

Specific Onboarding Practices for the Socialization of New Employees

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Onboarding is frequently used by organizations to help socialize newcomers, but little research has focused on the specific onboarding practices organizations use or the effectiveness of those practices in facilitating newcomer adjustment. To begin addressing this gap, this study explores specific onboarding practices and evaluates the Inform-Welcome-Guide framework of onboarding practices. Data are presented from representatives of 10 organizations regarding what onboarding practices they offer and how those practices are offered. Three hundred seventy-three new employees from those same 10 organizations also shared their perceptions of the practices they experienced, when those practices were experienced, and the perceived helpfulness of those practices. Lastly, the extent to which new employees were socialization was assessed. Several research questions and hypotheses among these variables were examined, and most of the hypotheses supported. Implications of these findings for future research and practice are discussed.

1. Introduction

The widespread use of onboarding programs (e.g., Holton, 2001; Survey findings, 2011) suggests that most organizations believe onboarding to be an important component of the newcomer experience and effective in helping to socialize new employees. We define onboarding as 'formal and informal practices, programs, and policies enacted or engaged in by an organization or its agents to facilitate newcomer adjustment' (Klein & Polin, 2012, p. 268). Onboarding is used by organizations to expedite socialization, which we define as the learning and adjustment process by which individuals assume an organizational role that fits the needs of both the individual and the organization (Chao, 2012; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Prior empirical research has documented many positive outcomes resulting from effective socialization for both organizations and new employees (e.g., better role clarity, self-efficacy, performance, retention, perceived fit, satisfaction, salary growth) (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007; Cable & Parsons, 2001;

Fang, Duffy, & Shaw, 2011). From a human capital perspective, the sooner and the extent to which newcomers can learn firm specific knowledge, understand the culture, and recognize other unique aspects of the organization, the sooner and the extent to which they can contribute to the success and competitive advantage of the organization (Coff & Kryscynski, 2011).

Less clear in the literature is what specific onboarding practices (e.g., being assigned a 'buddy', receiving a facility tour) best facilitate learning and socialization. Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) socialization tactics (e.g., Bauer et al., 2007) have been studied extensively, but these tactics (e.g., formal or informal, fixed or variable) represent broad strategies for socializing newcomers and do not inform the effectiveness of specific practices, programs, or policies. Specific alternative recruitment sources, assessment methods, training methods, pay systems, and so forth, are examined in applied psychology and human resource (HR) management research, but the specific onboarding practices organizations use to help newcomers adjust are rarely studied. With the exception of

formal orientation training (e.g., Fan & Wanous, 2008; Klein & Weaver, 2000; Wesson & Gogus, 2005), little research exists regarding the impact, most appropriate structure, or timing of onboarding programs, despite the ubiquity of such activities. As a result, we know little about the onboarding practices that are most effective, or how and when these activities should occur during this pivotal time in the employment relationship.

This study represents an initial step toward an improved understanding of specific onboarding practices and their impact on socialization. We do so by exploring the specific onboarding practices offered by a small set of organizations. It is not our intent to depict the extent to which specific onboarding practices are used by organizations beyond our sample, as a much larger and representative sample would be required. In addition to this organizational perspective, we also investigate whether and how newcomers experience these activities, what practices newcomers find most helpful, and how the nature and timing of these practices contribute to newcomer socialization. This work adds to the socialization literature by examining specific onboarding practices rather than broad tactics or a single program. By exploring the commonly used yet under-researched HR practice of onboarding, this study also provides an initial test of three typologies presented by Klein and Heuser (2008) concerning (1) a categorization of onboarding practices, (2) relevant time frames for providing onboarding activities, and (3) an expanded socialization content framework. We begin by providing a brief summary of prior onboarding research and an overview of these typologies. We then articulate the examined research questions and hypotheses, present our methodology and results, and conclude with implications, limitations, and future research directions.

2. Onboarding and socialization

There is some confusion in the literature around the distinctiveness of onboarding and socialization (Klein & Polin, 2012). Some authors equate the two (e.g., Bauer & Erdogan, 2010), but we view them as separate constructs based on key conceptual differences reflected in the previously provided definitions. For example, socialization is something that occurs within the individual, whereas onboarding refers to efforts by the organization to facilitate socialization. In addition, onboarding occurs when a member first joins an organization, whereas socialization is a continual process that extends throughout an individual's tenure with an organization and across organizations throughout one's career (Chao, 2012; Feldman, 1989; Van Maanen, 1976). Another distinction is that individuals can be proactive in their socialization, and considerable research exists concerning the proactive behaviors of newcomers (see Cooper-Thomas & Burke,

2012). An individual's activities and plans to help facilitate their own socialization – sometimes referred to as transition activities (Klein & Polin, 2012) – are, however, distinct from the onboarding policies, practices, and programs put in place by organizations or their agents (e.g., supervisors, leaders, coworkers, administrative assistants, mentors, HR representatives).

2.1. Socialization research

Research on organizational socialization can be divided into four relatively distinct aspects of the phenomenon: socialization stages, actors, tactics, and content. First, much of the early socialization research centered on identifying the stages through which newcomers progress (e.g., Buchanan, 1974; Feldman, 1976; Wanous, 1992). More recently, Klein and Heuser (2008) introduced a temporal framework for newcomer learning consisting of eight sequential time periods during which onboarding activities may occur. These time periods range from initial recruitment through the first year of employment.

A second perspective concerns the actors in the socialization process, namely the newcomer themselves and other socialization agents. Socialization agents, defined above, offer information, provide resources, and otherwise assist newcomers during their acculturation (Ashforth, 2001; Morrison, 2002b). The newcomer's role is to proactively make sense of their new environment, seek out needed information, and reduce the uncertainty that characterizes the socialization process (Louis, 1980). Proactive behavior has been identified as one of the more important variables to consider in organizational socialization research (Cooper-Thomas & Burke, 2012; Saks & Ashforth, 1997) because of its positive effects on socialization.

A third perspective has centered on the approach organizations take to help socialize newcomers. The research on Van Maanen and Schein's (1979) socialization tactics, summarized in a meta-analysis by Bauer et al. (2007), falls within this category. Research on specific onboarding practices, like orientation training, also falls within this perspective. As noted above, the distinction can be made between the onboarding practices put in place by organizations or their agents, and the transition activities initiated by newcomers to facilitate their own socialization. This study focuses on onboarding practices rather than transition activities.

Finally, socialization research has centered on understanding the content that needs to be learned during socialization (e.g., Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994; Feldman, 1976; Fisher, 1986). In this category, Klein and Heuser (2008) introduced an expanded typology of content dimensions to address criticisms of earlier frameworks. Specifically, this expanded typology separated dimensions that had previously been combined (e.g., working and social relationships; goals and values)

and added additional dimensions (e.g., rules and policies) to more comprehensively capture what new hires need to learn. Assessing the degree to which a newcomer has mastered these content dimensions provides an index of the extent to which an individual is socialized. This measure of how well newcomers are socialized provides a direct, proximal outcome against which the effectiveness of onboarding activities can be evaluated.

2.2. Onboarding practices

Organizations implement specific onboarding practices to (a) reduce the inevitable uncertainty and anxiety newcomers experience, (b) help them make sense of their new environment, and (c) provide them with the necessary tangible (e.g., explicit knowledge) and intangible (e.g., relationships) resources to become fully functioning organizational members effective in their new role (Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2005; Fang et al., 2011; Klein & Weaver, 2000; Louis, 1980; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 2002a; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Little systematic research exists concerning the extent to which specific onboarding practices achieve these desired and often assumed outcomes. Klein and Heuser (2008) articulated the need to systematically study the specific practices organizations use to facilitate new employee socialization, and presented a framework to organize these practices. Based on a review of the academic and practitioner literatures, they suggested organizing the wide variety of onboarding practices, programs, and policies based on the primary aim or purpose of the activity. Klein and Heuser (2008) concluded that there are three such primary purposes – practices that help *inform* the newcomer, those that *welcome* the newcomer, and those that *guide* the newcomer – thus, constituting the Inform-Welcome-Guide (IWG) framework.

The first category, *inform*, ‘includes all efforts to provide information, materials, and experiences’ (Klein & Heuser, 2008, p. 318) aimed at helping newcomers learn what they need to know to adjust successfully. Because this category includes a wide array of specific practices, it is divided into three subcategories: communication, resources, and training. The *communication* subcategory includes both one-way messages to newcomers (e.g., a welcome letter) and opportunities for two-way dialogue (e.g., a scheduled call). The *resources* subcategory captures practices beyond direct communications that make resources available to new employees to facilitate their adjustment (e.g., a new hire FAQ on the company Intranet). The *training* subcategory encompasses planned programs aimed at facilitating the systematic acquisition of knowledge and skills a newcomer may need to learn (e.g., orientation training). The second category, *welcome*, includes activities with the goal of celebrating the new employee, expressing appreciation that they joined the

organization, and providing opportunities for new hires to meet other organizational members (e.g., a welcome lunch). Practices in this category address the emotional needs of newcomers (Klein & Polin, 2012) and help them develop social capital.

Finally, the *guide* category includes those practices aimed at providing new hires with active, direct assistance (e.g., an assigned buddy) to help them navigate the transition from a naive outsider to an effective insider. There is some evidence suggesting that organizations differentially onboard different types of employees. For example, Fondas and Wiersema, (1997) found that the broad socialization tactics used in onboarding executives is often different (more likely to be informal, nonsequential, and individual) from the onboarding practices used for lower level positions. As another example, a recent descriptive survey of onboarding practices conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), found that slightly less than half of the organizations surveyed approach onboarding differently for entry, mid-, and senior level employees (Survey findings, 2011). That survey found differences in approach were more likely for management versus nonmanagement positions, the type of job, and employment status. Organizational characteristics (e.g., size, strategy) can also be expected to influence how new employees are onboarded. We recognize that organizational, job, and even individual characteristics may influence the relative importance of different IWG categories in socializing new employees, as well as the frequency of use and relative effectiveness of some specific onboarding practices. However, the IWG categories were designed to be applicable across all organizations, jobs, and contexts (Klein & Heuser, 2008). It is also beyond the scope of this initial test of the IWG framework to identify exactly what IWG categories, or specific practices within those categories, are most effective in particular situations.

3. Research questions and hypotheses

Klein and Polin (2012) noted the dearth of information about the onboarding practices used by organizations, outside of occasional examples presented in the practitioner literature of companies thought to do a good job with onboarding. The aforementioned SHRM survey found that most companies provide relatively few formal onboarding practices (Survey findings, 2011). The first aim of this study is to delve deeper in exploring, among a small set of participating organizations, the onboarding practices organizations are using, how and when those practices are occurring, the perceived helpfulness of those practices, and their effects on newcomer socialization. Given our sample, our intent is to begin to understand patterns and relationships, rather than to provide normative data. Furthermore, we are not attempting to fully validate the IWG framework or a measure corresponding

to that framework. The purpose of this study is to provide an initial test of the usefulness and feasibility of the taxonomy.

Toward this aim, we first present a set of research questions aimed at summarizing the onboarding activities of our participating organizations. In doing so, we explore both what companies are offering and what new hires are experiencing. In terms of practices organizations are offering, we explore whether specific practices reflecting the IWG framework are offered and if so, whether they are required or encouraged. From the new employee's perspective, we explore whether each practice was experienced, and if so, when it occurred and whether it occurred formally or informally. In addressing these research questions, we test the viability of two of the typologies presented by Klein and Heuser (2008). Specifically, we examine whether the proposed IWG categories of onboarding practices, as well as the typology of relevant time frames suggested by Klein and Heuser, are meaningful and useful ways to organize the specific onboarding practices and the temporality of those practices.

Research Question #1: What types of practices are participating organizations using to onboard their new employees? What types of practices do new employees recall experiencing during their onboarding experience?

Research Question #2: To what extent are onboarding practices required by participating organizations? To what extent are onboarding practices experienced formally versus informally by new employees?

Research Question #3: When are onboarding practices occurring as recalled by new employees?

In a fourth research question, we explore how helpful newcomers find onboarding activities (both specific practices and in terms of the IWG categories) in aiding their adjustment. The perceived helpfulness of an onboarding practice is not the same as the actual effectiveness of that practice in facilitating the mastery of socialization content, performance, retention, or other desired onboarding outcomes. A new employee could, for example, believe a particular practice was helpful even though it did not actually aid them in becoming more socialized. Perceived helpfulness is, then, an initial indicator analogous to reaction measures used in evaluating training programs. Such assessments are still valuable, however, given that practices not seen as beneficial are unlikely to be continued. In addition, reaction measures have been shown to relate to other outcomes of interest (e.g., Sitzmann, Brown, Casper, & Zimmerman, 2008). This is presented as a research question because there is currently limited theory or evidence on which to base predictions that certain specific practices or categories of practices will be universally perceived as more helpful than others. Evidence does, however, suggest that not all onboarding activities are

viewed favorably, as some surveys (e.g., Snell, 2006) report employees expressing low levels of satisfaction with their onboarding experience.

Research Question #4: How helpful do new employees view the onboarding practices they experience?

Next, we identify the six hypotheses tested in this study. The first concerns the potential discrepancy between intended onboarding practices and what newcomers actually experience. The strategic HR literature recognizes the gap that can occur between intended and implemented HR practices (Kramar, 1992; Wright & Boswell, 2002). There are several potential reasons for this discrepancy including (a) policies not being clearly communicated, (b) guidelines, materials, or resources needed to implement those policies not being provided, or (c) managers simply choosing not to implement a practice. Because of the probability of such discrepancies, we assess both the onboarding practices that should be occurring (as reported by a representative from the HR Department familiar with policies and the intended practices), as well as the onboarding practices new hires recall experiencing. Congruence between these two sources is not expected given the disconnect between intended and implemented HR practices documented elsewhere (e.g., Khilji & Wang, 2006; Storey, 1992; Woodrow & Guest, 2014). Furthermore, a direction to this discrepancy is not predicted because there are reasons for it to occur in either direction. The reasons for this discrepancy outlined above all suggest that employees should report experiencing onboarding practices less often than companies report them being offered. However, it is also conceivable that new employees could report onboarding practices occurring that their organization does not report offering due to individual managers or coworkers implementing practices not enacted by the organization.

Hypothesis 1: There will be a discrepancy between onboarding practices reported as occurring by organizations and recalled as experienced by new employees.

Our next hypothesis is that providing/experiencing a greater number of onboarding practices will lead to greater mastery of socialization content (Chao et al., 1994; Klein & Heuser, 2008). The primary theories used to explain organizational socialization suggest that more onboarding practices should result in greater socialization. For example, uncertainty reduction theory is based on the need of individuals to minimize ambiguity. In onboarding contexts, this implies the need to increase the predictability of one's new environment. Providing more information, assistance, experiences, and opportunities to interact with organizational members all help reduce uncertainty and facilitate sensemaking. The more onboarding practices offered/experienced, the more likely it is that newcomers will have their questions answered and learn how things are done in their new

organization. Other theories used to explain how newcomers reduce uncertainty and form attachments, such as social exchange and social identity (Chao, 2012), also support the notion that offering more onboarding practices should result in more opportunities to identify key individuals, thereby facilitating the establishment of both work and friendship networks. Furthermore, Klein and Polin (2012) noted that a range of onboarding practices is likely required to fully address the needs of newcomers, and offering more practices increases the likelihood of those needs being met. This 'more is better' prediction may seem obvious, but it may alternatively be the case that there are diminishing returns in offering additional practices beyond a certain number of effective activities. Furthermore, this relationship has not yet been demonstrated, and testing this assumption is a reasonable first step.

Hypothesis 2a: The number of onboarding practices offered by an organization will be positively related to the extent to which new employees are socialized.

Hypothesis 2b: The number of onboarding practices experienced by new employees will be positively related to the extent to which these new employees are socialized.

There are competing views on whether training and development programs are most effective when they are voluntary versus required. On one hand, self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) would suggest that giving people control and choice is likely to increase intrinsic motivation, meaning that individuals would seek to get the most out of the programs in which they have volitionally engaged. On the other hand, making a program or activity mandatory signals to employees and managers that the program is important. This increases the likelihood that the activity will occur, be attended, and be taken seriously. Informal activities are playing an increasingly important role in learning (Noe, Marand, & Klein, 2014; Tannenbaum, Beard, McNall, & Salas, 2010), but little research has examined whether activities offered informally instead of formally serve a similar signaling function, resulting in potentially reduced effectiveness. In addition, a required or formal activity is likely to be more carefully planned and implemented, be given more resources, and be updated more frequently than an optional or informal activity. Based on this rationale and evidence from the training literature (e.g., Baldwin, & Magjuka, 1991) that required programs are taken more seriously, we predict that required and formal onboarding practices will be viewed as more helpful by newcomers and be associated with greater socialization.

Hypothesis 3a: The extent to which new employees' onboarding experiences are required will be positively related to the extent to which new employees are socialized.

Hypothesis 3b: The extent to which new employees' onboarding experiences are formal will be positively related to the extent to which new employees are socialized.

Hypothesis 4a: Onboarding practices that are required by organizations will be perceived as more helpful by new employees compared to practices that are encouraged.

Hypothesis 4b: Onboarding practices that are experienced formally by new employees will be perceived as more helpful by those new employees compared to practices that are experienced informally.

Our final hypotheses concern the effects of timing on onboarding practices. It is widely recognized that socialization is an ongoing process with the socialization of a new hire occurring over several months (Ashforth, 2012; Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Rubenstein, & Song, 2013). Yet some research also suggests that socialization occurs fairly rapidly after entry, with the resulting adjustment largely stable (e.g., Bauer & Green, 1998; Cooper-Thomas & Anderson, 2005). Even if socialization does occur rapidly, there are still important temporal distinctions that can be made and, as noted by Klein and Heuser (2008), we currently do not have a good understanding of the most advantageous timing of different practices. Klein and Heuser further suggested that new hires will be most receptive to learning content that relates to their 'current concerns' (Klinger, 1975) and when they perceive a strong need for that learning (e.g., Smith-Jentsch, Jentsch, Payne, & Salas, 1996). For an onboarding practice to be perceived as helpful or to actually facilitate the learning required for socialization, the need for the knowledge, skills, or experiences must exist and be salient. That is, an onboarding practice is unlikely to have much impact if offered too early, and the need for the activity is not recognized or appreciated. Alternatively, an onboarding practice is unlikely to provide much value if it occurs after the new hire has already learned what that practice is aimed at conveying.

Hypothesis 5: Onboarding practices that occur earlier will be perceived to be more helpful by new employees than practices occurring later.

Hypothesis 6: The earlier an organization offers socialization practices, the greater the extent to which new employees will be socialized.

4. Method

4.1. Participants and procedures

The authors contacted 40 HR managers through personal contacts, and 10 of those managers agreed to participate. The study involved (a) having one representative from HR

complete a survey about their organization's onboarding practices, and (b) the organization allowing all new employees within the organization or a particular unit to be surveyed about their onboarding experiences. New employees were defined as those hired within the past 2 years (the past year for one larger organization). This operationalization was based on evidence and recommendations that onboarding programs extend from 6 months to over a year past the start date (e.g., Bauer, 2010; Klein & Heuser, 2008; Survey findings, 2011) as well as allowing for a sufficient amount of time to have passed for new hires to have learned from the onboarding practices they experienced.

The new employee survey asked about both onboarding experiences and the extent to which the employee was socialized. The study was described to employees as an effort to help better understand the practices used by organizations to help onboard their new employees as well as the effectiveness of those practices. Depending on the organization, the invitations were either sent directly by the authors or on behalf of the authors by an organizational representative. In most cases, these invitations were extended via email with a link to the online survey. For some employees, hard copy surveys were distributed with cover letters containing the invitation to participate. Hard copy surveys were collected via sealed drop boxes. The first page of the survey (both paper and online) presented the informed consent information. No incentives were offered in exchange for participation. Across these 10 organizations, 1,047 invitations to participate were sent and 373 completed surveys were received, resulting in a response rate of 35.6%. New hire participants were 54.1% female, were on average 34.9-year old, and 79.4% had a college degree or a higher level of education. New hires had been with their organization, and in their current job, an average of approximately 9 months when completing the survey. Less than 20% of participating new employees had supervisory responsibilities.¹

The organizational survey, which focused on the organization's onboarding practices, was administered to an individual familiar with the organization's onboarding process for new hires. The invitations and instructions for completing this survey were sent by the authors to organization contacts via email and contained a link to an online survey. The initial page of this survey presented the informed consent information. Respondents providing the organizational information were 80% female, on average 39.1-year old, and all had a college degree or a higher level of education. The 10 participating organizations reflect a wide variety of sizes, sectors, and industries. The largest concentration of companies was in manufacturing (20%), finance/insurance (20%), and utilities (20%) industries. Other represented industries included construction (10%), healthcare (10%), retail/services (10%), and telecommunications (10%). Over half of the organizations were publicly traded, and the companies ranged in size

from 100 employees to 49,999 employees. The mean response for organizational size corresponded to the 1,000–4,999 employees category.

4.2. Measures

Eight different measures were created from questions asked of both new hires and organizational representatives about onboarding practices. For all of these measures, the starting point was a list of 30 onboarding practices developed for this study and based on the typology presented in Klein and Heuser (2008). In developing that typology, Klein and Heuser compiled a list of specific onboarding practices based on a review of both the academic and practitioner literatures, including staffing and training textbooks and the websites of several organizations cited in the practitioner literature as exemplars of effective onboarding. They arrived at the IWG typology by grouping practices based on their primary purpose. For this study, the list of practices was reviewed and updated by examining the more recent academic and practitioner literature. We also verified the categorization of practices into the IWG categories by having a sample of nineteen graduate student SMEs sort the practices. We omitted those practices that did not cleanly fall into an IWG category to arrive at our final list of 30 practices.

4.2.1. *If and how organizations offer onboarding practices*

From the organizations, we gathered data on both 'If' and 'How' onboarding practices were offered. The organizational representatives evaluated each of the 30 onboarding practices and were asked to indicate whether each practice was 'required' for new hires, 'encouraged' but not required, or 'neither required nor encouraged'. Based on these responses, two different scores were calculated for each of the five onboarding practice categories. The first measure, 'Organization-If' offered, reflects the extent to which onboarding practices were provided within each category, based on a count of the practices within each category (required and encouraged coded '1'; neither coded '0'). The second measure, 'Organization-How' offered, reflects the extent to which practices in that category were required (coded '2') versus encouraged (coded '1').

4.2.2. *If and how new employees experience onboarding practices*

Similar measures were created from the new employee perspective. New employees also evaluated each of the 30 onboarding practices. They were first asked to indicate whether each occurred formally, occurred informally, or did not occur. Respondents were instructed to select 'formal' if the practice was required, preplanned, and appeared to occur for all new hires; 'informal' if the practice was voluntary or appeared to be spontaneous. Respondents were instructed to select 'formal' if unsure

or if some elements of both applied. Based on these responses, two different scores were again calculated for each of the five IWG practice categories. The first measure, 'Employee-If' experienced, reflects the extent to which a new hire experienced onboarding practices within each category. This measure is a count of how many practices within each category were experienced by the new hire (formal and informal coded '1'; did not occur coded '0'). The second measure, 'Employee-How' experienced, reflects the extent to which those experienced practices occurred formally (coded '2') or informally (coded '1') if they were experienced.

4.2.3. When new employees experience onboarding practices
If an employee respondent indicated that they experienced an onboarding practice (either formally or informally), they were also asked to indicate when the activity occurred, allowing us to create a Practice Timing measure. The response options included the following: during recruitment & hiring (-38); after hired, but before the first day (-14); on the first day (1); after 1st day but during the first week (4); after first week but during first month (19); during 2nd or 3rd months (60); during months 4-6 (135); after 6 months, but during 1st year (228). Respondents chose from the verbal descriptions, not a numbered Likert scale. During the data cleaning process, the verbal descriptions were translated into the numbers in parentheses above, reflecting the approximate number of days before or after the start date the practice occurred. The prestart date code values were based on the average time from initial recruitment contact and hiring and from hire to start date. If a practice occurred more than once, respondents were instructed to indicate when it first occurred. An 'I don't remember/don't wish to answer' option was also provided. A measure was created for each of the five IWG categories by averaging the timing of the experienced practices.

4.2.4. How helpful new employees view onboarding practices
Employee respondents were asked one additional question about each onboarding practice they reported experiencing (either formally or informally). Specifically, they were asked to indicate how helpful the practice was in helping them adjust to their new position or organization, allowing us to create a Practice Helpfulness variable. Employees responded using a 5-point (1) 'not at all beneficial' to (5) 'extremely beneficial' response scale. A measure was created for each of the five IWG categories by averaging the helpfulness rating given to the practices experienced within that category. We also created a Practice Helpfulness Composite by averaging the helpfulness ratings across all specific experienced practices.

4.2.5. The extent new employees are socialized
The composite measure of the Extent Socialized scales presented by Klein, Polin, and Sutton (2010) was used to

assess the degree to which new employees were socialized. This 12-item measure taps the socialization content typology presented by Klein and Heuser (2008). That typology expands and redefines the six dimensions identified by Chao et al. (1994) and consists of the following dimensions: Language, Structure, History, Inducements, Rules/Policies, Social Relations, Task Proficiency, Work Relations, Navigation, Politics, Goals/Strategy, and Culture/Values [see Klein and Heuser (2008) for a full discussion of this typology]. The Klein et al. (2010) measure consists of a multi-item scale for each of the 12 dimensions as well as a composite scale consisting of one core item from each dimension (e.g., Task Proficiency, *I have learned how to perform my job duties correctly*; Culture/Values, *I am aware of my organization's core values*). This study used the composite scale. The alpha reliability of the composite scale was 0.88.

4.3. Analytical approach

We used three different analytical methods to examine our data. First, we computed zero-order correlations to examine bivariate relationships among the measured and created variables. Second, descriptive statistics were calculated to make comparisons among IWG categories and specific practices to answer our research questions and Hypothesis 1. Because new hires are nested within organizations, and to account for the differential sample size of new employees within each of the participating organizations, the descriptive statistics were weighted. Third, we used Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) to examine the proposed relationships, again to account for the nested nature (i.e., employees within organizations) of the data. In doing so, we treated intercepts as random and slopes as fixed.

5. Results

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the Organization and Employee IWG category variables and examined outcomes are presented in Table 1. Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics for the specific onboarding practice variables within each IWG category. For the individual-level employee data, unweighted descriptive statistics are provided in Table 1, whereas weighted descriptive statistics are provided in Table 2. Employees only responded to the How, Timing, and Helpfulness questions for the practices they experienced. As such, the sample sizes for the ratings of specific onboarding practices varied widely and were small for some practices. We provide descriptive statistics for all of the specific onboarding practices in Table 2, but we examine our research questions and test our hypotheses using the IWG categories and only the two most commonly experienced specific

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Organization—if offered															
1. Inform-communication	0.75	0.29	—	.00	0.67**	0.43	0.42	0.49	0.32	0.71***	.07	0.29			
2. Inform-resources	0.80	0.23	-.26**	—	0.27	0.58	0.48	.05	-.54	-.09	.08	-.23			
3. Inform-training	0.77	0.20	0.64**	0.28**	—	0.59	0.41	0.45	-.16	0.69*	0.27	.00			
4. Welcome	0.52	0.27	0.25**	0.58**	0.57**	—	0.70*	0.75*	-.03	0.66*	0.22	0.55			
5. Guide	0.60	0.31	0.51**	0.44**	0.47**	0.59**	—	0.39	-.07	0.36	0.46	0.41			
Organization—how offered															
6. Inform-communication	1.50	0.39	0.29**	0.10*	0.36**	0.79**	0.32**	—	0.22	0.77**	-.22	0.52			
7. Inform-resources	1.31	0.29	0.30**	-.54**	-.20**	.02	.06	0.28**	—	0.18	.09	0.53			
8. Inform-training	1.55	0.26	0.49**	.02	0.68**	0.64**	0.27**	0.75**	0.21**	—	-.18	0.62			
9. Welcome	1.32	0.22	0.41**	0.12*	0.33**	0.12*	0.47**	-.28**	.04	-.16**	—	.03			
10. Guide	1.33	0.43	0.23**	-.18**	0.17**	0.58***	0.23**	0.62**	0.64**	0.68**	-.08	—			
Employee—if experienced															
11. Inform-communication	0.68	0.27	0.15**	-.03	0.10	0.15**	.07	0.16**	0.18**	0.16**	.05	0.18**	—		
12. Inform-resources	0.55	0.27	-.12*	.08	-.22**	-.09	.05	-.17**	.05	-.29**	0.13*	-.13*	0.35**	—	
13. Inform-training	0.70	0.20	.08	0.22**	0.20**	.07	0.17**	-.19**	-.14**	-.12*	0.41**	-.17**	0.32**	0.40**	—
14. Welcome	0.47	0.22	-.03	0.15**	.02	.03	.04	-.13*	.03	-.05	0.17**	-.01	0.44**	0.50**	0.43**
15. Guide	0.47	0.29	0.14**	.08	.08	0.13*	0.15**	.00	0.15**	.06	0.22**	0.17**	0.35**	0.39**	0.32**
Employee—how experienced															
16. Inform-communication	1.70	0.32	.08	-.06	-.05	.00	.08	.06	.08	.01	-.03	.05	.05	.04	.02
17. Inform-resources	1.53	0.35	-.04	.04	-.11*	-.08	.02	-.17**	.04	-.19**	0.16**	-.07	-.01	0.24**	0.19**
18. Inform-training	1.74	0.24	0.13*	.02	.08	-.04	.08	-.07	-.09	-.03	.08	-.14**	.03	.09	.04
19. Welcome	1.65	0.29	.06	0.11*	.06	.01	0.18**	-.13*	-.01	-.08	0.22**	-.09	.09	0.18**	0.20**
20. Guide	1.50	0.44	.09	-.05	-.08	.09	0.15**	0.13*	0.24**	.05	.02	0.19**	0.13*	0.14*	0.10
Practice timing															
21. Inform-communication	0.49	26.23	-.10	.02	-.00	.08	-.05	0.11*	0.12*	0.14**	-.11*	0.15**	0.21**	-.03	.04
22. Inform-resources	7.44	26.08	-.06	.09	0.11*	0.15**	-.03	.09	.05	0.18**	-.02	0.17**	.04	-.13*	-.03
23. Inform-training	7.60	20.84	-.16**	.00	-.04	0.19**	-.09	0.25**	0.22**	0.20**	-.15**	0.34**	.04	-.12*	-.12*
24. Welcome	5.97	24.51	-.00	-.10	.01	.05	-.08	.08	0.16**	.09	.01	0.17**	-.01	-.08	.00
25. Guide	-.1.73	22.12	.02	-.09	.09	0.11	-.05	0.14*	0.16**	0.20**	-.03	0.23**	.04	-.13*	-.05
Practice helpfulness															
26. Inform-communication	3.61	0.88	.00	-.08	-.17**	0.10*	.03	-.05	0.18**	-.04	-.07	.09	0.17**	0.32**	0.10
27. Inform-resources	3.72	0.80	-.01	-.04	-.11*	-.07	.05	-.02	0.11*	-.04	-.06	.01	.08	0.25**	.08
28. Inform-training	3.74	0.77	.03	-.14**	-.16**	-.11*	.01	-.07	0.21**	-.09	.04	.09	0.26**	0.42**	0.14**
29. Welcome	3.23	0.90	.03	-.10	-.11*	-.00	.09	.09	0.20**	.04	-.09	0.14*	0.29**	0.36**	.05
30. Guide	2.83	0.94	-.04	.05	-.14**	-.11	.05	-.15*	-.02	-.17**	.03	-.10	0.10	0.30**	0.17**
31. Helpfulness composite	3.57	0.69	.03	-.11*	-.17**	-.10*	.06	-.04	0.19**	-.07	-.03	.06	0.27**	0.44**	0.14**
32. Extent socialized	3.83	0.55	-.06	-.03	-.17**	-.08	-.04	-.14**	0.12*	-.20**	0.14**	.01	0.27**	0.47**	0.30**

Table 1. Continued

Variable	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
Employee-if experienced															
14. Welcome	–														
15. Guide	0.47**	–													
Employee-how experienced															
16. Inform-communication	0.04	.00	–												
17. Inform-resources	0.17**	0.12*	0.19**	–											
18. Inform-training	.07	.05	0.25**	0.32**	–										
19. Welcome	0.12*	0.10*	0.10	0.29**	0.21**	–									
20. Guide	0.13*	.08	0.27**	0.29**	0.24**	0.22**	–								
Practice timing															
21. Inform-communication	.09	.00	–.05	.02	–.04	.06	.02	–							
22. Inform-resources	–.02	–.04	–.02	–.07	–.06	.04	–.02	0.16**	–						
23. Inform-training	–.06	–.11*	–.03	–.14**	–.17**	–.12*	–.05	0.28**	0.27**	–					
24. Welcome	.07	.05	–.02	–.06	–.03	.02	.01	0.29**	0.22**	0.34**	–				
25. Guide	–.03	–.00	.06	–.10	–.05	–.13*	–.03	0.26**	0.25**	0.26**	0.26**	–			
Practice helpfulness															
26. Inform-communication	0.22**	0.20**	0.19**	.06	0.17**	0.15**	0.12*	–.02	–.00	–.06	–.13*	–.05	–		
27. Inform-resources	0.14**	0.16**	0.15**	0.18**	0.14*	0.13*	0.21**	.01	–.08	.01	–.10	–.03	0.54**	–	
28. Inform-training	0.28**	0.28**	0.11*	0.15**	.09	0.20**	0.18**	.04	–.06	–.09	–.10	–.09	0.61**	0.60**	–
29. Welcome	0.25**	0.22**	0.10	.08	0.12*	0.13*	0.18**	.05	–.05	.02	–.13*	–.08	0.61**	0.54**	0.61**
30. Guide	0.19**	0.11*	.05	0.14*	0.12*	0.21**	.07	–.05	–.03	–.11	–.12*	–.18**	0.53**	0.46**	0.54**
31. Helpfulness composite	0.26**	0.29**	0.15**	0.16**	0.16**	0.21**	0.19**	.02	–.06	–.07	–.13*	–.09	0.81**	0.79**	0.87**
32. Extent socialized	0.38**	0.27**	0.13*	0.18**	.03	0.12*	.09	–.09	–.07	–.05	–.02	–.04	0.35**	0.35**	0.45**
Variable			29				30				31				32
Practice helpfulness															
29. Welcome			–												
30. Guide			0.39**	–											
31. Helpfulness composite			0.82**	0.67**	–										
32. Extent socialized			0.33**	0.33**	0.46**	–									

Notes: Means and Standard Deviations for variables 1–10 are at the organizational level (N = 10); these values for the remaining variables are at the individual level (N = 373). Correlations above the diagonal are at the organizational level; those below the diagonal are at the individual level. *p < .05. **p < .01.

Table 2. The provision and experiencing of onboarding practices

Onboarding practice	Organization		New employee			
	If offered ^a	How offered ^b	If experienced ^c	How experienced ^d	Practice timing ^e	Practice helpfulness ^f
Inform-Communication	0.75 (0.29)	1.50 (0.39)	0.70 (0.27)	1.73 (0.30)	0.91 (25.71) -38.00	3.79 (0.84)
I went to a question and answer session where new hires were able to ask senior leaders questions.	0.60 (0.52)	1.67 (0.52)	0.49 (0.50)	1.82 (0.39)	19.72 (49.21)	3.62 (1.00)
I was invited to meet with a senior leader.	0.60 (0.52)	1.50 (0.55)	0.61 (0.49)	1.72 (0.45)	60.00	3.70 (1.12)
My manager set aside a block of uninterrupted time to spend with me.	0.90 (0.32)	1.33 (0.50)	0.78 (0.42)	1.54 (0.50)	-38.00	4.14 (0.78)
I met with a representative from HR.	0.90 (0.32)	1.78 (0.44)	0.91 (0.29)	1.84 (0.37)	1.00	3.80 (1.01)
Inform-Resources	0.80 (0.23)	1.31 (0.29)	0.55 (0.26)	1.52 (0.34)	7.43 (24.08) 1.00	3.81 (0.76)
I was shown how to find things on the website the company has for its associates.	1.00 (.00)	1.40 (0.52)	0.71 (0.46)	1.47 (0.50)	3.96 (22.60)	3.80 (0.96)
I was given an initial plan that outlined opportunities for my development.	0.80 (0.42)	1.38 (0.52)	0.58 (.49)	1.61 (0.49)	18.40 (43.78)	3.95 (0.84)
I was given a glossary of abbreviations and 'buzzwords' used throughout the company.	0.70 (0.48)	1.29 (0.49)	0.30 (0.46)	1.65 (0.48)	4.87 (17.26)	3.87 (0.94)
I was directed to a section of the company website specifically designed for new associates.	0.50 (0.53)	1.40 (0.55)	0.40 (0.49)	1.59 (0.49)	1.00	3.59 (1.00)
I was given a list of names and contact information of important people within the company.	0.80 (0.42)	1.00 (0.00)	0.58 (0.50)	1.54 (0.50)	3.67 (33.01)	3.77 (0.97)
My workspace was ready for me (including all supplies, materials, and equipment).	1.00 (0.00)	1.20 (0.42)	0.72 (0.45)	1.54 (0.50)	5.43 (16.71)	4.11 (0.91)
Inform-Training	0.77 (0.20)	1.55 (0.26)	0.66 (0.20)	1.74 (0.23)	8.32 (20.25) 1.00	3.78 (0.85)
I was shown a new employee video.	0.70 (0.48)	1.86 (0.38)	0.70 (0.46)	1.95 (0.21)	2.51 (12.53)	3.11 (1.10)
I was encouraged to observe a fellow associate for a period of time.	0.70 (0.48)	1.14 (0.38)	0.60 (0.49)	1.46 (0.50)	1.00	4.15 (0.93)
I received on-the-job training on how to perform my job.	1.00 (0.00)	1.70 (0.48)	0.79 (0.41)	1.42 (0.49)	7.88 (20.18)	4.37 (0.86)
I was given a tour of company facilities.	1.00 (0.00)	1.30 (0.48)	0.84 (0.36)	1.69 (0.47)	1.00	3.82 (0.95)
I attended an orientation program with other new hires.	0.90 (0.32)	2.00 (.00)	0.90 (0.30)	1.99 (0.11)	-1.24 (31.86)	3.79 (1.02)
I completed an on-line orientation program.	0.40 (0.52)	1.25 (0.50)	0.24 (0.43)	1.85 (0.36)	1.00	3.76 (1.11)
I attended a session where presentations were given by fellow associates who were expert on certain tasks or procedures.	0.70 (0.48)	1.71 (0.49)	0.47 (0.50)	1.90 (0.30)	12.41 (33.90)	3.80 (1.04)
					4.00	
					24.15 (43.35)	
					19.00	

Table 2. Continued

Onboarding practice	Organization		New employee			
	If offered ^a	How offered ^b	If experienced ^c	How experienced ^d	Practice timing ^e	Practice helpfulness ^f
Welcome	0.52 (0.27)	1.32 (0.22)	0.47 (0.23)	1.63 (0.30)	4.09 (23.74)	3.34 (0.89)
I received a personalized welcome (phone call, email, or letter) to the company from a senior leader.	0.60 (0.52)	1.50 (0.55)	0.65 (0.48)	1.74 (0.44)	-14.23 (23.20)	3.22 (1.21)
I received a personalized welcome (phone call, email, or letter) from my manager.	0.50 (0.53)	1.00 (0.00)	0.77 (0.42)	1.55 (0.50)	-15.27 (18.88)	3.61 (1.01)
I was given a welcome kit.	0.80 (0.42)	1.75 (0.46)	0.65 (0.48)	1.88 (0.33)	-9.47 (18.02)	3.74 (1.02)
I participated in exercises to get to know my fellow associates.	0.50 (0.53)	1.40 (0.55)	0.37 (0.48)	1.53 (0.50)	-14.00	3.75 (0.99)
There was a gathering (meeting, welcome lunch) for me to meet my fellow associates.	0.80 (0.42)	1.00 (0.00)	0.51 (0.50)	1.61 (0.49)	16.66 (40.56)	3.70 (1.01)
A new associate welcome celebration was held.	0.60 (0.52)	1.33 (0.52)	0.21 (0.41)	1.55 (0.50)	1.00	3.76 (1.00)
I was invited to participate in a social event to get to know fellow associates.	0.60 (0.52)	1.17 (0.41)	0.46 (0.50)	1.39 (0.49)	4.00	3.61 (1.04)
My family was invited to attend a social activity held outside of work.	0.20 (0.42)	2.00 (0.00)	0.20 (0.40)	1.74 (0.44)	26.15 (38.09)	3.53 (1.40)
My joining the company was announced in an email, on the company website, or in a company newsletter.	0.20 (0.42)	1.00 (0.00)	0.43 (0.50)	1.79 (0.41)	19.00	2.81 (1.23)
Company t-shirts or other items with the company name/logo were sent to my home.	0.40 (0.52)	1.50 (0.58)	0.36 (0.48)	1.77 (0.42)	12.24 (30.08)	2.85 (1.13)
Guide	0.60 (0.31)	1.33 (0.43)	0.49 (0.29)	1.56 (0.43)	-2.42 (21.42)	3.93 (0.93)
Someone at a higher level than my manager was assigned to be my mentor.	0.20 (0.42)	1.50 (0.71)	0.18 (0.38)	1.72 (0.45)	1.00	3.94 (0.91)
I had a single point of contact (welcome coordinator) that I could reach out to with any questions.	0.80 (0.42)	1.50 (0.54)	0.66 (0.47)	1.62 (0.49)	-14.00	3.86 (1.01)
A fellow associate was assigned as my 'buddy' to help answer any questions I might have.	0.80 (0.42)	1.25 (0.46)	0.63 (0.48)	1.48 (0.50)	-38.00	4.15 (1.01)

^aMean (standard deviation) at the organizational level where 1 = required or encouraged; 0 = neither.

^bMean (standard deviation) at the organizational level where 2 = required; 1 = encouraged.

^cWeighted mean (standard deviation) at the individual level where 1 = occurred formally or informally; 0 = did not occur.

^dWeighted mean (standard deviation) at the individual level where 2 = formally; 1 = informally.

^eWeighted mean (standard deviation) and mode days before (-) or after (+) start date at the individual level.

^fWeighted mean (standard deviation) at the individual level where 1 = not at all beneficial; 5 = extremely beneficial.

Italicized practices are those most commonly occurring in each IWG category and examined in the analyses.

onboarding practices from the employee's perspective within each category.

5.1. *If onboarding practices are occurring*

The first research question centered on identifying what organizations are doing and what new employees are experiencing. Thus, we first examine the 'If' measures for both organizations and new employees. Based on the organization responses, Table 2 shows that the three Inform categories are the most commonly occurring, with means ranging from 0.75 to 0.80, and Welcome practices occurring least often (0.52). These means can be interpreted as reflecting the percentage of companies in which the practices occurred. The two most commonly occurring specific practices, as reported by the organization, in each IWG category are italicized in Table 2. In some cases, 'most commonly occurring' means a practice is always being offered among the participating organizations (i.e., a new employee being shown how to find things on the website the company has for its associates; a new employee's workspace being ready for them; a new employee receiving on-the-job training; and a new employee being given a tour of company facilities); in other cases, the 'most commonly occurring' practices are only offered by 80% of the participating organizations (e.g., a new employee being given a welcome kit; a gathering being held for the new employee to meet their fellow associates). The variance in whether organizations are providing the onboarding practices is greatest for the Inform-Training, Welcome, and Guide categories and least for the Inform-Communication category.

From the employee perspective, the most frequently experienced categories of practices were Inform-Communication (0.70) and Inform-Training (0.66). The Welcome (0.47) and Guide (0.49) categories were the least frequently experienced. Employees generally reported experiencing practices at a lower rate than organizations reported offering them. This is true for both the practice categories and specific practices. In fact, only one specific onboarding practice (i.e., a newcomer meeting with a representative from HR) is reported by the employee as occurring more often than it is reported as occurring by the organization. Across the categories and specific practices reported by new employees, the relative pattern of frequencies is similar to the organization reported data. It should also be noted that for both the organization and new employee reports, a great deal of variance exists within each of the IWG categories. For example, employees reported the Inform-Resources category as occurring 55% of the time, yet a specific onboarding practice within that category – the workspace being ready – is reported as occurring 72% of the time.

5.2. *How onboarding practices are occurring*

The second research question concerned how organizations are offering (i.e., required or encouraged) and how new employees recall experiencing those practices (i.e., formally or informally). Based on the means for the organization responses presented in Table 2, Inform-Training practices are most often required (55% of the time) followed by Inform-Communication practices (50%), with the remaining three practice categories being more often encouraged than required. Inform-Resources practices are least often required (31%). Turning to the most commonly occurring specific practices in each of the IWG practice categories, it is apparent that the above conclusions for the practices categories do not necessarily reflect the specific practices within those categories. The manner in which a specific practice is likely to be offered differed from the category conclusion for 4 of the 10 most commonly offered practices (e.g., Inform-Communication practices are, in general, required 50% of the time, but the specific practice of a manager setting aside a block of uninterrupted time is only required 33% of the time). In other cases, even if the general conclusion is the same (i.e., more likely to be required), the extent to which this is true varies substantially (e.g., Inform-Training practices are, in general, required 55% of the time, but a new employee receiving on-the-job training is required 70% of the time).

From the new employee perspective, all five of the IWG categories were more likely to be experienced formally as opposed to informally. The differences in conclusions between the IWG category and the specific commonly occurring practices within those categories were generally smaller in terms of the employee reports of how they are experienced (formal vs. informal) relative to the organizations' reports of how practices are offered (required or encouraged). Three of the 10 most common specific practices do differ substantially from the category report (e.g., the Inform-Training category is experienced formally 74% of the time, but the specific practice of a new employee receiving on-the-job training only occurs formally 42% of the time), but these differences are not as large as those in the organization responses.

5.3. *When onboarding practices are occurring*

The third research question concerned when onboarding practices are occurring (asked of new employees who reported a practice occurring). As seen in Table 2, two IWG categories – Inform-Communication and Guide – are reported as occurring, on average, on the first day and a few days prior to the first day, respectively. Welcome practices are reported as occurring, on average, late in the first week, with the two remaining categories – Inform-Resources and Inform-Training – occurring, on average, early in the second week of a newcomer's

tenure. However, the modal responses reveal a slightly different pattern. The modal response for four of the five practice categories is 'on the first day', with the exception being Inform-Communications, for which the modal response is 'during recruitment and hiring'. Looking at the 10 most commonly offered specific practices reveals considerably more variation in the timing of practices. In the Inform-Communication category, for example, meeting with a representative from HR occurs, on average, nearly 2 weeks prior to the start date, despite the category average being on the newcomer's start date. Commonly occurring specific practices within the categories of Inform-Training, Welcome, and Guide also show large discrepancies from the category averages whereas the most commonly occurring specific practices within Inform-Resources show more consistency with the category average.

5.4. Helpfulness of onboarding practices

The final research question concerned the perceived helpfulness of experienced onboarding practices. The weighted mean ratings of Practice Helpfulness are provided in Table 2. The helpfulness scores for the IWG categories ranged from 3.34 (Welcome) to 3.93 (Guide), with 3 corresponding to 'moderately beneficial', and 4 being 'very beneficial'. Some commonly offered specific practices are rated as much more helpful than their category. For example, a manager setting aside a block of uninterrupted time in the Inform-Communication category, a newcomer's workspace being ready for them in the Inform-Resources category, a newcomer receiving on-the-job training in the Inform-Training category, and a fellow associate being assigned as a buddy to the newcomer in the Guide category all have means over 4.10, exceeding the average ratings for the categories.

5.5. Discrepancy between organization offerings and employee experiences

The first hypothesis posited that there will be a disconnect between the onboarding experiences of new employees and what organizations report offering to new employees. We do find several discrepancies between Organization-If and Employee-If reports for both the IWG categories and specific common practices. By comparing means in Table 2, we see that the discrepancy between Organization and Employee reports of 'If' practices occurred is greatest for Inform-Resources (0.80 vs. 0.55, $t = 1.87$, $p < .05$). The differences for Inform-Communication, Inform-Training, Welcome, and Guide are smaller and not statistically significant. For 9 of the 10 specific practices, the weighted mean for employee reports of experiencing the practice is lower than organizational reports of offering the practice (the exception

being a newcomer meeting with a representative from HR). The discrepancy between employee and organizational reports is statistically significant for 5 of the 10 specific practices (i.e., a newcomer being shown how to find things on the website the company has for its associates; a newcomer's workspace being ready for them; a newcomer receiving on-the-job training; a newcomer being given a tour of company facilities; a gathering being held for the newcomer to meet their fellow associates). Hypothesis 1 is, thus, partially supported for 1 of the 5 IWG categories and 5 of 10 commonly occurring specific practices.² Perhaps most interesting are those practices which are reported as being offered by all of the organizations in this sample yet are reported as not being experienced by new employees in large numbers (e.g., a newcomer being shown how to find things on the website the company has for its associates).

5.6. If practices are offered/experienced influencing extent socialized

Hypothesis 2a predicted that offering more onboarding practices would be positively related to the extent to which new employees are socialized. In this sample, the mean extent socialized rating is 3.83. This corresponds to employees, on average, being moderately well socialized. As noted earlier, HLM was used to account for new employees being nested within organizations. In testing this hypothesis, Organization-If offered was used as the Level 2 predictor and Extent Socialized the Level 1 dependent variable. These results, presented in Table 3, reveal that for all five of the IWG categories, the number of practices offered within a category explains a significant amount of variance in new employee socialization. We also report the results for specific onboarding practices in Table 3 for consistency. However, these results do not relate to Hypothesis 2a. A significant slope for a specific practice means that offering that practice (vs. not doing so) is associated with being better socialized, and does not convey anything about the number of practices offered. The slopes are statistically significant for all 10 practices. Hypothesis 2a is, thus, fully supported. In addition, for the 10 most common onboarding practices, experiencing each of those practices is associated with being better socialized.

Hypothesis 2b predicted that experiencing more onboarding practices would be positively related to the extent to which new employees were socialized. HLM was again used with Employee-If offered the Level 2 predictor and Extent Socialized the Level 1 dependent variable. Results are presented in Table 3. All five of the IWG categories demonstrate significant results. Hypothesis 2b is, thus, fully supported, suggesting that the number of onboarding practices experienced by new employees is positively related to the extent to which they are

Table 3. Results of HLM analyses for IWG categories and most commonly occurring specific practices with extent socialized as the dependent variable

	H2a	H2b	H3a	H3b	H6
	Organization-if	Employee-if	Organization-how	Employee-how	Practice timing
Inform-Communication					
	4.463 ^a	0.593	2.381	0.264	-.002
	0.54	0.10	0.21	.08	.00
	67.98**	33.74**	131.68**	9.72**	2.20
<i>My manager set aside a block of uninterrupted time to spend with me.</i>	3.809	0.312	2.528	0.179	-.002
	0.41	.06	0.32	.06	.00
	87.48**	25.23**	63.08**	10.09**	1.33
<i>I met with a representative from HR.</i>	3.771	0.222	2.010	0.126	-.002
	0.44	.09	0.17	.08	.00
	73.36**	6.03*	147.26**	2.61	4.49*
Inform-Resources					
	4.426	0.909	2.794	0.196	-.001
	0.40	0.10	0.17	.08	.00
	124.41**	84.36**	265.26**	6.23*	1.71
<i>I was shown how to find things on the website the company has for its associates.</i>	3.813	0.163	2.429	0.205	-.004
	.06	.06	0.27	.06	.00
	4,370.00**	7.09**	83.05**	10.10**	6.54*
	3.813	0.311	2.839	0.133	.001
	.06	.06	0.32	.06	.00
<i>My workspace was ready for me (including all supplies, materials, and equipment).</i>	4,370.00**	26.65**	79.58**	4.72*	.08
	4.611	0.913	2.390	0.173	-.001
	0.41	0.15	0.15	0.12	.00
	124.41**	38.59**	271.66**	2.02	0.93
<i>I was given a tour of company facilities.</i>	3.813	0.179	2.581	0.135	-.002
	.06	.08	0.31	.07	.00
	4,370.00**	4.44*	68.33**	4.11*	5.06*
	3.772	0.155	1.888	1.870	-.000
	0.44	0.15	.02	.05	.00
	73.36**	1.11	5,869.40**	1,246.44**	0.21
Welcome					
	5.900	1.006	2.805	0.249	-.001
	0.94	0.13	0.13	0.10	.00
	39.74**	60.40**	468.55**	6.37*	0.56
<i>I received a personalized welcome (phone call, email, or letter) to the company from a senior leader.</i>	3.791	0.223	2.265	0.272	-.001
	0.99	.06	0.32	.07	.00
	14.55**	12.95**	51.39**	14.55**	0.83
<i>I received a personalized welcome (phone call, email, or letter) from my manager.</i>	3.814	0.251	3.814	0.133	-.001
	1.21	.06	0.11	.06	.00
	9.99**	16.26**	1,265.37**	4.38*	0.20
	5.125	0.484	2.614	.097	-.001
	0.80	0.10	0.27	.07	.00
	40.62**	23.95**	97.16**	1.95	0.21
<i>I had a single point of contact (welcome coordinator) that I could reach out to with any questions.</i>	3.813	0.218	2.285	0.144	-.000
	0.60	.06	0.28	.06	.00
	39.79**	14.54**	68.18**	4.94*	0.13
<i>A fellow associate was assigned as my 'buddy' to help answer any questions I might have.</i>	3.806	0.161	2.735	0.109	-.002
	0.60	.06	0.33	.08	.00
	39.59**	6.97**	70.69**	2.08	2.01

^aSlope (t), standard error. F. *p < .05; **p < .01.

socialized. Again here, results for specific practices are provided for consistency and completeness, but those results do not directly address Hypothesis 2b. Slopes for all but one (i.e., a newcomer attending an orientation program with other new hires) of the 10 specific onboarding practices was significant indicating that for most, but not all, of these practices, experiencing each of the practices was associated with newcomers being better socialized.

5.7. *How practices are offered influencing extent socialized*

Hypothesis 3a predicted organizations that require, as opposed to just encourage, more onboarding practices would have better socialized new employees. The results of the HLM analysis with Organization–How offered as the Level 2 predictor and Extent Socialized as the Level 1 dependent variable are presented in Table 3. The slopes for all five of the IWG categories were statistically significant as was the case for all 10 of the most common specific onboarding practices, fully supporting Hypothesis 3a. The extent to which new employee onboarding practices were required is positively related to the extent to which they are socialized.

Hypothesis 3b suggested that employees who experience more onboarding practices formally rather than informally would be better socialized. HLM was again used with Employee–How offered as the Level 2 predictor and Extent Socialized the Level 1 dependent variable. Results, presented in Table 3, show mixed results. The slope was statistically significant for three of the five categories (Inform–Communication, Inform–Resources, and Welcome). The specific onboarding practices similarly showed mixed findings, with 8 of the 10 practices showing significant results. The exceptions here are a newcomer meeting with a representative from HR and a fellow associate being assigned as a ‘buddy’. Hypothesis 3b is, thus, partially supported. It appears that for most, but not all practices, the extent to which new employees’ onboarding experiences were formal was positively related to extent socialized.

5.8. *How practices are offered influencing practice helpfulness*

Hypothesis 4a predicted that new employees would perceive onboarding practices as more helpful when they were required. We examined these relationships using HLM, with Organization–How offered as the Level 2 predictor and Practice Helpfulness the Level 1 dependent variable. These results are presented in Table 4. Significant slopes are evident for all 5 of the IWG categories and for all 10 of the most commonly offered specific onboarding practices. Hypothesis 4a is, thus, fully supported. New

employees perceived required onboarding practices to be more helpful.

Hypothesis 4b posited that experiencing an onboarding practice formally would be more helpful to a new employee compared to experiencing an onboarding practice informally. Here, Employee–How offered was used as the Level 2 predictor and Practice Helpfulness the Level 1 dependent variable. Results presented in Table 4 indicate that significant effects were found for all but one practice category (Guide) as well as for all but one specific onboarding practice within that category (having a fellow associate be assigned as a ‘buddy’). Hypothesis 4b is, thus, mostly supported, suggesting that, with the exception of Guide activities, onboarding practices that were experienced formally by new employees were perceived as more helpful.

5.9. *Practice timing influencing practice helpfulness*

Hypothesis 5 posited that practices occurring earlier in the onboarding process would be perceived as more helpful by new employees. In this HLM analysis, Practice Timing was used as the Level 2 predictor and Practice Helpfulness the Level 1 dependent variable. Results are shown in Table 4. Negative slopes were expected as we predicted that practices offered earlier would be perceived as more helpful. Significant negative slopes were observed for three of the five IWG categories (i.e., Inform–Training, Welcome, and Guide). Among the specific onboarding practices, the effects were significant for only 3 of the 10 most common practices (a newcomer being shown how to find things on the website the company has for its associates; a newcomer’s workspace being ready for them; and a newcomer having a single point of contact). Hypothesis 5 is, thus, partially supported. It appears that it is only for some onboarding practices that experiencing them earlier resulted in them being perceived as more helpful by new employees.

5.10. *Practice timing influencing extent socialized*

Lastly, Hypothesis 6 predicted that onboarding practice timing would influence extent socialized. For this final analysis, presented in Table 3, Practice Timing was the Level 2 predictor and Extent Socialized the Level 1 dependent variable. Again here, negative slopes were expected, reflecting the prediction that experiencing practices earlier would be associated with better socialized newcomers. None of the five IWG categories revealed significant results, and only 3 of the 10 specific onboarding activities (i.e., a newcomer meeting with a representative from HR, a newcomer being shown how to find things on the website the company has for its associates, and a newcomer being given a tour of company

Table 4. Results of HLM analyses for IVG categories and most commonly occurring specific practices with practice helpfulness as the dependent variable

	H4a Organization–how	H4b Employee–how	H5 Practice timing
Inform-Communication	2.371^a	0.554	–.001
	0.21	0.13	.00
	132.11**	17.29**	0.69
<i>My manager set aside a block of uninterrupted time to spend with me.</i>	2.800	0.600	–.002
	0.31	.09	.00
	80.44**	48.32**	0.40
<i>I met with a representative from HR.</i>	2.047	0.641	–.003
	0.15	0.15	.00
	178.01**	19.40**	1.61
Inform-Resources	2.783	0.506	–.002
	0.18	0.12	.00
	250.40**	18.18**	1.81
<i>I was shown how to find things on the website the company has for its associates.</i>	2.409	0.508	–.010
	0.28	0.12	.00
	76.20**	18.17**	11.99**
<i>My workspace was ready for me (including all supplies, materials, and equipment).</i>	3.063	0.597	–.012
	0.33	0.11	.00
	88.49**	28.20**	7.63**
Inform-Training	2.380	0.497	–.004
	0.14	0.16	.00
	304.85**	9.68**	3.94*
<i>I was given a tour of company facilities.</i>	2.556	0.289	–.003
	0.33	0.12	.00
	59.14**	5.49*	2.35
<i>I attended an orientation program with other new hires.</i>	1.899	1.908	–.001
	.05	.04	.00
	1,736.31**	1,848.48**	0.64
Welcome	2.430	0.666	–.005
	0.15	0.15	.00
	270.47**	18.73**	7.32**
<i>I received a personalized welcome (phone call, email, or letter) to the company from a senior leader.</i>	1.878	0.774	–.006
	0.27	0.17	.00
	47.80**	20.39**	2.70
<i>I received a personalized welcome (phone call, email, or letter) from my manager.</i>	3.630	0.489	.002
	0.14	0.13	.00
	720.39**	14.94**	0.23
Guide	2.694	0.194	–.006
	0.29	0.13	.00
	84.84**	2.35	5.70*
<i>I had a single point of contact (welcome coordinator) that I could reach out to with any questions.</i>	2.289	0.443	–.006
	0.31	0.14	.00
	53.61**	10.63**	4.72*
<i>A fellow associate was assigned as my ‘buddy’ to help answer any questions I might have.</i>	2.945	0.226	–.006
	0.39	0.14	.00
	58.16**	2.49	3.28

^aSlope (γ), standard error, F. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the Academy of Management in Montreal, Quebec, August, 2010. We thank Aden Heuser for her input on this study.

facilities) had statistically significant slopes. Hypothesis 6 was, thus, largely unsupported. With the exception of a few specific onboarding practices, offering them earlier rather than later was unrelated to the extent to which new employees were socialized.

6. Discussion

This study sought to explore, and thereby add to our understanding of, specific onboarding practices. Specific-

ally we investigated if, how, and when specific onboarding practices are offered by participating organizations and experienced by newcomers in those organizations, how helpful newcomers perceived those practices, and the association between those practices and newcomer socialization. Below we expand on the four main conclusions from our research. First, as expected, there were several discrepancies between organizational reports of practices offered and employee reports of practices experienced. In general, organizations believe employees are experiencing more onboarding activities than may be the

case. For example, employees reported experiencing the Inform-Resources category of practices, and half of the most commonly offered specific onboarding practices, significantly less often than their organization reported offering them.

A second conclusion drawn from our findings is that it matters how many different onboarding practices are offered or experienced. For all five IWG categories, the number of practices offered (or experienced) was positively related to newcomers being more socialized. This is not to say that an effective onboarding program must include all 30 of the practices examined here, but it does suggest that offering more practices, rather than fewer, helps facilitate socialization, a primary goal of most onboarding programs. In addition, for all 10 most commonly offered practices, offering each of those practices was associated with greater socialization. It is also worth noting that newcomers perceived nearly all specific practices, and all five categories, to be at least moderately beneficial to their onboarding experience.

A third conclusion is that it also matters how onboarding practices are offered or experienced. Practices in some IWG categories tended to be required more often than others, whereas all five IWG categories were more likely to be experienced formally than informally. Newcomers viewed practices as more helpful when they were required (as opposed to encouraged) and the extent to which practices were required was significantly related to extent socialized for all five categories and for all 10 most commonly offered specific practices. The same was generally true for experiencing practices formally (as opposed to informally). Here the extent to which practices were experienced formally was significantly related to extent socialized for three of the five categories, and for 8 of the 10 most commonly offered specific practices.

Our fourth and final conclusion concerns the timing of onboarding practices. It appears that the optimal timing of practices is more complex than simply 'the earlier the better'. For three of the five practice categories, offering the practices earlier was associated with those practices being viewed as more helpful. In terms of extent socialized, significant relationships were not evident for any of the five categories. For both perceived helpfulness and extent socialized, significant associations were observed for only 3 of the 10 most commonly offered specific practices. The only common specific practice significant for both outcomes, however, was being shown how to find things on the website the organization has for its associates. The optimal timing of a specific onboarding practice may depend on the needs of the new employee, the specific practice, and how many practices are being offered. Our results suggest that onboarding activities are most commonly occurring on the first day, though there are some exceptions and considerable variation in the timing of experienced activities.

6.1. Implications

Our findings contribute to the socialization literature in two primary ways. First, we demonstrate the value of looking beyond broad socialization tactics to examine specific onboarding practices and how they relate to newcomer socialization. More specific connections to socialization and other distal outcomes can be made by studying specific onboarding practices, programs, events, and policies, as well as the what, how, and when of those specific activities. Second, this study provides an initial test of three frameworks provided by Klein and Heuser (2008): the IWG Framework for organizing the various onboarding practices used by organizations, the expanded socialization content framework, and the temporal framework for when onboarding practices occur. The composite socialization content measure, based on the expanded socialization content framework, operated as expected. The other two frameworks were helpful in organizing what occurred and when, but also presented some challenges.

Our results also highlight five issues with important implications for practice. The first concerns the observed discrepancy in several instances between what companies said they are offering and what newcomers reported actually experiencing. This disconnect was greatest for the Inform-Resources category. These inconsistencies could be a result of structural problems (individual departments or managers not implementing programs as designed), or it could be that the activities occurred, but in a forgettable manner (i.e., employees forgot or never realized it happened). The former suggests the need to put mechanisms in place to ensure that employees are indeed experiencing practices as planned; the latter suggests a need to evaluate whether the practices should be offered at all, or delivered differently.

A second practical concern centers around which practices are most effective. In terms of extent socialized, the highest correlations within a category being experienced were observed for Inform-Resources and Welcome. With regards to perceived helpfulness, the highest average scores were observed for Guide and the lowest for Welcome. For the most part, the specific activities perceived to be most helpful are also very frequently offered. Two specific practices viewed as highly beneficial but offered slightly less frequently are assigning a fellow associate as 'buddy' and encouraging a newcomer to observe a fellow associate for a period of time. These should be considered by organizations if they are not already part of the onboarding process. Similarly, most of the specific practices rated lower in terms of perceived helpfulness are not widely offered. Two that are offered by more than half of the participating companies are being shown a new employee video and receiving a personalized welcome from a senior leader. Organizations that are using these activities should review them and potentially revise the

content or communication of these practices if they are retained. In general, organizations should be evaluating and updating onboarding programs to include those practices that are effective and revise or eliminate practices that are not providing the desired results.

Third, organizations need to determine how many different onboarding practices to offer for newcomers. Our findings suggest that offering and experiencing more onboarding practices is better, yet organizational resources are limited and at some point there are likely diminishing returns. Prior research has found that most companies provide relatively few formal onboarding practices (Survey findings, 2011). Because each of the five different IVG categories reflects a different purpose, it is recommended that multiple practices from each category be offered. Of the five onboarding practice categories, the results regarding Welcome practices are perhaps the most interesting. The practices in this category are the least commonly offered or experienced and are rated as least helpful, yet the extent to which practices in this category were offered was associated with being more socialized. It, thus, appears that both organizations and new employees under value these practices. These activities may need to be better framed or communicated to overcome this perception. Evaluating these practices against objective outcomes may also help better make the case for their usage.

A fourth practical issue concerns whether practices should be mandated and offered formally, or simply encouraged and made available informally. Despite the current trend toward self-directed learning and development, our results suggest that requiring onboarding practices is associated with those practices being perceived as more helpful and with greater socialization. The same is generally, but not as consistently, true for experiencing specific practices formally versus informally. This suggests that most onboarding activities should be required and offered formally. The precise reasons for these differences remain to be demonstrated, but required and formal practices may be more likely to occur, be attended, and be taken seriously. They may also be more carefully planned and implemented than optional or informal activities.

Finally, organizations need to determine the optimal timing of onboarding practices. Both the academic and practitioner literatures view onboarding as a process that should be designed to occur over several months, yet our results indicate that most practices are provided within a very narrow time frame (the mode for most practices being the first day). Our results further suggest, in terms of facilitating socialization, that earlier is not necessarily better with the exception of a few specific practices. Rather than overloading newcomers on entry, it is, thus, recommended that a more nuanced approach be taken based on learning needs (Klein & Heuser, 2008). That is, each onboarding practice should be examined in terms of what it is designed to help a newcomer learn, and that

practice then sequenced based on when that learning need is most salient. This may also mean providing an activity at multiple rather than a single time period (e.g., providing some basic information initially and then following up with more depth later), and taking better advantage of the time during recruitment and hiring and between the hire and start dates.

6.2. Limitations and future research

Several limitations of this research should be recognized in interpreting our findings and implications. The first is the cross sectional nature of our design. Specifically, we had newcomers at various stages of early tenure complete a single survey regarding their onboarding experiences and extent socialized. Because we also obtained information from organizations, we did not rely solely on single source data from a single point in time. However, a longitudinal design that tracks newcomers over time would be advantageous in several respects. Newcomers may report their experiences with more accuracy if they are asked about a shorter time period. A longitudinal design would also allow for a stronger test of the causal relationships between specific practices and extent socialized. Future research employing a longitudinal design with multiple assessments of what, when, and how practices are experienced would help achieve a deeper understanding of the most effective timing of different onboarding practices.

Two other potential limitations follow from the above discussion, namely our reliance on newcomer recall and our definition of newcomers. The average tenure in our sample is 9 months, but some employees were asked to recall experiences that had occurred up to 2 years prior to completing the survey. We operationalized newcomers as having tenure of 2 years or less based on the longstanding recommendation that onboarding should be a process lasting at least 6 months and continuing for up to 2 years (Klein & Polin, 2012). However, the optimal onboarding time frame may have become compressed and warrants further examination given changes in the nature of the employment relationship (e.g., Rousseau, 1995), increased employee mobility, and use of contingent work arrangements. In terms of reliance on recall, it has been demonstrated that retrospective reports can be biased (e.g., Howard, 2011), yet research also suggests that they can be fairly accurate and are generally not so imperfect as to be invalid (e.g., Todd, Tennen, Carney, Armeli, & Affleck, 2004). The newcomer is the best source for information about their experiences, but collecting this information in closer proximity to the onboarding practices in question would help reduce this concern.

A fourth set of limitations pertain to our sample and resulting restrictions in range. Our findings are more generalizable than had we only used a single organization, and

we did obtain sufficient variation on most dimensions. Yet our sample is not sufficiently large or diverse to be fully generalizable in terms of providing a census of current onboarding practices in organizations. In addition, having only 10 organizations resulted in low statistical power for the organizational level and cross-level analysis. Our failure to find differences based on the type of employee or position may also be a function of our small sample size at the organizational level. The IWG categories and socialization content dimensions were designed to be applicable across all types of organizations, jobs, and employees. In addition, for many of the examined specific practices, it is difficult to identify a specific scenario where the practice would not be beneficial (e.g., workspace being ready, having a single point of contact). Yet it is reasonable to expect that, depending on the context, there could be differences in the relative importance of different IWG categories or effectiveness of specific onboarding practices. Discovering those potential differences in the use or effectiveness of onboarding practices due to organizational, job, and individual characteristics was not an objective of this study, but these are important avenues for future research.

Another sample-related limitation is that we did not have all onboarding practices occurring at all possible time periods among our participants. Similarly, some practices were always offered and nearly always required, while others were rarely required. Moreover, timing and helpfulness ratings were only obtained if a practice was experienced. The restrictions in range were further exacerbated by our cross sectional design in that some participants had only been on the job a few days or weeks at the time of survey administration, limiting both the practices they had experienced and the time for those experiences to influence their socialization. As a result, the full range was not always present in our variables. Together, the above sample issues limited the likelihood of finding significant relationships. Field experiments – even studies using cohort designs – would allow more direct comparisons of offering specific practices in different ways or at different times to better understand the optimal timing and manner in which specific practices should be provided to maximize their value in helping socialize newcomers. A final potential sample-related limitation is our use of a single respondent for the organizational level data (Gerhart, Wright, & McMahan, 2000; Huselid & Becker, 2000). Although we recognize there is debate around this issue, we obtained this information from the individual most familiar with the organization's onboarding policies and practices. Had we sought corroboration from a second, potentially less informed source, we would be able to assess inter-rater reliability, but it is less clear that the combined information would be more accurate (Huselid & Becker, 2000).

It also needs to be noted that our focus for this study was on the actions taken by organizations to facilitate socialization. Yet research has established employee pro-

activity, and individual differences associated with those proactive behaviors, also contribute to new employee socialization. Future research is needed to examine how individual differences and proactive behavior interact with specific onboarding in contributing to socialization. Previous research supports the notion that individual differences can moderate the effects of information and learning on proximal outcomes (Saks & Ashforth, 1997), and extent socialized is one such proximal outcome. In addition, future research should explore whether certain onboarding practices might facilitate proactive behavior (e.g., Gruman, Saks, & Zweig, 2006). This could occur by providing the mechanisms or opportunities for proactivity (e.g., Inform-Communication or Inform-Resources practices) or by providing new hires greater confidence (e.g., Inform-Training practices) or a sense of security (e.g., Welcome or Guide practices) to be proactive.

A final limitation to note is the IWG framework and checklist used to assess what practices were offered and experienced. We found the IWG categories to be useful for organizing and thinking about the different goals and approaches to onboarding, and aggregating practices into those categories did yield variation in means and some significant patterns across categories of practices. However, the categories may be too broad from a measurement perspective in that aggregating practices obscured differences across specific onboarding practices within a category. There were several specific instances where the findings for an IWG category were not representative of the findings for specific practices within that category. Future research is needed to examine specific onboarding practices offered at different times, and in different ways, to more fully understand the mechanisms through and extent to which each facilitates the socialization of newcomers. Yet there is also a place for research along the lines of this study where assessing a wide variety of onboarding practices is of interest. For such future research, there may be a better way to assess the degree to which organizations are offering various practices and the possible variations in how those practices are implemented. In addition, the comprehensiveness of the list of examined practices, and the prevalence of those practices, need to be verified through much larger and representative sample of organizations. Research would then be needed validating the measure of those practices in terms of both psychometrics and structure.

6.3. Conclusion

Considerable attention has been given to broad socialization tactics, the role of newcomer proactivity in facilitating their socialization, and the relationship between socialization and various organizational outcomes. Yet relatively few studies have examined the specific practices initiated by organizations to facilitate socialization. This study

provides a preliminary effort to do so, and in turn, contributes initial insights regarding the efficacy of specific onboarding practices and how and when to offer those practices. Future research is needed that builds on these findings to further identify the specific practices that are generally most effective, alone and in combination, as well as key situational factors and variations in implementation that make a specific practice more or less effective in facilitating socialization.

Notes

1. Because of prior evidence that some organizations approach onboarding differently for different types of employees (Survey findings, 2011), we looked for differences in our variables of interest (using ANOVA) based on employment status and supervisory responsibility. No significant differences were observed, so we did not use these demographic factors as control or moderating variables in our analyses.
2. We did not compare the 'How' variables from the organization and new employee perspective because of different ways 'How' is defined for each – a required practice does not necessarily have to occur formally nor an encouraged practice informally.

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