

# The relationship of anticipation to newcomer socialization processes and outcomes: A pilot study

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The construct of new employee anticipation was explored within a model of newcomer socialization. Measures of anticipation, socialization processes and outcomes obtained from new college graduates one year after graduation ( $N = 378$ ) suggested low-anticipation newcomers report lower job satisfaction, commitment, work motivation, job involvement and psychological success. Graduates who anticipated their jobs perceived organizations as being more receptive to them, jobs as more challenging, greater control over their work, more influence on the organization, and understood the culture better. In addition, graduates who had not anticipated their current jobs reported lower levels of satisfaction with the transition, greater stress and more difficulty with the transition. Implications for socialization research and human resource systems are discussed.

The process of obtaining productive employees is fundamental. Recent interactionist models (Ashford & Taylor, 1990; Jones, 1983; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Reichers, 1987) portray proactive participants in job candidate–newcomer transitions. Morrison (1993) found newcomer information-seeking behaviours related to subsequent socialization outcomes. Unfortunately, tests of these theories have been fragmented and incomplete (Feldman, 1986; Fisher, 1986). With the exception of realistic job previews, emphasis has been almost exclusively on what happens after newcomer entry (Rynes, 1992).

One would expect similar results for information-seeking behaviour prior to employment. Mowday, Porter & Steers' (1982) theory of organizational commitment contains an 'anticipation' stage describing applicants' pre-entry cognitions, motivation, affect, environmental circumstances and exploratory activities (Mowday *et al.*, 1982). Fisher (1986) also questioned whether newcomers' willingness to engage in socialization/adaptation processes (labelled 'socializability') before and after organizational entry might be a significant factor. Interactional models portray newcomers as proactive participants *after* entry. Similarly, 'proactive anticipation' may be important at pre-entry stages.

Mowday *et al.* (1982) predicted pre-entry attitudes and behaviours would affect socialization processes and outcomes. Stumpf & Hartman (1984) reported relationships

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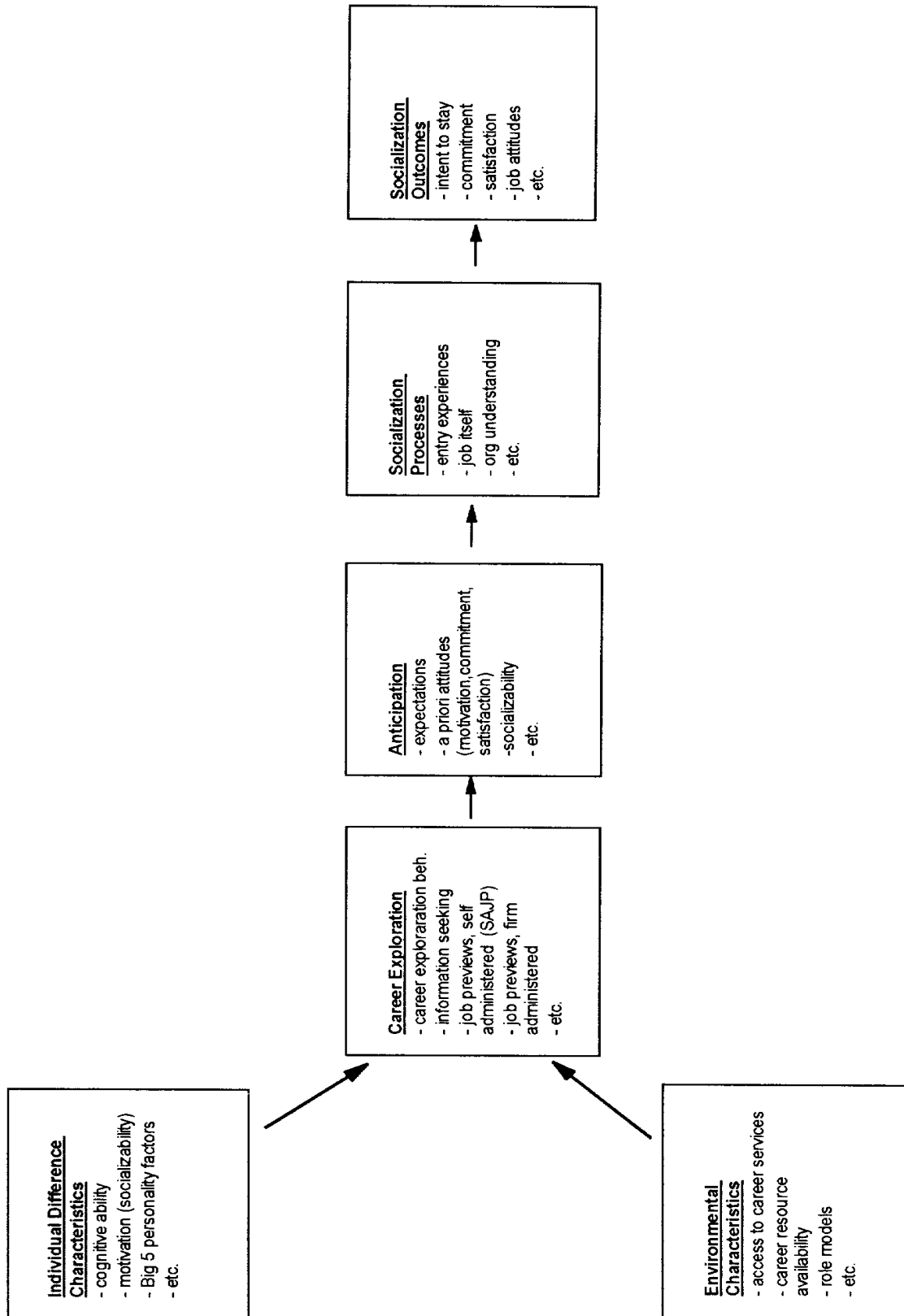


Figure 1. Conceptual model of pre-entry effects on socialization and outcomes.

between 'career exploratory behavior' (p. 308) two months prior to organizational entry and socialization processes, job attitudes and turnover intentions two to nine months after organizational entry. Realistic job previews affect newcomer anticipation in new jobs and influence a variety of outcomes (Premack & Wanous, 1985).

Given a perceived non-zero probability of a job offer and acceptance, applicants' job *anticipation* will be conceptually defined as global cognitive and affective orientation toward a job caused by individual differences and environmental circumstances. Anticipation is expected to influence newcomer enthusiasm to participate in socialization processes and subsequent socialization outcomes. Anticipating a career-appropriate job that is subsequently obtained should motivate newcomer participation in organizational socialization processes and yield positive outcomes. Figure 1 adapted these relationships from Mowday *et al.*'s (1982) model and existing empirical findings.

The primary purpose of this pilot study was to examine relationships between 'anticipation' and subsequent socialization processes and outcomes. This is a partial test of the model in Fig. 1 in that only relationships between anticipation and socialization are examined.

## Method

### *Sample*

Data for this study were collected from a survey instrument sent to all spring 1990 bachelor's graduates from a large state university ( $N = 2214$ ). Two mailings completed 12 months after graduation yielded 846 responses (38.2 per cent). Of 846 total respondents, 548 or 65.3 per cent were in a career-appropriate position (not unemployed or attending graduate school). Only graduates indicating they were employed in a business, professional services, or other for-profit organization were used ( $N = 378$ , 69 per cent of career-appropriate pool). Other employers (e.g. education, government and other non-profit) were excluded to control for the possibility that anticipation influence might differ by organizational type. The final sample consisted of 378 bachelor's graduates employed in career-appropriate business positions.

### *Item development process*

No instruments could be located measuring perceptions of socialization process, however existing attitude scales contain items that could be modified to focus on socialization processes. Items were obtained from two sources: existing measurement scales and content analysis of 125 interviews with new employees (one year experience or less), direct supervisors of employees and senior executives from 12 organizations hiring significant numbers of new employees. Detailed description of these interviews, items and factor analysis results are available from the authors.

### *Socialization process measures*

Socialization process was conceived in terms of three newcomer perceptions of their new environment, i.e. the job, employer and the organizational entry process.

*Perceptions of organizational entry experiences.* Sixteen original items were developed to tap perceptions of organizational entry experiences. Examples included perceptions of firms' receptivity to new employees and difficulties adapting to new jobs.

*Job perceptions.* Nineteen items tapped job characteristic constructs identified in the literature (Ashford & Cummings, 1985; Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Hall & Lawler, 1970; Mabey, 1986; Rabinowitz & Hall, 1981;

Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970). Five items tapping perceived job challenge, fit and discretion were adapted from Hall & Lawler (1970). Four role ambiguity items and single items tapping perceptions of feedback and clarity of job competency requirements were adapted from Ashford & Cummings (1985). Construct definitions found in the literature and interview content analysis suggested seven additional items.

*Organizational understanding.* Thirteen original items tapped newcomer's perceptions of how well they understood the firm. Items focused on newcomer knowledge of culture and informal structure.

#### *Socialization outcome measures*

Seven job attitudes were identified from interview content analyses and the socialization literature as important outcomes of the socialization process. Hackman & Oldham's (1975) three-item short form measured job satisfaction ( $\alpha = .85$ ). Mowday, Steers & Porter's (1979) nine-item OCQ short form measured commitment ( $\alpha = .91$ ). Hackman & Lawler's (1971) three-item scale measured internal work motivation ( $\alpha = .78$ ). A four-item version of Lodhal & Kejner's (1965) 20-item scale measured job involvement ( $\alpha = .78$ , Ashford & Cummings, 1985). Blau's (1988) three-item scale measured intent-to-quit ( $\alpha = .91$ , Mobley, 1977). Hall, Goodale, Rabinowitz & Morgan's (1978) six-item scale measured psychological success ( $\alpha = .79$ ). Two items from Mowday *et al.* (1979) measured post-decision dissonance ( $\alpha = .87$ ).

#### *Operationalization of anticipation*

Newcomer's anticipation was measured with a single item asking if graduates were 'employed in a position appropriate for starting my career' versus 'employed in a position appropriate for starting my career, *but not what I had anticipated having*'. This distinction is not what graduates *wanted* or hoped for, which might be subject to bias or recall error, but what graduates had *anticipated* having.

#### *Demographic data*

Demographic questions obtained information on number of employees, newcomer age, sex, race, undergraduate major, undergraduate GPA and prior employment experience.

#### *Analyses*

Anticipation and non-anticipation groups were compared on demographic responses. Second, exploratory factor analyses identified meaningful item groupings capturing perceptual dimensions of newcomer socialization. ANOVA and ANCOVA tested whether anticipation/non-anticipation groups differed on socialization perceptions and outcomes.

## Results

#### *Descriptive statistics*

Graduates averaged 10.5 months employment at their current organization, were 57.1 per cent male, 94.4 per cent white, and 36.8 per cent business and 25.7 per cent engineering graduates with GPAs between 2.0 and 3.0 (59.3 per cent). Approximately two-thirds of the sample ( $N = 251$ ) anticipated their current job before graduation. Chi-square and *t* tests found significant differences in grade point average, previous professional work experience, length of employment and number of organizations worked for.

#### *Psychometric characteristics*

Three common factor analyses analysed items tapping newcomer (1) perceptions of organizational entry experiences, (2) job entry perceptions, and (3) organizational under-

standing. Loadings obtained from varimax rotation of factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 suggested interpretable simple structures. Items developed uniquely for this study resulting in exceptionally clean loadings (average loading greater than .50 on the major factor and less than .20 on all other factors).

Table 1 reports descriptive statistics, correlations and internal consistency estimates for unit weighted sums of items loading on each factor. Adaptation difficulty ( $\alpha = .57$ ), stress ( $\alpha = .54$ ), mutual influence ( $\alpha = .42$ ), and informal organization ( $\alpha = .26$ ) display marginal to unacceptable levels of reliability, though this is expected with new items and instructional sets (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Many investigators reported low reliabilities when studying newcomer questionnaire responses, which may be due to combinations of random measurement error and instability in latent constructs (i.e. see Schaubroeck & Green's, 1988, discussion of gamma change in organizational entry processes). All low reliability scales contained two or three items, suggesting future development efforts which generate more items might enhance conceptual clarity and reliability. Other scales displayed adequate to good reliabilities (.61 to .91, mean = .71).

Means, standard deviations and bivariate correlations for scales reported in Table 1 suggest common method variance did not yield ubiquitous low-to-moderate correlations. For example, transition satisfaction ranged in correlation from  $-.610$  with post-decision dissonance, to  $.151$  with job involvement, to  $.652$  with job satisfaction.

### *Research questions*

Table 2 reports significant differences between anticipation/non-anticipation groups on eight of 13 scales in predicted directions. Graduates who anticipated current jobs perceived more organizational receptivity, job challenge, work control, organizational influence and understanding of the culture. Graduates who had not anticipated current jobs reported more transition dissatisfaction, stress and difficulty with the transition.

Control variables had significant main effects in only a few instances and no significant interaction effects. Grade point average was significant for transition satisfaction and mutual influence. Months employed significantly contributed to the prediction of flexibility while number of organizations worked for significantly predicted job clarity. Months of previous work experience predicted organization receptivity and job challenge. These results suggest newcomer pre-entry anticipation predicts aspects of newcomer socialization better than measures of human capital (GPA and prior experience).

Table 3 reports analyses of covariance using job attitudes as dependent variables. Significant differences occurred between anticipation/non-anticipation groups on all scales except job involvement. The 'anticipated' group reported higher job satisfaction, commitment, internal work motivation and psychological success, lower post-decision dissonance, and intent to quit.

Grade point average main effects were significant for commitment and intent to quit. Interaction effects with grade point average were significant for four job attitudes: job satisfaction, commitment, intent to quit and post-decision dissonance. Meaningful interactions between demographic variables and anticipation/non-anticipation increased effect sizes when predicting commitment ( $\Delta\bar{w} = .1947$ ), post-decision dissonance ( $\Delta\bar{w} = .1777$ ), intent to quit ( $\Delta\bar{w} = .1645$ ), and job satisfaction ( $\Delta\bar{w} = .1114$ ). Months employed and previous work experience had no significant main covariate effects. Number of jobs held

**Table 1.** Correlations for socialization process and outcome measures

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	
1. Organization receptivity	3.47	.74	.65																				
2. Adaptation difficulty	3.34	.78	-.085	.57																			
3. Acceptance	3.85	.61	.343	.238	.68																		
4. Transition satisfaction	4.05	.71	.383	.198	.356	.61																	
5. Flexibility	3.87	.62	.236	-.011	.164	.170	---																
6. Stress	3.24	.80	.179	.427	.249	.233	-.003	.51															
7. Job challenge	3.67	.68	.381	-.113	.269	.457	.106	-.061	.80														
8. Job clarity	3.80	.56	.294	.200	.468	.353	.102	-.219	.270	.84													
9. Control	3.67	.76	.477	-.191	.308	.495	.135	-.267	.519	.306	.68												
10. Mutual influence	3.72	.80	.291	-.178	.307	.308	.128	-.086	.271	.348	.332	.42											
11. Organizational savvy	3.99	.53	.342	-.184	.459	.405	.177	-.164	.256	.660	.386	.415	.73										
12. Culture understanding	3.32	.76	.401	-.148	.310	.394	.101	.329	.422	.386	.403	.375	.435	.68									
13. Informal organization	3.91	.58	.152	-.105	.285	.224	.079	.076	.102	.322	.207	.331	.363	.220	.26								
14. Job satisfaction	3.61	1.02	.412	-.222	.306	.652	.089	-.263	.688	.349	.571	.333	.365	.517	.167	.85							
15. Org. commitment	3.11	.82	.447	-.208	.297	.586	.155	-.176	.553	.389	.546	.407	.445	.562	.189	.783	.91						
16. Internal work motivation	4.20	.62	.307	-.041	.267	.386	.118	.065	.403	.244	.427	.357	.289	.260	.181	.473	.483	.78					
17. Job involvement	2.41	.79	.155	-.049	.065	.151	.099	.061	.309	.064	.263	.236	.090	.196	.087	.321	.455	.376	.78				
18. Inherent to quit	2.58	1.25	-.314	.187	-.226	-.517	-.057	.210	-.557	.274	-.449	-.235	-.294	-.474	-.119	-.851	-.743	-.365	-.310	.91			
19. Psychological success	3.76	.60	.386	-.268	.397	.509	.089	-.262	.486	.487	.463	.387	.526	.383	.310	.608	.564	.492	.323	.461	.79		
20. Post-decision dissonance	2.05	.99	-.400	.147	-.260	-.610	-.075	.192	-.536	.321	-.534	-.227	-.314	-.431	-.097	-.745	-.730	-.387	-.272	.691	-.533	.87	

Note. Cronbach's alpha reliabilities are shown on the diagonal.

Table 2. Means and analysis of variance for anticipation with socialization processes

Scale	Anticipated		Not anticipated		Anticipated/ not anticipated		GPA		Months employed		No. of jobs		Work exper.		$\omega^2$
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	p	p	p	p	p	p	p			
Organization receptivity	3.54	.72	3.34	.75	5.443	.020	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.004	.168	
Adaptation difficulty	3.26	.79	3.50	.73	7.372	.007	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.203	
Transition satisfaction	4.19	.58	3.78	.85	31.955	.032	.032	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.313	
Stress	3.15	.79	3.42	.79	7.920	.005	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.121	
Challenge	3.91	.69	3.20	.87	45.899	.001	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.025	.355	
Control	3.80	.70	3.42	.81	20.660	.001	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.249	
Mutual influence	3.78	.77	3.59	.85	5.679	.018	.048	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.150	
Culture understanding	3.43	.72	3.11	.76	23.652	.001	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.272	
Organizational savvy	4.01	.52	3.98	.55	2.397	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.079	
Clarity	3.81	.55	3.79	.58	2.641	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.011	n.s.	n.s.	.162	
Flexibility	3.89	.64	3.84	.60	.395	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.028	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.081	
Acceptance	3.88	.60	3.79	.63	1.169	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.001	
Informal organization	3.91	.59	3.93	.56	1.277	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.114	

<sup>a</sup>No interactions were significant.

Table 3. Means and analysis of variance for anticipation with job attitudes

Scale	Anticipated		Not anticipated		Anticipated/ not anticipated		GPA		Antic × GPA		Months employed		No. of jobs exper.		$\bar{\omega}$	$\Delta\bar{\omega}^c$
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	p	p	p	p	p	p	p	p			
Job satisfaction	3.88	.85	3.08	1.10	62.600	.001	n.s.	.039	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.402	.1114	
Commitment	3.57	.76	3.10	.84	46.021	.001	.017	.004	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.380	.1947	
Internal work motivation	4.28	.56	4.05	.70	6.462	.011	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.020	n.s.	n.s.	.181	—	
Job involvement	2.48	.77	2.28	.82	1.974	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.000	—	
Intent to quit	2.29	1.10	3.16	1.34	52.574	.001	.044	.002	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.399	.1645	
Psychological success	3.86	.57	3.56	.61	22.566	.001	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.004	n.s.	n.s.	.268	—	
Post-decision dissonance	1.76	.76	2.63	1.14	87.549	.001	n.s.	.001	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	.474	.1777	

<sup>c</sup>Change in  $\bar{\omega}$  due to inclusion of Antic × GPA interaction.



had significant effects for internal work motivation and psychological success ( $\Delta\bar{w}$  of .1095 and .1378, respectively).

### Discussion

Anticipating one's job prior to employment has a strong relationship with socialization processes and outcomes. Specifically, non-anticipatory newcomers were significantly less satisfied with their jobs, committed to the organization, internally motivated to work and psychologically successful. They also reported greater post-decision dissonance and higher intent to quit. It is rather striking that such significant and large differences were found on so many critical job attitude scales. Newcomer anticipation may have a far-reaching effect on socialization outcomes.

Socialization process results suggest a similar pattern. Differences in socialization process perceptions were not as large as those found for socialization outcomes, though significant differences were found on eight of 13 socialization process scales. Non-anticipatory graduates had difficulty adapting, greater stress, less favourable impressions of the organization and less organizational learning. The largest difference was found for job challenge.

Interestingly, non-anticipators in both the highest grade point average group (3.5–4.0) and the lowest (2.0–2.49) had markedly lower job satisfaction and commitment, higher intent to quit and post-decision dissonance. The low-grade point/non-anticipation group may have had fewer job choices, unrealistic expectations, and greater difficulty in securing jobs of choice, leading to more disappointment. The low-grade point/anticipation group may have felt extremely lucky to get the job they had anticipated and were therefore more satisfied and committed and less likely to leave. The high-grade point/non-anticipation group may have been disappointed to not receive job offers given their academic success.

Differences in means on the job attitude scales are large, particularly differences in 'intent to quit'. Hiring graduates for whom the job was not actively contemplated prior to employment may be risky. Bowen (1982) noted dissatisfied stayers may be costly due to other types of on-the-job withdrawal (e.g. absenteeism) and diverting energy to look for other employment. Organization socialization efforts during the first year appear not to have been equally successful for anticipators and non-anticipators. Richer measures of processes and substance of 'anticipation' may assist in selecting candidates most likely to adapt and not turn over.

The major contribution of the current effort is in demonstrating that even a coarse, dichotomous operationalization of anticipation exhibited a vigorous relationship with socialization processes and outcomes. Clearly, enhanced understanding of anticipation will come from additional item development and data collection taken at multiple points in time. Investigators need to examine *how* pre-entry variables (e.g. anticipation, individual difference characteristics, or environmental circumstances) influence socialization processes and outcomes. Implications for human resource interventions in selection, orientation and training would be forthcoming.

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