



# The role of social socialization tactics in the relationship between socialization content and newcomers' affective commitment

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The role of  
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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The aim of this paper is to explore the role of social socialization tactics on the relationship between task- and organization-related information (socialization content) and newcomers' affective commitment to their work organization.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A total of 280 new hires in a Greek service company participated in a survey. Moderated regression analyses were conducted to test research hypotheses.

**Findings** – The results supported the role of investiture-divestiture tactics as a moderator in the relationship between newcomers' task-related information acquisition and organizational affective commitment. In addition, serial-disjunctive tactics were found to moderate the relationship between organization-related information acquisition and newcomers' affective commitment. The study also demonstrated that both task-related and organization-related information acquisition are important to the development of newcomers' affective commitment at the early stages of the socialization process.

**Research limitations/implications** – Owing to the cross-sectional design of the research, causality cannot be drawn.

**Practical implications** – The knowledge of whether, and the extent to which, particular socialization tactics and content areas contribute to newcomers' adjustment would provide organizations a competitive advantage by incorporating them into their socialization programs.

**Originality/value** – Provision of feedback affirming newcomers' personal characteristics as well as assignment of established role models were found to provide the framework within which the acquisition of task and organization-related information respectively are related to new hires' affective commitment towards their work organization.

**Keywords** Socialization, Employees, Social environment, Job satisfaction, Organizational culture, Greece

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Organizational socialization is of pivotal importance to organizations and newcomers alike, especially nowadays due to the increasing degree of employee mobility. Successful socialization refers to newcomers' adjustment to their work environment as well as alignment of their efforts to organizational goals (Baker and Feldman, 1990). Commitment to the organization has been considered to be a major hallmark of successful adjustment. Although socialization is an ongoing process, socialization of new hires has traditionally received more attention due to the intensity of adjustment



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issues; especially the period of early entry has been found to be critical for the formation of work attitudes, which persist for many months later (e.g. Mowday *et al.*, 1982; Bauer and Green, 1994). Effective socialization has been linked to positive work attitudes and behaviours (work motivation, job involvement, organizational commitment, low turnover, innovative and cooperative behaviour) (Van Maanen, 1976; Feldman, 1981). Organizational commitment has been mainly approached as a multi-dimensional construct which, according to Meyer and Allen (1997) framework, consists of three components. Affective commitment reflects employees' emotional attachment to and involvement in the organization. Continuance commitment refers to a realization of the costs associated with leaving the organization. Finally, normative commitment involves feelings of obligation to continue employment. The majority of extant research has examined the relationship between organizational socialization and commitment using Mowday *et al.*'s (1982) conceptualization of commitment as an affective attachment to an organization characterized by shared values, a desire to remain in the organization, and a willingness to exert effort on its behalf. The latter conceptualization of organizational commitment is closely related to Meyer and Allen (1997) notion of affective commitment.

The theoretical basis underpinning most organizational socialization work has been uncertainty reduction (Lester, 1987; Nelson and Quick, 1991); according to this theoretical framework, upon organizational entry, newcomers experience psychological distress which they try to reduce by becoming familiar with the organizational rules, roles, tasks and norms. In other words, the "reality shock" experienced by newcomers is reduced by learning both functional and social aspects of their new position as well as work organization. Despite the fact that considerable progress has been made toward understanding how adjustment arises, extant research has been conducted almost exclusively in northern American business contexts.

By and large, previous studies have focused on the direct relationships between socialization tactics and/or content dimensions and organizational commitment. Relevant research remains divided along distinct fronts, since scarce research has been conducted which integrates socialization tactics and content literature. On the one hand, there are studies that have focused on the investigation of the various tactics used by organizations in order to facilitate newcomer socialization (e.g. Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1992). On the other hand, there is empirical research which has approached socialization mainly as a learning process and focused on the content of socialization (e.g. Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Taormina, 1999; Klein and Weaver, 2000). Even though relevant review reveals the existence of a great number of studies examining either socialization tactics or content as antecedents of newcomers' adjustment and commitment, there is a limited overlap between these two endeavors. However, since socialization entails working through both task and social transitions (Fisher, 1986), comprehensive understanding of organizational socialization calls for attention to both the learning content and the processes by which the new hires adjust to specific roles in the organization. The present study aims to fill this gap by going beyond competing claims identified in extant literature regarding the relative importance of tactics over learning content (and *vice versa*) on newcomer's affective commitment. The study's aim is not to explore either tactics or content; rather it will be about simultaneous examination of both. It argues that newcomers' development of affective commitment

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can be best understood from both perspectives and thus the artificial divide between tactics and content needs to be abolished.

The reason for focusing on the relationship of organizational socialization with affective commitment is two-fold. First, affective commitment – as compared to the other two commitment components – has been reported to have the most positive effects on important organizational phenomena as well as considered to be a key indicator of employee integration at work (Mowday *et al.*, 1982; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Meyer and Allen, 1997). Given that affective commitment has been found to be the strongest and most consistent predictor of organizationally desired outcomes (e.g. both in-role and discretionary performance), this construct has constituted the focus of interest to organizational scholars and practitioners alike (Meyer *et al.*, 2002). The second reason for choosing affective commitment as the dependent variable for this study is that, in the context of organizational socialization, this commitment dimension appears to be the most relevant since it has been found to be related to the underlying notions underpinning most organizational socialization work, that is, uncertainty reduction and identity theory. Employees' perceptions of personal importance (i.e. extent to which they are made to feel that they make important contributions to the organization), competence and confidence in their abilities and achievements have been linked to the affective component of organizational commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1997; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990). In addition, characteristics of employees' role in the organization, such as role ambiguity have been consistently related to employees' affective commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Finally, extant studies have shown relationships between fit perceptions and individual affective outcomes (e.g. Ashforth and Saks, 1996; Cable and Judge, 1997).

Specifically, the study explores the contribution of social socialization tactics on information content-affective commitment relationship. Building on uncertainty reduction theory as well as social learning and identity theory, it argues for the moderating role of investiture-divestiture and serial-disjunctive tactics to the relationship between socialization content (namely performance proficiency and goals/values) and affective commitment. From a practical standpoint, and given the fact that organizations dedicate extensive resources to newcomers' training, organizations will benefit from knowing whether and the extent to which gains in the latter's adjustment and affective commitment may be garnered by the adoption of social socialization tactics, which could be either incorporated into their formal socialization programs or embedded in their off-site (i.e. on-the-job) training.

The following sections review theory-based relations between socialization tactics/learning content and organizational commitment and move on with considering social socialization tactics as moderators of the socialization content-affective commitment relation.

### **Socialization tactics and affective commitment**

Socialization tactics refer to ways structured by the organization in order to help newcomers adapt to early entry experiences and perform a transition from one role to another (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Jones, 1986). The reduction of uncertainty newcomers experience on organizational entry constitutes the theoretical basis for organizational socialization tactics, since tactics shape the type of information received by newcomers as well as the ease of having access to such information. Extant

empirical research has indicated that perceptions of socialization tactics influence attitudinal outcomes such as organizational commitment (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Jones, 1986; Ashforth and Saks, 1996).

One of the most prominent theoretical models of socialization is Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) typology of socialization tactics. The model identifies six dimensions along which socialization tactics vary, each consisting of a bipolar continuum; the six polarities are:

- (1) collective vs. individual;
- (2) formal vs. informal;
- (3) fixed vs. variable;
- (4) sequential vs. random;
- (5) serial vs. disjunctive; and
- (6) investiture vs. divestiture.

According to Van Maanen and Schein (1979), the serial (vs disjunctive) tactic refers to the newcomers' socialization by an experienced employee (leader or colleague) who acts as a role model, while disjunctive tactic refers to the absence of such a model/mentor for the socialization of new hires. As far as investiture tactic is concerned, it involves the affirmation of newcomers' personal identity and characteristics in the sense that organization processes ratify and establish viability and usefulness of newcomer's personality[1]. On the contrary, divestiture refers to negative social interactions between newcomers and other employees until the former begin to fulfill expectations (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979) while it also entails processes, which strip away certain enduring characteristics of the newcomer. Having conducted a factor analysis of Van Maanen and Schein's six socialization tactics, Jones (1986) argued for the existence of three broader factors:

- (1) content;
- (2) context; and
- (3) social (serial-disjunctive and investiture-divestiture) socialization tactics.

Social (as compared to content and context) tactics have been considered to be the most critical for newcomers' adjustment, in the sense of providing the social cues and facilitation necessary during the learning process (Saks *et al.*, 2007). New hires' perceived personal acceptance by the group has been found to influence the former's level of commitment to the group (Jones, 1986; Allen and Meyer, 1990).

Apart from uncertainty reduction theory, person-organization (P-O) fit theory has also been used to provide the theoretical basis for understanding the relationship between social socialization tactics and newcomer adjustment (e.g. Kim *et al.*, 2005). In specific P-O fit have been used to explain the relationship between "social" socialization tactics and newcomers' adjustment. Social tactics, through affirmation of personal characteristics and social acceptance and support provided by established organizational members have been found to have the strongest correlation with socialization outcomes (Bauer *et al.*, 2007). Saks *et al.*'s (2007) meta-analytic study demonstrated that perceptions of person-job and person-organization fit partially mediate the relationship between social tactics and organizational commitment.

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Similarly, Cable and Parsons (2001) have argued that serial and investiture tactics are positively related to new hires' subjective perceptions of person-organization fit, while increasing the congruence between the former's personal values and their perceptions of organizational values.

The argument of the present study holds that Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) self-categorization, and the conceptually-related social identity theory, account for the process entailed in investiture-divestiture tactics, while serial-disjunctive tactics make use mainly of the social learning processes. According to self-categorization and social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Turner *et al.*, 1987), individual's identity is two-fold:

- (1) personal identity entails the characteristics which differentiate the individual from the group; and
- (2) social identity/ies which refers to categorization of self into one or more social groups.

Identification with collectives helps reduce the uncertainty associated with interacting in new environments (Weick, 1995). Following Brewer (1991, 2003), apart from the need for inclusion to a particular social unit (i.e. work group, organization), the individual has a need for uniqueness ("how am I different from others?"). Thus, even though Van Maanen (1975) has regarded the abandonment of pre-existing attitudes, values, and behaviors as vital for effective socialization, research on identity has indicated that, given that organization's demands infringe upon the uniqueness of the personal identity, employees seek a balance between personal and organizational identity, in the sense of neither being too distinct from nor too dependent on organizational identity (Brewer, 1991; Kreiner *et al.*, 2006). According to Ashforth *et al.* (2008), newcomers' sense making process entails incorporation of elements of the collective into their sense of self. In this respect, affirmation of personal identity by established employees can be seen as enhancing newcomers' feelings of uniqueness which is prerequisite for the latter's identification with, and commitment to, the organization. In this sense, the core mechanism connecting investiture-divestiture tactics to affective commitment is the conservation of personal identity, through the affirmation of personal characteristics by organizational members.

As far as serial-disjunctive tactics are concerned, through social learning, the provision of role models enhance newcomers' understanding of the task and role's demands as well as of the organizational norms; in this sense, the provision of information from the mentor reduces newcomer's experienced uncertainty and is inductive of the latter's affective commitment. However, mentors have been found to act not only as sources of job-related information but also as sources of social support, advice and "inside" information while helping the newcomer be integrated into the informal social network (Kram, 1985). In this sense, the presence of role models or mentors as well as positive social support from experienced organizational members, lead to perceptions of better fit and thus to internalization of organizational values and development of emotional link with the organization. Moreover, perceived supportive management and positive interpersonal relationships in the workplace have been found to promote employees' psychological safety (Saks, 2006). Since newcomers are likely to view mentor's positive orientation towards them as indicative of organization's support, they will have the propensity to reciprocate by becoming more committed.

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The present study sets out to examine each social tactic separately in order to explore the possibility of distinct relationships with the rest of the constructs examined. So far, most relevant research (e.g. Cable and Parsons, 2001; Saks *et al.*, 2007) has used a combined measure for both social (serial and investiture) tactics. Moreover, most of these studies used Jones' measure of investiture-divestiture, which focuses on the social support offered by organizational members. The present research follows Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) conceptualization of investiture-divestiture, which focuses on the affirmation of personal characteristics that individuals bring into the organization. Thus, social support (as exemplified by serial tactics) can be seen as an indication of acceptance of newcomer's identity; however it constitutes only one element of investiture-divestiture process (see Ashforth and Saks, 1996).

- H1.* An organization's use of investiture socialization tactics will be positively related to newcomer affective commitment.
- H2.* An organization's use of serial socialization tactics will be positively related to newcomer affective commitment.

### **Socialization content and affective commitment**

The bulk of research on organizational socialization has approached socialization primarily as a learning process and focused on what newcomers actually learn (i.e. socialization content) as they assimilate to the organization in their attempts to become effective organizational members; these studies have demonstrated the pivotal role that information content plays to newcomers' commitment (e.g. Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1992; Chao *et al.*, 1994; Saks and Ashforth, 1997a). This research has explained the relationship between socialization content and newcomers' adjustment in terms of uncertainty reduction theory; by providing incumbents with pertinent information, organizations reduce the uncertainty of the former's assimilation process.

Relevant empirical research has identified specific content areas that new hires need to learn about; these studies examined how socialization content related to measures of employee adjustment and attitudes such as organizational commitment. There is a great deal of conceptual overlap among the content areas (or dimensions) proposed by different frameworks. In general, the content domains which are embodied in most definitions of socialization refer to task demands and role characteristics as well as organizational culture, goals and values (e.g. Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1992; Chao *et al.*, 1994; Saks and Ashforth, 1997b). These domains represent performance proficiency and goals/values dimensions in Chao *et al.*'s (1994) framework.

In specific, the performance proficiency dimension refers to learning the tasks involved on the job; it entails features such as understanding task duties, assignments and priorities as well as ways of handling routine problems. According to stage models of the socialization process (e.g. Feldman, 1981; Louis, 1980), in the course of the first few months on a new job, incumbents focus on learning the tasks necessary to perform their job and clarifying their role in the organization. Ostroff and Kozlowski's (1992) study indicated that task and role-related information were found to be the most salient to newcomers, especially during the first few months after entering the organization. Nevertheless, inconsistent findings have been reported regarding the relationship between task mastery and organizational commitment, while most studies have suggested the existence of weak or no relationship between the two constructs, which

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was attributed to the fact that task-related information is a personal-level construct while commitment is organizational-level construct (e.g. Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1992; Bauer and Green, 1998; Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg, 2003). However, it is argued here that newcomers who master their tasks – and thus feel confident in fulfilling their task requirements – are, in turn, more likely to want to remain in the organization and exert more effort towards achieving its goals.

The goals/values content dimension refers to employees' understanding of, and identification with, formal goals and values as well as informal and tacit norms espoused in the organization. Since newcomers cannot embrace organizational goals/values if they are not made aware of them, the goals/values dimension is important for effective socialization. According to Chao *et al.* (1994), organizational goals and values constitute a link between the individual and the larger organization, beyond the confines of the individual's job. Klein and Weaver (2000) who examined the relationship between both goals/values and performance proficiency content on the one hand and organizational commitment on the other hand found that only goals/values dimension was related to commitment. Since it seems reasonable to suggest that new hires cannot embrace organizational goals/values (and consequently experience an emotional bond with the organization) without being made aware of these goals/value, organizational goals/values knowledge are likely to induce affective commitment to newcomers:

- H3.* Newcomers' acquisition of performance proficiency information will be positively related to newcomer affective commitment.
- H4.* Newcomers' acquisition of organizational goals/values information will be positively related to newcomer affective commitment.

### **Social tactics as moderators between socialization content and affective commitment**

As already noted, review of extant empirical studies indicated the existence of significant correlations between affective commitment and investiture-divestiture as well as serial-disjunctive dimensions. In addition, a link between socialization content and affective commitment has also been established.

However, limited empirical research has been conducted which relates content areas to socialization processes. In one of those studies, Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg (2003) demonstrated that the newcomers' acquisition of adequate knowledge and skills for the performance of tasks as well as their perceived approval from coworkers invokes organizational commitment; however, no specific relationship between approval and knowledge obtained was examined in their study. In the meantime, two empirical studies have highlighted the role of integration to the group, concluding that employees must adjust to their group before they can master their task and negotiate their role (Feldman, 1989; Katz, 1980). On the contrary, in their study of the socialization of British Army recruits, Cooper-Thomas and Anderson (2002) found that the relationship between tactics and commitment was indirect and mediated by the content of information acquisition. Similarly, Saks and Ashforth's (1997b) empirical findings demonstrated that information acquisition mediated the relationship between socialization tactics and outcomes.

As mentioned earlier, socialization tactics reflect organizations' attempts to structure the information provided to newcomers; the provision of such structure alleviates the stress experienced by newcomers when entering in the new work environment. In the case of social socialization tactics, these tactics also contribute to new hires' perceptions of fit with the work organization. The present study argues for the moderating role of the affirmation of newcomer's characteristics by the work group as well as of the support provided by a role model for the successful socialization of new hires. On the one hand, it posits that the contribution of task and goals/values information acquisition to newcomers' successful socialization (as exemplified by their affective commitment to the organization) is subject to the degree of acceptance and affirmation of newcomer's personal identity. Organization's feedback on the viability and usefulness of one's own characteristics and values (investiture tactics) offers a sense of continuity to newcomer's personal identity; at the same time it invokes the feeling that the organization's values are in accordance with his/her own values while his/her skills and abilities are useful and valued by the organization. Under such circumstances, newcomers acquire a sense of self-efficacy, which accentuates the propensity that task/job-related information will invoke high levels of affective commitment. Similarly, the perception of fit with the organization will increase the probability that the more they become knowledgeable about the goals/values endorsed by the organization, the more they will direct their efforts towards achieving these goals.

On the other hand, divestiture tactics entail newcomer's assignment of a mentor, who acts as a source of information and role model, both directly and indirectly, which alleviates the stress experienced while enhancing perceptions of P-O fit. Since supervisors have been found to shape perceptions (Kozlowski and Doherty, 1989), newcomer's perspective slowly converge with the more normative view offered by the more normative view offered by the supervisor/mentor regarding task, role and behavioural requirements; in this sense, mentors assist newcomers to their role development process (Major *et al.*, 1995). Under these circumstances, the provision of organization-related information is likely to make newcomers more actively accept the goals and the values of the organization as well as exerting effort towards these goals (i.e. affective commitment). In a similar manner, the assignment of a mentor who acts as a role model and provides social support to newcomers, positively influences the development of the latter's commitment, when information regarding the task/job to be performed is provided to them.

- H5.* An organization's use of investiture socialization tactics will moderate the relationship between newcomers' acquisition of socialization information (i.e. performance proficiency, goals/values) and their affective commitment in such a way that this relationship will be stronger for those who perceive higher, rather than lower investiture.
- H6.* An organization's use of serial socialization tactics will moderate the relationship between newcomers' acquisition of socialization information (i.e. performance proficiency, goals/values) and their affective commitment in such a way that this relationship will be stronger for those who perceive higher, rather than lower, serial tactics.



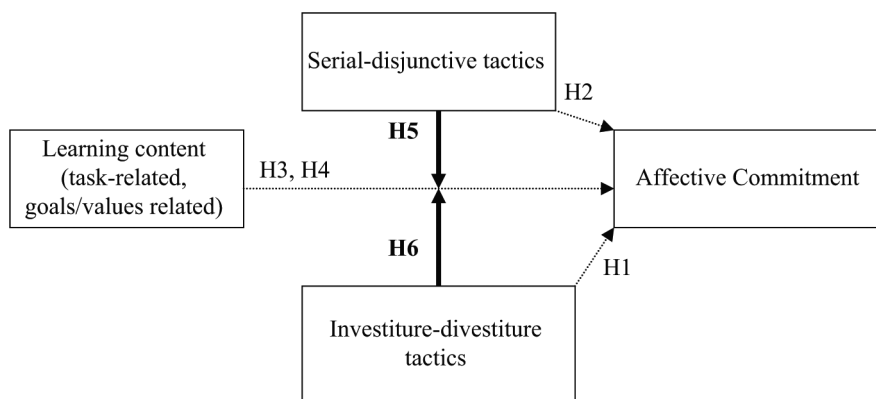
**Method**

*Design and procedure*

Based on the discussion above regarding the theoretical background, six research hypotheses were proposed which constituted the research framework presented in Figure 1. This depiction indicates that the core hypotheses (demarcated by bold arrows) attempt to identify the moderating effects of social socialization tactics on the relationship between the learning content and affective commitment.

Information from newcomers was collected during the early stages of their socialization; this decision was in accordance to extant research findings which have indicated that new hires adjust rapidly to their new work environment and thus socialization tactics are likely to be more important during the first few months at work than later (e.g. Saks and Ashforth, 1997b; Katz, 1980). Due to the nature of the selection and recruitment process of the particular organization (new entries were recruited in large numbers), all participants of the study entered the organization with a time difference of two weeks maximum. In specific, the time when questionnaires were distributed to job incumbents ranged from eight to nine weeks after joining the organization. Due to anonymity of the responses, no control could be made regarding the time difference in the date of new hires' entry in the organization.

Collection of completed questionnaires was performed in a manner that confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents was ensured. Questionnaires were distributed upon completion of the first half (i.e. first two weeks) of the training program. In specific, the last day of their formal training program, new hires were informed by a training executive about the purpose of the study and assured for the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses and asked to volunteer to fill in the questionnaire. At this stage, all newcomers had worked on the work site they had been assigned for approximately six to seven weeks and another two weeks were segregated and attended the first part of their official training. Upon questionnaire completion, they inserted by themselves the completed questionnaires into an envelope which was common for all group members and which was eventually gathered by a training executive and sent to the researcher. All respondents returned their questionnaires; all but three questionnaires were usable and included in the analysis.



**Figure 1.**  
Conceptual framework

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*Participants*

For the purpose of the present study, data were collected from 280 new hires of one organization. Of the respondents, 66 percent were male and 34 were female. Regarding their age, 11 percent of the sample was between 20 and 25 years old, 58 percent were between 25 and 30 years old, 23 percent were between 30 and 35 years old, while 8 percent were above 35 years old. The educational level of all recruits was that of secondary education. The group of new hires participated in the present study were all entry-level employees; for the first few months, all participants worked in the front-line performing the same type of tasks.

*Organizational context*

All respondents participating in this study were new hires of a Greek financial services organization which belonged to the public sector. The organization employed approximately 6,000 employees. Approximately three years before the study took place, numerous changes were made ranging from relatively minor policy changes to strategic re-orientations and organizational restructuring. In regard to organizational restructuring, each role in the branches was redefined and sales and service tasks were combined into the same role and were restructured; sales tasks became more client-oriented while standard service tasks became more automatized.

As far as the training process in the particular organization is concerned, it entailed both on-the-job training (informal training), which occurs at the work site, and formal training taking place on a training site. The latter had mainly the form of oral presentations and lecture notes which had a standard form and were given by very senior employees of the organization. During official training, recruits went through training collectively, organized into groups of around 20 people. The official training consisted of two rounds lasting two weeks each. In regard to mentoring, each branch was responsible for assigning a mentor for each newcomer; this mentor had to hold a managerial position.

*Informal interviews and examination of organizational documents*

Informal interviews were conducted with the training director and a middle manager working in the training department of the firm as well as two human resources middle managers. The interviews focused on the history of the organization, values espoused by organizational members as well as changes having occurred during the last decade. Finally, interpretation of the findings of the data collected were discussed with the same interviewees and checked for plausibility. An important organizational cultural orientation was reported to be high respect and obedience to authority; employees were expected to show respect to authority figures and comply with the demands of their superiors.

For the purpose of the study, access was also given to the leaflets distributed to newcomers regarding the official training program to be followed; examination of the training leaflets indicated that official training focused on dissemination of task-related information primarily and secondarily of organizational goals and values. Informal interviews with the training director and middle manager, who supervised the content of the official training confirmed that these were the two knowledge areas that official four-weeks training offered to new hires focused on.

Measures

Affective commitment was measured on a six-item Likert-type scale using Meyer *et al.*'s (1993) scale. Scale anchors ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Reliability estimates reported by extant empirical studies have ranged from 0.74 to 0.88 (e.g. Allen and Meyer, 1990. Meyer and Allen, 1984; Meyer *et al.*, 1989) while Meyer and Allen (197) reported median reliability for affective commitment is 0.85. In this study, the Cronbach alpha estimate was 0.82. Factor analyses performed have indicated that affective commitment is distinguishable construct from related constructs as well as from continuance and normative commitment (Meyer and Allen, 1997).

*Socialization tactics.* In the present study, investiture and serial tactics were operationally defined and measured using Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) framework on socialization tactics. Both dimensions examined reflected the tactics defined by the extremes: investiture vs. divestiture and serial vs. disjunctive. Participants were asked to describe whether their organization employed investiture-divestiture (five items) and serial-disjunctive socialization tactics (five items) using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree). Extant studies have demonstrated the existence of distinct factors comprised by each of Van Maanen and Schein's framework while the two subscales were found to be correlated (e.g. Ashforth and Saks, 1996). The factor analysis (using oblique rotation) conducted in this study indicated that the subscales constituted distinct factors (see Table I). The Cronbach estimate was 0.81 for investiture-divestiture and 0.84 serial-disjunctive subscale.

| Items   | Factor 1<br>Investiture-<br>divestiture | Factor 2<br>Serial-<br>disjunctive |
|---|---|------------------------------------|
| <i>INV1</i> : Almost all my colleagues have been supportive of me personally  | 0.73                                    | 0.15                               |
| <i>INV2</i> : I have been made to feel that my skills and abilities are very important in this organization   | 0.78                                    | 0.11                               |
| <i>INV3</i> : I have had to change my attitudes and values to be accepted in this organization (R)  | 0.77                                    | 0.09                               |
| <i>INV4</i> : My colleagues have gone out of their way to help me adjust to this organization   | 0.74                                    | 0.02                               |
| <i>INV5</i> : I feel that experienced organizational members have held me at a distance until I conform to their expectations (R)                     | 0.74                                    | 0.10                               |
| <i>SERIAL1</i> : Experienced organizational members see advising or training newcomers as one of their main job responsibilities in this organization | 0.12                                    | 0.80                               |
| <i>SERIAL2</i> : I have received little guidance from experienced organiz. members as to how I should perform my job (R)                              | 0.07                                    | 0.81                               |
| <i>SERIAL3</i> : I have little or no access to people who have previously performed my role in this organization (R)                                  | 0.16                                    | 0.71                               |
| <i>SERIAL4</i> : I have been generally left alone to discover what my role should be in this organization (R)   | 0.05                                    | 0.79                               |
| <i>SERIAL5</i> : I am gaining a clear understanding of my role in this organization from observing my senior colleagues                               | 0.08                                    | 0.77                               |
| Eigen values  | 2.2                                     | 3.7                                |
| Percentage of item variance explained   | 22.53                                   | 37.14                              |

**Note:** Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization

**Table I.**  
Factor solution for social socialization tactics

Task- and organization-related knowledge were measured by using the performance proficiency and goals/values subscales respectively, included in the organizational socialization content scale which was developed by Chao *et al.* (1994). From the organizational goals/values subscales, the questions which implied acceptance (rather than knowledge of) organizational goals/values were excluded and substituted by questions devised for the particular organizational setting following the propositions of the organizational members interviewed. A total of five items were used for the measurement of each subscale; these items were rated on a scale from (1) “Strongly disagree” to (7) “Strongly agree”. Co-efficient alphas for the present study were 0.77 for performance proficiency and 0.78 for goals/values subscale. Construct validity evidence for these subscales is provided by Chao *et al.* (1994) who reported reliability estimates greater than or equal to 0.78 while their principal-components factor analysis reproduced each of the dimensions theorized. In the present study, the factor analysis conducted confirmed the existence of two distinct factors (see Table II).

The questionnaires constituted Greek translations of the scales mentioned above which were originally written in English language; in order to enhance reliability, the method of translation and back-translation was used. In an attempt to ensure relevance of the items included in the questionnaire, the final version of the translated questionnaire was distributed to the organizational members already interviewed. Finally, the order in which the scales included in this study were completed was counterbalanced so as response bias would be minimized.

*Control variables.* Age and gender were measured as control variables. Even though there are studies which have yielded inconclusive results in regard to the effect of these demographic variables (e.g. Van de Velde *et al.*, 2003), some empirical research has

| Items   | Factor 1<br>Performance<br>proficiency | Factor 2<br>Goals/<br>values |
|---|--|------------------------------|
| <i>PP1</i> : I understand what all the duties of my job entail  | 0.66                                   | 0.01                         |
| <i>PP2</i> : I have developed the appropriate skills and abilities to successfully perform my job             | 0.74                                   | 0.11                         |
| <i>PP3</i> : I have almost mastered the required tasks of my job  | 0.80                                   | 0.14                         |
| <i>PP4</i> : I have learned how to successfully perform my job in an efficient manner                         | 0.75                                   | 0.07                         |
| <i>PP5</i> : I have learned to a great extent “the ropes” of my job   | 0.65                                   | 0.17                         |
| <i>GOAL1</i> : I understand the goals of my organization  | 0.03                                   | 0.75                         |
| <i>GOAL2</i> : I am aware of the organization’s values  | 0.05                                   | 0.75                         |
| <i>GOAL3</i> : I am familiar with the tacit goals and values espoused in this organization                    | 0.12                                   | 0.70                         |
| <i>GOAL4</i> : I understand the rules and principles that maintain the integrity of the organization          | 0.11                                   | 0.61                         |
| <i>GOAL5</i> : I have a good understanding of the unwritten rules of how things are done in this organization | 0.12                                   | 0.79                         |
| Eigen values  | 2.0                                    | 3.3                          |
| Percentage of item variance explained   | 20.04                                  | 33.18                        |
| <b>Note:</b> Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization   |  |                              |

**Table II.**  
Factor solution for  
performance proficiency  
and goals/values –  
related information

suggested that these two characteristics may affect affective commitment (Maurer, 2001; Meyer and Allen, 1997; Mowday *et al.*, 1982).

*Common method variance*

Since the scales used in the present study were self-reported and collected at a single point in time, there are concerns regarding the influence of common method variance on the results of this study. In order to control for such a possibility, particular steps were taken, following Podsakoff *et al.*'s (2003) recommendations. From a procedural point of view, and in an attempt to minimize response bias, the order in which the scales included in this study were completed was counterbalanced. Moreover, the possibility of item ambiguity was minimized by having the questionnaires filled in and commented upon by the organizational members interviewed, prior to the study. From a statistical point of view, a Harman's one-factor test was performed; following this technique, all the variables were entered into a principal components factor analysis. Examination of the unrotated factor solution indicated the existence of five factors accounting for 53 percent of the variance; the first factor accounted for only 24 percent of the variance. These findings suggest that that neither a single factor emerged from the factor analysis nor one general factor accounted for most of the variance. These results indicated that common method variance is unlikely to be a serious threat to validity.

**Results**

Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alphas, and correlations among all relevant variables are presented in Tables III and IV. Correlation analyses indicated that both socialization tactics and information content areas examined were related to affective commitment, confirming *H1* to *H4*. In specific, affective commitment demonstrated statistically significant correlations with investiture-divestiture (0.40,  $p < 0.001$ ) and serial-disjunctive tactics (0.26,  $p < 0.001$ ) as well as performance proficiency (0.45,  $p < 0.001$ ) and organizational goals/values knowledge (0.35,  $p < 0.001$ ). From the control variables, only gender was found to demonstrate small but significant correlation with investiture-divestiture tactics.

*Regression analyses*

The hypotheses were further tested via regression analyses (Tables V and VI). In order to minimize problems of multicollinearity, all variables were centred before calculating

| Variables                       | <i>M</i> | SD   | Alpha |
|---------------------------------|----------|------|-------|
| Age <sup>a</sup>                | 2.28     | 0.75 | –     |
| Gender <sup>b</sup>             | 1.33     | 0.47 | –     |
| Affective commitment            | 20.81    | 5.84 | 0.82  |
| Investiture-divestiture tactics | 17.99    | 4.73 | 0.81  |
| Serial-disjunctive tactics      | 18.16    | 4.80 | 0.84  |
| Performance proficiency         | 18.54    | 4.80 | 0.77  |
| Goals/values                    | 18.46    | 4.90 | 0.78  |

**Notes:** *N*=280; <sup>a</sup> 1 = 20-25, 2 = 25-30, 3 = 30-35, 4 = over 35; <sup>b</sup> 1 = female, 2 = male

**Table III.**  
Means, standard deviations and reliabilities of the variables examined

**Table IV.**  
Intercorrelations for the  
study variables ( $n = 280$ )

| Variables                         | (1)           | (2)          | (3)          | (4)          | (5)          | (6)          | (7) |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----|
| Age                               | —             |              |              |              |              |              |     |
| Gender                            | 0.07<br>****  | —            |              |              |              |              |     |
| Affective commitment              | 0.04<br>****  | 0.09<br>**** | —            |              |              |              |     |
| Investiture – divestiture tactics | -0.09<br>**** | 0.15<br>*    | 0.40<br>**** | —            |              |              |     |
| Serial – disjunctive tactics      | -0.08<br>**** | 0.03<br>**** | 0.26<br>**** | 0.24<br>**** | —            |              |     |
| Performance proficiency           | -0.04<br>**** | 0.10<br>**** | 0.45<br>**** | 0.15<br>*    | 0.27<br>**** | —            |     |
| Organizational goals/values       | 0.05<br>****  | 0.11<br>**** | 0.35<br>**** | 0.20<br>**   | 0.14<br>*    | 0.25<br>**** | —   |

**Notes:** \*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$ ; \*\*\*\*  $p \leq 0.05$

the regression statistics (Aiken and West, 1991). Due to the small correlation of gender with investiture-divestiture tactics, this variable was not included in the regression analysis.

The results of the multiple regression analysis indicated that both socialization tactics and content areas accounted for 36 percent of the total variance of affective commitment (Table V). However, when these variables were entered simultaneously, serial-disjunctive tactics ceased to have a positive contribution to the development of affective commitment. In order to explore the additive effect of each social socialization tactic on affective commitment above and beyond the effect of socialization content, hierarchical regressions were estimated, using commitment as criterion variable (see Table VI). The results demonstrated that each socialization tactic explained a statistically significant proportion of incremental variance in commitment ( $\Delta R^2 = 11$  percent for investiture tactics, while the serial tactics demonstrated also an additive

| Variables                   | Affective commitment |                      |                      |                      |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
|                             | Coefficients beta    |                      |                      |                      |
|                             | Model 1              | Model 2              | Model 3              | Model 4              |
| Serial-disjunctive          | 0.27**               | 0.18*                | 0.09***              | 0.08***              |
| Investiture-divestiture     |                      | 0.35**               | 0.32**               | 0.29**               |
| Performance proficiency     |                      | 0.38**               | 0.34**               |                      |
| Organ. goals/values         |                      |                      |                      | 0.19**               |
| <i>F</i> change             | 22.03**              | 39.74**              | 53.53**              | 13.26**              |
| Total <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> | ( <i>df</i> = 1,273) | ( <i>df</i> = 1,272) | ( <i>df</i> = 1,271) | ( <i>df</i> = 1,270) |
|                             | 0.07                 | 0.19                 | 0.33                 | 0.38                 |

Notes: \*  $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.001$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.05$ . Coefficients are standardized

**Table V.** Results of multiple regression analysis predicting affective commitment

|                            | Affective commitment  |                           |              |                 |         |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|--------------|-----------------|---------|
|                            | <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> | ADj <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> | $\Delta R^2$ | <i>F</i> change | $\beta$ |
| Step 1                     |                       |                           |              |                 |         |
| 1. Performance proficiency | 0.21                  | 0.21                      | 0.21         | 71.45           | 0.40**  |
| Step 2                     |                       |                           |              |                 |         |
| 2. Investiture tactics     | 0.32                  | 0.32                      | 0.11         | 44.92           | 0.34**  |
| Step 1                     |                       |                           |              |                 |         |
| 1. Goals/values            | 0.12                  | 0.12                      | 0.12         | 37.15           | 0.27**  |
| Step 2                     |                       |                           |              |                 |         |
| 2. Investiture tactics     | 0.23                  | 0.23                      | 0.11         | 41.08           | 0.35**  |
| Step 1                     |                       |                           |              |                 |         |
| 1. Performance proficiency | 0.21                  | 0.20                      | 0.21         | 71.46           | 0.41**  |
| Step 2                     |                       |                           |              |                 |         |
| 2. Serial tactics          | 0.23                  | 0.22                      | 0.02         | 8.52            | 0.16*   |
| Step 1                     |                       |                           |              |                 |         |
| 1. Goals/values            | 0.12                  | 0.12                      | 0.12         | 37.29           | 0.31**  |
| Step 2                     |                       |                           |              |                 |         |
| 2. Serial tactics          | 0.17                  | 0.16                      | 0.05         | 15.86           | 0.22**  |

Notes: \*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.001$ .  $\beta$  are taken from the last equation

**Table VI.** Results of hierarchical regression analysis, examining the additive effect of social tactics on affective commitment

effect on affective commitment beyond the effect of both socialization content areas ( $\Delta R^2$  ranging from 2 percent to 5 percent).

*Testing for moderating effects*

H5 and H6, concerning the individual moderating effects of investiture-divestiture and serial-disjunctive tactics were tested by two separate moderated regression models (see Table VII: Models 1 and 3 for investiture and Models 2 and 4 for serial tactics). The hypotheses pertaining to the moderating effect of each socialization social tactic was examined following the instructions of Baron and Kenny (1986) and Frazier *et al.* (2004). The moderator is considered to affect the strength of the relation between a predictor variable and a criterion variable; a moderated effect exists if the interaction term adds significantly to the prediction of the outcome (Baron and Kenny, 1986). At the first step, a content dimension and the hypothesized moderator (each socialization tactic) were both entered as predictors. At the next step, the cross-product of each content dimension (performance proficiency or goals/values) and the hypothesized moderator (investiture-divestiture or serial-disjunctive tactics) was entered. A significant term at this step indicates that an interaction effect was present. The results of the moderated regression analyses are shown in Table VII.

|   | $R^2$ | Adj $R^2$ | $\Delta R^2$ | F change | $\beta$  |
|---|-------|-----------|--------------|----------|----------|
| <i>Model 1</i>  |       |           |              |          |          |
| Step 1  |       |           |              |          |          |
| Performance proficiency                                   | 0.34  | 0.20      | 0.21***      | 71.45*** | 0.41***  |
| Investiture-divestiture tactics                           | 0.56  | 0.31      | 0.11***      | 44.92*** | 0.35***  |
| Step 2  |       |           |              |          |          |
| Performance proficiency × investiture divestiture tactics | 0.57  | 0.32      | 0.01*        | 3.92*    | 0.10*    |
| <i>Model 2</i>  |       |           |              |          |          |
| Step 1  |       |           |              |          |          |
| Performance proficiency                                   | 0.45  | 0.20      | 0.21***      | 71.46*** | 0.42***  |
| Serial-disjunctive tactics                                | 0.48  | 0.22      | 0.02**       | 8.52**   | 0.17**   |
| Step 2  |       |           |              |          |          |
| Performance proficiency × serial disjunctive tactics      | 0.49  | 0.23      | 0.01****     | 3.54**** | 0.10**** |
| <i>Model 3</i>  |       |           |              |          |          |
| Step 1  |       |           |              |          |          |
| Organizational goals/values                               | 0.40  | 0.16      | 0.16***      | 52.93*** | 0.35***  |
| Investiture-divestiture tactics                           | 0.48  | 0.23      | 0.07***      | 25.92    | 0.27***  |
| Step 2  |       |           |              |          |          |
| Goals/values × investiture-divestiture tactics            | 0.49  | 0.23      | 0.004****    | 1.47**** | 0.06**** |
| <i>Model 4</i>  |       |           |              |          |          |
| Step 1  |       |           |              |          |          |
| Organizational goals/values                               | 0.35  | 0.12      | 0.12***      | 37.29*** | 0.30***  |
| Serial-disjunctive tactics                                | 0.41  | 0.16      | 0.05***      | 15.86*** | 0.24***  |
| Step 2  |       |           |              |          |          |
| Goals/values × serial-disjunctive tactics                 | 0.42  | 0.17      | 0.01*        | 3.97*    | 0.11*    |

**Notes:** \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*\*\* $p \leq 0.05$ . "βs" are taken from the last equation

**Table VII.** Results of hierarchical regression analysis, examining the moderating effect of investiture-divestiture and serial-disjunctive tactics on the relationship between performance proficiency – goals/values and affective commitment



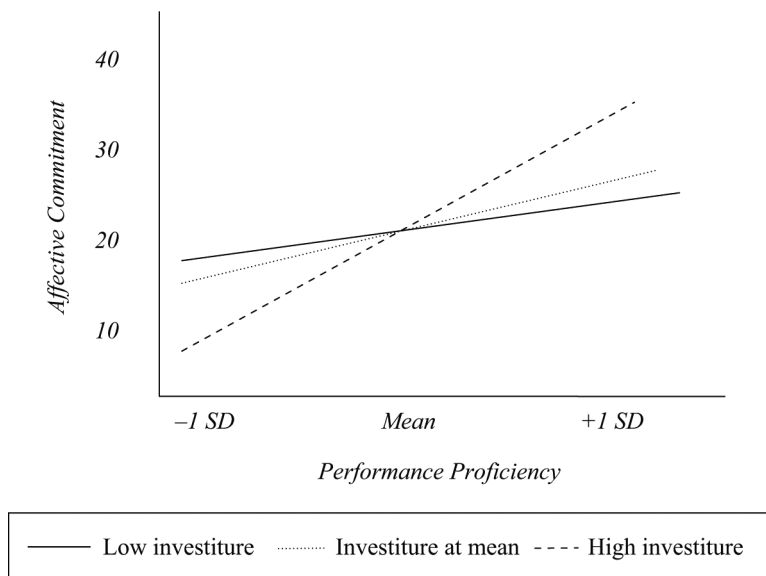
*Testing for the moderating effects of investiture-divestiture tactics (H5)*

The analysis indicated that only one interaction term added significantly to the prediction of affective commitment; that is, the positive effect of performance proficiency to new hire's commitment to the organization was found to be stronger under high investiture than under low investiture tactics ( $F$  change = 3.92,  $\Delta R^2 = 0.01$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) (Model 1). Contrary to expectation, there was no significant moderating effect of investiture tactics on the relationship between organizational goals/values and affective commitment ( $F$  change = 3.54,  $\Delta R^2 = 0.01$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). To further clarify the interaction effects of investiture-divestiture tactics on the relationship between performance proficiency and commitment, separate plots were drawn for individuals whose scores on the investiture-divestiture tactics were one standard deviation below the mean, at the mean, and one standard deviation above the mean (Aiken and West, 1991). The slopes (betas), which depicted the relationships between investiture-divestiture tactics, performance proficiency and affective commitment were positive and significant. As Figure 2 depicts, newcomers perceiving high investiture who report high levels of job-related information availability are more likely to report increased affective commitment, especially compared to newcomers perceiving low investiture in low job-related information situations. The above results provide partial support for H5.

*Testing for the moderating effects of serial-disjunctive tactics (H6)*

Hypothesis 6 stated that serial-disjunctive tactics would moderate the socialization content-commitment relation. This hypothesis was partly supported since:

- there was a significant moderating effect of serial tactics on the relationship between organizational goals/values and affective commitment ( $F$  change = 3.97,  $\Delta R^2 = 0.01$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); while



**Figure 2.** Effects of performance proficiency on affective commitment at different values of investiture tactics

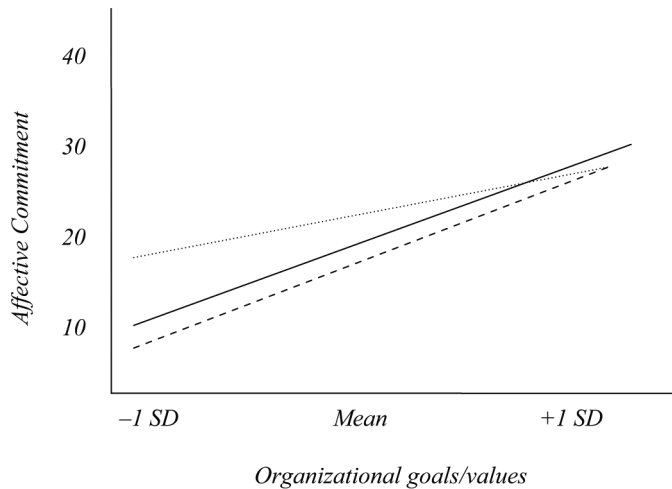
- the moderating effect of serial-disjunctive tactics on the relationship between performance proficiency and affective commitment was not significant ( $F$  change = 1.47,  $\Delta R^2 = 0.004$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

As Figure 3 indicates, newcomers perceiving high serial tactics who report high levels of goals/values-related information availability are more likely to report high levels of affective commitment, as compared to new hires who perceive restricted serial tactics in low goals/values-related information situations. These findings provide partial support for *H6*.

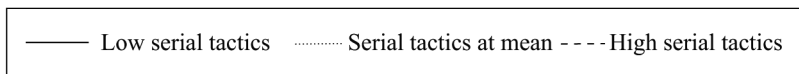
**Discussion**

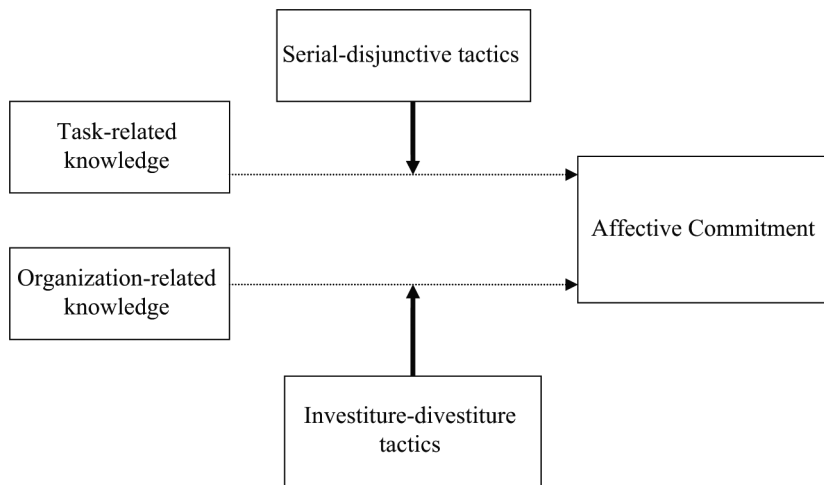
The purpose of this investigation was to examine whether social tactics moderated the relationship between socialization content and affective commitment. It also explored the link between social socialization tactics, socialization content (i.e. performance proficiency and goals/values) and newcomers’ affective commitment. The results of this study suggest that the revised conceptual model provided in Figure 4 serves as a framework for enhancing understanding of the development of newcomer affective commitment to their work organization. This model incorporates social socialization tactics with certain learning dimensions inherent in organizational socialization and in this sense addresses competing claims regarding the importance of the socialization tactics over content domains.

The results revealed three noteworthy points. First, social socialization tactics explained additional variance of new hires’ affective commitment above and beyond the effect of provision of task- and organization-related information; this finding suggests that, at least at the early stages of newcomers’ socialization, organizational socialization is not exclusively a learning process but also a work group integration



**Figure 3.** Effects of organizational goals/values on affective commitment at different values of serial tactics





**Figure 4.**  
Revised conceptual framework

process (through acceptance and provision of social support). The appreciation of the value of individuality has already been found to have positive relationship with organizational identification (e.g. Janssen and Huang, 2008), a concept similar to affective commitment. Similarly, positive effects of mentoring on newcomer adjustment have also been reported (Reichers, 1987; Chatman, 1991; Liden *et al.*, 2000), while positive communications with, and reinforcement by, mentors have been found to enhance acceptance of organizational values (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979).

The second point worth considering refers to the link between socialization content and affective commitment. The findings revealed that organization-related information acquisition explained incremental variance in affective commitment, above and beyond the effect of task-related information, which challenges existing studies which have reported that task-related information – as compared to other information types – is of primary importance to effective socialization especially at the early socialization stages (e.g. Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1992). Moreover, the present study demonstrated that task-related information significantly contributes to the development of affective commitment, which is at odds with other studies which have found either weak or no relationship between task mastery and commitment (e.g. Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1992; Bauer and Green, 1994; Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg, 2003); task-related information acquisition, and its subsequent task mastery, appear to lead to generation of an emotional link to the organization. In general, the bivariate correlations between the variables examined in this study were similar to the ones reported in the relevant studies (e.g. Allen and Meyer, 1990; Cooper-Thomas and Anderson, 2002; Saks *et al.*, 2007), which may be reflective of a possible similarity in characteristics of the present sample with the Northern-American samples on which most relevant studies have been based.

The third key point refers to the findings that there is a moderating effect of investiture-divestiture tactics on the relationship between task-related information acquisition and newcomers' affective commitment and serial-disjunctive tactics on the relationship between organization-related information acquisition and commitment. At this point, mention is needed to the fact that both moderator variables account for only

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1 percent in the amount of changed variance, which constitutes a small amount of explained variance. Nevertheless, extant research has suggested that there is a general difficulty in detecting moderating effects of even very small magnitudes; even in cases that moderation is detected, the observed moderating effects in published studies are small while it is also suggested that methodological and statistical artefacts often produce a downward bias in the observed effect sizes (Aguinis and Stone-Romero, 1997; Aguinis *et al.*, 2005). In regard to the size of moderating effects, Cohen *et al.* (2003) have postulated that even a small effect size can be theoretically and practically important. In this respect, it is argued here that in the context of the development of newcomers' affective commitment, at 1 percent increase in the strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in their work organization may translate into a wide range of organizationally desired outcomes as well as an increase of positive work attitudes. Moreover, given that vast amount of money invested in the development of socialization/induction programs for new hires, the function of certain socialization tactics as moderating variables explaining even a small amount of the content areas – affective commitment relationship is practically important since it may facilitate the attainment of corporate strategic goals.

In regard to the moderating role of investiture tactics, it seems that, through the affirmation of newcomers' characteristics, investiture tactics enable newcomers to gain an important sense of competence and confidence in performing their jobs, which, in turn, leads to increased affective commitment. This finding is in accordance with Saks and Ashforth's (1997b) study, which indicated that the more newcomers were able to keep their own attitudes/values, the greater the task mastery and organizational commitment. Affirmation of newcomers' values/goals was not found to have an impact on organization-related information. A tentative explanation for this finding could be that while, on the one hand, high investiture enhances the notion of self-confidence which in turn fosters more positive job attitudes, low investiture (i.e. divestiture) "rebuilds" the individual in the organization's image (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979) and thus fosters assimilation of the desired identity and enhances affective commitments. Owing to the absence of relevant research, this finding warrants further investigation.

As far as the moderating role of serial tactics on organizational goals/values – commitment relation is concerned, the findings suggest that, when providing structured relationships with experienced insiders, it becomes more likely that information regarding organizational goals/values (provided by the organization through other means such as training programs) will lead newcomers to be committed to their organization. Through social learning, mentoring gives opportunities to newcomers to have an enhanced understanding of the organization in order to interpret events and learn the appropriate attitudes and behavioural norms. Moreover, a mentor's presence entails communication of a common message about the organization's values to newcomers, which should lead to a greater sense of community and, in consequence, increase propensity of newcomers' acceptance and internalization of organizational values and norms. In this respect, Chatman's (1991) study has shown that newcomers who spent more social time with organizational mentors are more likely to internalize organizational values, while Ostroff and Kozlowski (1993) found that newcomers with mentors acquired more information about organizational issues. Moreover, Cable and Parsons (2001) found that

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interactions with experienced role models provide newcomers with exposure to, and understanding of, organizational norms and values, while the social support offered by mentors encourage acceptance and adoption of such values. The lack of a significant moderator effect for serial-disjunctive tactics on performance proficiency-commitment link indicated that the existence of a mentor or role model available to newcomers had no impact on the task-related information-commitment relation. This finding was not anticipated; for instance, while Morrison's (1993) study indicated that when being proactive, newcomers sought for normative and social information from colleagues, the findings of the present study advocate for the important role of mentoring for the acquisition and acceptance of organization-related information. However, consideration of the particular organizational content in which the present study was conducted may provide some insight into why this interaction was not observed. As it became clear from informal interviews conducted with organizational employees, new hires were immediately assigned to a particular branch of the organization and then assigned to a senior employee who takes the role of a mentor. However, since all new hires are entry-level employees (in terms of the tasks to be learned and performed), their mentors provide them with job-related information, but do not serve as role models in the sense that they perform different set of tasks; instead, other experienced colleagues who perform similar tasks to newcomers serve as examples to be imitated when acquiring job-related tasks. Moreover, due to the recent restructuring of the set of tasks performed by each role, mentors have not experience in performing the tasks in the way the new entry-level employees are expected to. For these reasons, it seems plausible to suggest that, newcomers in the particular organization acquire task-related information through the observation of others. On the contrary, and given the high respect – and compliance – to authority which is an important value in the particular organization, assigned mentors' role was crucial for the goals/values – commitment relationship. The moderating effect of serial-disjunctive tactics on the relationship between organization-related information acquisition and affective commitment needs also to be examined from a Greek cultural standpoint. At a national level, Greece has been found to be consistently high on the power distance dimension (e.g. Hofstede, 1980, 2001), which indicates a strong dependence of subordinates on their supervisors. In this respect, the important role that mentors play on organizational values – affective commitment relationship as found in the present study may be attributed to the normative pressure the latter exerts on newcomers which is higher high power distance cultures, like Greece.

Finally, the differential role of each social socialization tactic, as found by the different moderating effects on information acquisition-commitment relationship, suggests that investiture-divestiture and serial-disjunctive tactics should not be treated uniformly. It appears that investiture tactics draw mainly on personal identity affirmation processes while serial tactics draw more on social support mechanisms.

### **Limitations and implications of the study**

There are several limitations to the present study. First, this study relied on data collected from a single organization which raises concerns regarding generalization of findings; one cannot be sure that similar results would be found in other organizational settings. Replication of the study is needed in order to determine whether the present findings are unique to the particular organization or industry (i.e. services) or whether

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the pattern of relationships discovered appears in organizations with different characteristics. Similarly, this study needs to be replicated to other countries with similar or different cultural characteristics in order to explore whether similar patterns of relationships exist; this would be particularly important since organizations working outside a North American context and wishing to maximize commitment have scarce empirical evidence to guide them.

This study is a cross-sectional design, which makes it impossible to be conclusive on causal relationships among the variables studied. Future research needs to address this shortcoming by directly by manipulating social socialization tactics to determine whether the same moderation effects on learning content – commitment relationship occur. Similarly, the use of a longitudinal design would allow for the investigation of the direction of the association of the concepts examined.

Moreover, no variations in length of service were controlled in the present study; even though the differences in length of service were small (their tenure in the organization ranged from eight to nine weeks), they may have affected the direction of these results. In addition, as data were gathered from the same respondents at the same time and using the same collection method, the data is subject to common method variance which may have inflated the observed relationships; however, the differentiated patterns of results across survey variables (i.e. existence of weak correlations between certain variables) could suggest that relationships across the variables studied were not inflated. Future research needs to seek independence in the measurement of the constructs studied. Finally, since all constructs examined in the present study constituted internal psychological processes, it was assumed that they were better answered by the individuals who experienced the process; reliance on self-report data has generally been accepted in organizational socialization research (e.g. Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1992; Cooper-Thomas and Anderson, 2002).

The present piece of research examined newcomers at an early stage of their socialization (six to eight weeks after organizational entry). Even though this decision was driven by the assertion that the most interesting effects of socialization process occur early in its early period (e.g. Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1992), it may be the case that the relationship between socialization tactics and information content as far as newcomers' adjustment during the first few months of socialization changes. For this reason, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to later stages of employees' socialization in their work organization; thus, future research needs to examine whether the moderating effects of social socialization tactics persist over time.

The identification of social socialization tactics as moderators of the socialization content-commitment relation has both theoretical and practical implications. The results of this study extend extant research on organizational socialization by providing evidence that:

- investiture socialization tactics moderate the relationship between task-related information and newcomers' affective commitment; and
- serial socialization tactics moderate the relationship between organization-related information and newcomers' affective commitment.

In this respect, this study provides a theoretical framework to guide future research on organizational socialization and the development of organizational commitment in new hires.

The findings of the present paper are of practical importance since they inform organizations regarding the importance of social socialization tactics for newcomers' adjustment. In specific, the findings suggest that organizational attempts should not exclusively focus on provision of information through intense and formal training; rather, the contribution of task and goals/values information acquisition to newcomers' successful socialization (as exemplified by their commitment to the organization) is subject to the degree of acceptance of newcomer's personal identity as well as the availability of role models. Thus, a practical advice to organizational managers would be that equal effort needs to be put on encouraging a climate supportive to newcomers' personal identity as well as assigning experienced role models to the latter, since both tactics constitute pivotal ways in which organizational learning and integration occurs. Moreover, the results of the present study raise certain questions which need to be addressed so that practical advice can be provided to human resource managers. For instance, should the role model be somebody who has a senior position (e.g. manager) or somebody with previous experience with the particular job? Following the findings of the study, mentors with powerful positions in the organization serve as role models in regard to the communication of organization's tacit goals and values guiding behaviour; a suggestion here could be for organizations in which power and authority are highly valued, senior organizational members need to be assigned as mentors. However, the findings of the study suggest that, in cases where newcomers do not have the opportunity to observe other employees who perform the same task to their task, a mentor (role model) with previous experience with the particular role/ set of tasks performed is needed. In this sense, training established employees with relevant work experience in the art of enacting supportive communications with newcomers, clarifying the latter's roles as well as understanding how best to help newcomers is crucial for the successful socialization of the newcomers. Based on the results of this study, human resource managers need to examine specific strategies with respect to the operationalization of social socialization tactics. For instance, different types of socialization programs (e.g. formal mentoring program, social events, buddy system) could potentially make use of benefits associated with social tactics; the adoption of appropriate type will depend on the particularities of each organization. In this sense, the findings may enlighten human resource practitioners regarding the design of organizational socialization programs aiming for more affectively committed employees.

#### Note

1. In this sense, Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) classification of investiture as an individualized tactic is theoretically plausible, due to its emphasis on identity affirmation.

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