.63***	.48***	.70***	(.87)						
7. Fixed tactics	3.89	1.34	-.26	.07	.57***	.48***	.27**	.35**	(.69)					
8. Investiture tactics	5.84	1.04	.03	.00	.07	.37***	-.25*	-.10	.07	(.68)				
9. Job discretion	3.36	.993	.05	.07	.03	-.11	-.17	-.22*	.01	.28**	(.92)			
10. Job novelty	3.56	.985	.12	-.05	-.08	-.18	.13	-.00	.01	-.22*	.13	(.84)		
11. Change job	2.97	1.03	.29**	.07	-.30**	-.14	-.31**	-.36**	-.47***	.24*	.16	-.06	(.90)	
12. Change self	2.26	.751	-.09	.27**	-.05	-.12	-.07	.04	-.06	-.33**	-.02	-.17	-.05	(.75)

^aNumbers in parenthesis are reliability coefficients

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Table II. Multiple Regression Analysis of Mode of Adjustment

Variables	Self-change		Job change	
	Beta	T-value	Beta	T-value
Self-change			.02	.14
Job change	.02	.14		
Need for control	-.30	-2.32*	.17	1.27
Need for feedback	.31	2.51**	.09	.69
Job discretion	.19	1.44	.03	.21
Job novelty	-.27	-2.22*	.03	.27
Collective tactics	-.30	-1.77	.06	.33
Formal tactics	.28	1.36	-.33	-1.61
Serial tactics	.17	.94	.09	.50
Sequential tactics	-.19	-.97	.09	.50
Fixed tactics	-.11	-.68	-.44	-3.05**
Investiture tactics	-.52	-3.54***	.21	1.34
	Adjusted R ² = .21 F = 2.51**		Adjusted R ² = .24 F = 2.80**	

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

II indicates that need for control was in fact significantly and negatively related to self-change but was not significantly related to job change.

Hypothesis 2 suggested that need for feedback would be negatively related to job change and positively related to self-change, or the exact opposite as that hypothesized for need for control. The regression results indicate that need for feedback was positively related to self-change but was not significantly related to job change, providing partial support for Hypothesis 2.

Job Variables

Hypothesis 3 suggested that job discretion would be positively related to job change and negatively related to self-change. The results, however, did not support this hypothesis. Discretion was not significantly related to either of the dependent variables.

Hypothesis 4 argued that job novelty would have the opposite relationship with job change and self-change as job discretion; it would be negatively related to job change and positively related to self-change. Like West (1987), this study found a nonsignificant relationship between job novelty and adjustment through job change. However, in contrast to what was hypothesized, job novelty was negatively related to the self-change mode of adjustment.

Organizational Variables

Hypothesis 5a argued that individual, informal, random, variable, disjunctive, and divestiture tactics would be positively related to job change or conversely that collective, formal, serial, sequential, fixed, and investiture tactics would be negatively related to adjustment via job change. The results in Table II generally did not support this hypothesis because five out of six of the socialization tactics were not significantly related to the dependent variable of job change. Only variable socialization tactics had the expected significant positive relationship with job change.

Hypothesis 5b argued that collective, formal, sequential, fixed, serial, and divestiture would be positively related to self-change or conversely that individual, informal, disjunctive, random, fixed, and investiture tactics would be negatively related to self-change. Hypothesis 5b was also not strongly supported because only one of the six tactics (divestiture–investiture) was significantly related to self-change.

DISCUSSION

This study attempted to expand our understanding of organizational entry by simultaneously examining the impact of individual, job, and organizational variables on two modes of adjustment through a longitudinal design. Overall the results suggest that the variables examined in this study have a moderate impact on self-change and less effect on job change as modes of newcomer adjustment.

Generally more of the variables seemed to be related to self-change than job change. Specifically, both individual variables had the predicted impact on self-change. Individuals who desired control changed themselves less over the first year on a new job, while individuals who had a high need for feedback tended to report more self-change after 1 year on the job. These findings suggest that a desire for control tends to focus individuals outward, away from changing themselves, though the lack of a significant relationship between need for control and job change suggests that their focus does not necessarily shift to the job. It may be that for these individuals, control is not found in changing themselves in order to fit or in changing the job to fit them but rather in other activities such as seeking information about the new environment or by establishing relationships with others in order to reduce the uncertainty associated with organizational entry. These possibilities begin to suggest that two modes of adjustment may be too limited. It may be that individuals engage in a variety of adjustment mechanisms that extend beyond simply changing themselves or changing their jobs.

Of the job variables, only job novelty was significantly related to self-change, and its effect was the opposite of that predicted. The results suggest that while controlling for job change, the greater the job novelty, the *less* the self-change. One potential explanation of this unexpected result can be likened to the “threat-rigidity” response raised by Staw, Sandelands, and Dutton (1982). It is possible that a novel job represented by the difference between the current job and previous jobs is perceived as a potential threat to individuals’ sense of self-esteem. It is threatening to self-esteem because the job requires skills and knowledge different from what they have utilized and mastered in the past. As such, the novel job may be a source of stress. Consequently, rather than respond by changing themselves to fit the novel needs of the job, individuals may become rigid, fixed, and unwilling to engage in self-change.

The general lack of relationships between the job variables and the job change mode of adjustment is surprising given the positive relationship found by West (1987). It may be that discretion *per se* is not a strong predictor of job change, but rather that the response in a high discretion job will depend on the extent to which the job initially fits or doesn’t fit the individual. If the job fits the person, there may be little reason to change the job even if the person has substantial discretion to do so, whereas if the job does not fit the person, discretion may be an important predictor of job change. As a *post hoc* test of this possibility, we divided the sample at the median on a two-item measure of person job fit developed by Feldman (1976). The correlation between job discretion and job change was .53 for those individuals low in person-job fit and $-.36$ for those in high person-job fit. This *post hoc* exploratory result is suggestive of a more complicated theoretical process than proposed by Nicholson (1984). Specifically, it suggests that while job discretion may free up job incumbents to tailor the job to better fit their skills and preferences, this will be more likely to result in job change when the incumbent feels that the job is a poor fit initially. If the job already fits, greater discretion will be less likely to stimulate job change as a mode of adjustment.

In general, the organizational socialization tactics did not predict attempts to change the job after 12 months. Only variable-fixed tactics were significantly related to the job change mode of adjustment. As hypothesized, fixed tactics communicate to newcomers that the timing of steps is set, which in turn may cause newcomers to not “rock the boat” and consequently to make little or no changes in their jobs, or conversely, random tactics communicate to newcomers that the timing of steps is not set, which in turn may free newcomers to make changes in their jobs.

Only investiture-divestiture socialization tactics had a significant relationship with self-change. This is perhaps not surprising. Investiture

tactics do, by their nature, have a specific and explicit message relative to self-change as a mode of adjustment. They directly and explicitly communicate that newcomers possess skills and knowledge that the organization desires, and therefore, newcomers do not need to make changes in themselves. Conversely, divestiture tactics explicitly communicate that newcomers' previous behaviors are inappropriate and must be changed. Given this direct message concerning self-change as a mode of adjustment, a stronger relationship between investiture-divestiture tactics and self-change might be expected compared to other tactics examined in this research.

Limitations

Certainly some caution must be exercised in generalizing these findings given the restricted sample of this study. Although MBAs constitute an important group of new hires to businesses, the MBA graduates in this sample may not be fully representative of the general population of MBA graduates. Further, MBAs may also be significantly different from high school, undergraduate, or mid-career new hires. Further research is needed to determine the extent to which common and unique variables play a role in the adjustment of these potentially different groups and samples.

Because all variables were measured via questionnaires, common method variance problems may also provide the basis for cautious interpretation of this study's results. However, the fact that variables were measured at three different points in time serves to reduce the probability that common method variance poses a substantial threat to the validity of this study's results.

Implications

The results of this research point to both research as well as practical implications. Although the individual variables examined in this study were significantly related to self-change, they were not significantly related to job change. Additionally, it may be that individual variables are more consistently moderators of the relationship between other variables and job change rather than directly predictive of job-change as a mode of adjustment (Jones, 1986).

The results of this study also point to some interesting practical implications. If firms want their newcomers to change themselves in order to fit in, the results of this study suggest that they may want to select individuals with high need for feedback and low need for control and utilize divestiture socialization tactics. If firms want newcomers to be innovators,

they may want to select individuals with low need for feedback and high need for control and utilize variable socialization tactics.

In conclusion, the results of this study suggest two interesting points. First, the results suggest that future research may benefit from expanding the modes of adjustment considered beyond self-change and job change. Second, future studies may add to our understanding by examining contingency factors such as person–job fit in determining the relationship between such job factors as role discretion and modes of adjustment such as job change.

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