Role of Domain-Specific Facets of Perceived Organizational Support During Expatriation and Implications for Performance

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In this study, we integrated social exchange theory with a spillover perspective to examine the relationships between two facets of perceived organizational support (POS) among expatriated managers (at Time 1), their work and general adjustment (at Time 2), affective commitment (at Time 2), and job performance (at Time 3). A longitudinal survey sampled 165 expatriate managers in China across three time periods. POS in the current assignment and in off-the-job life were found to interact with each other to predict work and general adjustment. Work and general adjustment were related to higher affective commitment by the expatriate employees, which, in turn, led to better job performance. The theoretical and practical implications of these results are discussed.

Key words: perceived organizational support; expatriate adjustment; job performance; longitudinal

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Perceived organizational support (POS), defined as employees’ “global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being” (Eisenberger et al. 1986, p. 501), has been the focus of a significant amount of research effort and has been associated with various employees’ attitudes and behaviors, including but not limited to job satisfaction, affective commitment, task performance, and turnover (see meta-analysis by Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002). However, a number of theoretical and empirical research gaps remain in the literature. For instance, although Eisenberger and colleagues have provided strong arguments and empirical findings supporting the importance of POS (e.g., Armeli et al. 1998; Eisenberger et al. 1986, 1997, 2002; Lynch et al. 1999; Rhoades et al. 2001), the majority of POS studies have been cross-sectional in nature, which leaves the possibility of reverse causality, as would be the case if, for example, more committed employees perceived higher organizational support (Rhoades et al. 2001). Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) also suggested that longitudinal designs would help researchers clarify the causal links among POS, relevant mediators, and outcomes of interest in the social exchange process between the employee and employer.

In addition, while supervisor support (one type of support) has been found to be related to POS (Eisenberger et al. 2002, Shanock and Eisenberger 2006), the influence of POS in different domains has yet to be examined in detail. Guzzo et al. (1994) were among the first to adapt the general measure of POS (Eisenberger et al. 1986) to assess POS among expatriates with respect to (1) current job assignment (i.e., work), (2) off-the-job life (i.e., nonwork), and (3) plans for repatriation. The foreign environment can fundamentally change the nature of the employee’s relationship with their organization because the employer becomes a crucial (or only) source of support, which makes the employing organization even more central to the employee’s daily life (cf. Guzzo et al. 1994). International assignments typically separate employees from their routines and/or their social support structures (such as friends, relatives, and other family members), which is likely to create greater uncertainty (Black et al. 1991). At the same
time, expatriates face challenges in their daily lives that are normally absent for domestic new hires or employees who are assigned to new projects in their home country. The employer’s role in the employee’s daily life in connection with such matters as housing, food, shopping, or family members’ jobs and schools may be one reason why distinguishing the work versus nonwork domains of POS can become more important for expatriates as compared to domestic employees (cf. Guzzo et al. 1994, Kraimer and Wayne 2004, Kraimer et al. 2001). Considering POS in different domains is thus, particularly relevant to employees expatriated on international assignment (Guzzo et al. 1994) because of the adjustments they must make in different areas of life.

Organizational support theory posits that the positive or negative consequences of POS result from (1) employees’ perceptions of favorable treatment by the organization as a discretionary choice and (2) the norm of reciprocity within a social exchange framework (Rhoaes and Eisenberger 2002). If this is indeed the case, then employees’ reactions should differ when they perceive dissimilar amounts of support in distinct domains. In this paper, we intend to test the assumption regarding the underlying psychological process of POS by examining domain-specific differences in POS. Such an integration of a “domain-specific” research scheme (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. 2005, Takeuchi et al. 2002) into the social exchange theoretical perspective will provide a coherent organizing framework for examining the employment relationship in an international assignment context. The domain-specific approach should also apply to the outcome variables of POS such as cross-cultural adjustment, defined as the degree of comfort, familiarity, and ease that an individual feels toward the new cultural environment (Black and Stephens 1989).

Although past research has examined different types (inherently different from “domain” because types were not necessarily identified using one criterion such as work relatedness) of POS, little attempt has been made to align the criterion by which POS and outcome domains are defined. For example, Kraimer and Wayne (2004) examined adjustment, career, and financial POS, while two main dependent variables (commitment and performance) were divided by target (commitment toward the parent or the foreign subsidiary) and in or outside task role (task or contextual performance). We believe that the inconsistent results from past POS studies that looked at certain POS facets could partly have been because of POS and its outcome variables not having been conceptualized using the same domain framework. In this study, we intend to adopt a consistent domain scheme for both POS and a proximal outcome variable (adjustment) to identify stronger and more relevant relationships. We borrow from the work-family literature (e.g., Edwards and Rothbard 2000, Heller and Watson 2005, Ilies et al. 2007) to adopt work relatedness (work versus nonwork related) as the criterion for identifying the domains. As a result, we can differentiate between work (termed “current assignment POS”) versus nonwork related POS (termed “off-the-job life POS”: Guzzo et al. 1994), and work versus general cross-cultural adjustment (Takeuchi et al. 2002).

The main objectives of this study, therefore, are (1) to develop theoretical arguments for the main and interactive effects of POS in the work and nonwork domains (i.e., current assignment and off-the-job life POS) on work and general adjustment and (2) to examine the mediating processes in which POS leads to important employee outcomes (i.e., job performance) within a social exchange framework. Following Van Scotter et al. (2000, p. 526), we define job performance in this study as expected, role-related behaviors, “that are directly involved in producing goods or services, or activities that provide indirect support for the organization’s core technical processes.” This study, with its longitudinal design, contributes to the POS as well as the expatriate adjustment literature by illustrating the utility of a domain-specific perspective and the role affective commitment plays in mediating the relationship between adjustment and performance.

**Theoretical Overview**

While social exchange theory has emerged as the dominant theory in the employer-employee relationship literature (Shore and Coyle-Shapiro 2003) with POS being an integral part of it (e.g., Tekleab et al. 2005, Wayne et al. 1997), only a limited number of studies have examined the role of POS in the expatriate literature. Guzzo et al. (1994) are among the first scholars to have examined the antecedents (e.g., human resources practices used to manage expatriate employees) and consequences (organizational commitment) of POS during international assignment. Using cross-sectional data obtained from 148 expatriates, they found positive relationships between employer benefits and POS, and between POS and organizational commitment. While they obtained POS in three different domains, they used them as indicators of overall POS. Shaffer et al. (2001) found POS and affective commitment to be related to premature return intentions, defined as a situation where an expatriate leaves the international assignment early and returns home but generally stays within the same firm (Black and Gregersen 1990). However, they did not examine the relationship between POS and affective commitment.

Kraimer et al. (2001) differentiated the sources of POS (from the parent company versus from the foreign subsidiary) and tested their relationships with adjustment facets (general, work, and interactional). Using cross-sectional data, they found that parent company POS was positively related to general adjustment, while foreign facility POS was positively related to general...
and interactional adjustment. However, neither of the POS facets exhibited a significant relationship with work adjustment. Building on the Kraimer et al. (2001) study, Kraimer and Wayne (2004) proposed a more comprehensive model to examine the relationships among three facets of POS (i.e., adjustment, career, and financial), overall adjustment, two types of commitment (i.e., toward the parent and the foreign subsidiary), two types of performance (task and contextual), and intentions to remain. They only examined the relationship between adjustment POS and overall adjustment of expatriates (but not the other two facets of POS on overall adjustment) and found them to be related. Adjustment POS, however, was negatively related to the performance outcomes, career POS was not related to either task or contextual performance, and financial POS was positively related to task performance only. Overall adjustment and the two types of commitment did not act as mediators in the relationship between POS facets and task performance in this study. Thus the findings of the extant expatriate POS studies are mixed and equivocal.

Furthermore, while the exact focus of social exchange studies may vary (e.g., Blau 1964; Gouldner 1960; Homans 1958, 1961; March and Simon 1958), a common theme is that individuals exchange resources and strive for a balance in the give-and-take of this process (Coyle-Shapiro and Conway 2004). In organizations, this exchange process may lead to the formation of long-term open social exchanges built on trust that contribute to a productive and reciprocal relationship between an employee and the organization. Social exchange scholars have established the importance of the norm of reciprocity as a key principle (Blau 1964, Gouldner 1960) and argued that employees will be more inclined to reciprocate if the resources received from the other party are considered to be discretionary (voluntary decisions to be supportive) as opposed to a result of external circumstances (Eisenberger et al. 1997).

Nonetheless, longitudinal POS studies that examine possible mediating processes are also limited. For example, Eisenberger et al. (2002) reported that perceived supervisor support was positively related to temporal change in POS, suggesting that perceived supervisor support leads to POS. Rhoades et al. (2001) took repeated measurements of POS and affective commitment over time in two samples of employees and found support for POS as an antecedent to affective commitment (Study 2). They also provided evidence for the mediating role of affective commitment in the relationship between POS and voluntary turnover. Tekleab et al. (2005) found that POS (at Time 1) was negatively related to psychological contract violation (at Time 2), which was, in turn, negatively linked to job satisfaction (at Time 2). They also established that psychological contract violation partially mediated the relationship between POS (at Time 1) and job satisfaction (at Time 2). Choi (2006) found affective commitment (at Time 1) to be a partial mediator of the relationship between POS (at Time 1) and contextual performance (i.e., interpersonal helping at Time 2). On the other hand, Stinglhamber and Vandenberghe (2003) found that POS (at Time 2) led to affective commitment (at Time 3), but affective commitment did not act as a mediator of the relationship between POS (at Time 2) and actual turnover (at Time 4).

In sum, even though the longitudinal research on the mediated effects of POS is promising, its findings have been mixed and additional important work outcomes such as job performance (Harrison et al. 2004) should be examined to further elucidate the role of affective commitment in the social exchange processes. We developed and tested a process model of POS in specific domains and concomitant adjustment, commitment, and performance of expatriate employees, using longitudinal data from expatriate employees on international assignments across three time periods. The hypothesized relationships are displayed in Figure 1.

**Roles of POS Facets**

In general, when examining cross-cultural adjustment from a work-family conflict perspective (e.g., Edwards and Rothbard 2000, Heller and Watson 2005, Ilies et al. 2007), the causal relationships between any two variables for a particular individual can be categorized

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**Figure 1** Process Model of Relationship Between POS and Job Performance

![Figure 1](image-url)
into two types. The first might be called a within-domain effect, where a relationship between an independent and a dependent variable holds within one particular domain (e.g., work). The relationship between POS in the current assignment (work domain) and work adjustment (also work domain) would be an example. The second type of relationship in the international assignment context can be described as a spillover effect, defined as the “effects of work and family on one another that generate similarities between the two domains” (Edwards and Rothbard 2000, p. 180). An example would be the relationship between the POS for off-the-job life (nonwork domain) and work adjustment (work domain).

**Within-Domain POS and Adjustment.** The results of previous research in this area suggest that POS and adjustment are related within any one domain. For expatriates entering an unfamiliar and ambiguous foreign environment, assignment-related support from the parent company (i.e., current assignment POS) is normally critical for reducing role ambiguity and role conflict, which, in turn, can facilitate work adjustment (Black and Gregersen 1991). For instance, the parent company can provide resources that help expatriates communicate with local employees, assign job responsibilities to make the assignment easier to accomplish, and provide training to expand the expatriate’s skill set for the assignment. Findings from previous studies support a linkage between POS and adjustment. For instance, Kraimer et al. (2001) found that POS from both the parent company and foreign facility increased expatriate adjustment both to their work and in general.

Furthermore, as Black et al. (1991) have noted, the parent company can provide logistical support regarding housing, transportation, schools, and so forth to reduce uncertainties associated with the nonwork or general environment. Such off-the-job life POS should also facilitate expatriate adjustment. Similarly, benefits such as home leaves, through which expatriates can visit their home country regularly, stay informed of recent developments and stay in touch with their friends back home, can also be considered off-the-job life POS. These temporary leaves are a comfort to expatriates and help them by temporarily taking them away from stressful overseas assignments in the hope that they will feel reenergized to tackle the adjustment processes again. Therefore we expect that,

**Hypothesis 1.** Current assignment POS increases work adjustment.

**Hypothesis 2.** Off-the-job life POS increases general adjustment.

**POS Spillover and Adjustment.** Beyond the main “within-domain” effect, a variable that resides in one domain can also affect variables in another. For example, general adjustment (in the nonwork domain) may influence job satisfaction (in the work domain; Takeuchi et al. 2002). Such a relationship is referred to as a “spillover” effect. The spillover perspective asserts that an employee’s experiences at work can carry-over into the home, and experiences at home can affect one’s work (Caligiuri et al. 1998). A meta-analysis carried out by Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. (2005) has clearly illustrated the existence of such spillovers in connection with three of the work-related stressors (role clarity, role discretion, and coworker support) and their relationship with expatriates’ general and interaction adjustment. Thus, it is possible that a particular type of POS (e.g., current assignment POS) could spill over to affect other domains, specifically general or nonwork adjustment. However, organizational support theory (e.g., Eisenberger et al. 1997, Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002) suggests that the effect is more complicated than a direct spillover effect.

A basic premise of organizational support theory is that employees have a tendency to personify their organization (i.e., their employer) by ascribing to its human-like characteristics (Eisenberger et al. 1986). This tends to make employees “attentive to whether or not various aspects of their treatment by the organization result from discretionary decisions or from external constraints” (Eisenberger et al. 1997, p. 813). Employees therefore can be expected to develop positive attitudes toward an organization that provides favorable treatment (leading to high POS), especially if they consider that this treatment is the result of a discretionary valuation of the employee by the organization (Eisenberger et al. 1997, Rhoades et al. 2001). For instance, Eisenberger et al. (1997) found that the correlation between POS and the favorableness of job conditions depended strongly on the employee’s perceived organizational discretion with respect to those conditions. Specifically, they found that the correlation between POS and perceived favorableness in the high-discretion condition was about three times as strong as that in the low discretion condition.

A number of researchers have pointed out that in an expatriate context, information about the company’s support becomes especially salient (Aycan 1997, Guzzo et al. 1994). As such, expatriates are likely to be more attentive to various aspects of their organization’s treatment. To the extent that employees perceive organizational support as discretionary, they should exhibit more favorable reactions. So when both off-the-job and assignment POS are strong, employees should feel more valued as partners in their social exchange with the organization, because they should be more likely to conclude that the organization has devoted discretionary effort to fulfill their needs. This, in turn, should strengthen the expatriates’ perceived obligation to reciprocate by exhibiting high adjustment. High POS in only one domain (while low in the other), on the other hand, may be viewed as involving relatively less discretionary
effort, which is likely to engender less positive outcomes. Based on this discretionary argument, the greatest benefits of perceived support should be observed when both current assignment and off-the-job POS are high.

**Hypothesis 3.** Off-the-job life POS interacts with POS in the current assignment to affect work adjustment such that the positive effect of current assignment POS on work adjustment will be stronger when off-the-job life POS is also high.

**Hypothesis 4.** Current assignment POS interacts with off-the-job life POS to affect general adjustment such that the positive effect of off-the-job life POS on general adjustment will be stronger when current assignment POS is also high.

Some may argue that the positive effect on adjustment of the combination of high POS in the current assignment and high off-the-job life POS can be predicted from the conventional spillover perspective and that it is unnecessary to conceptualize the relationship in terms of an interaction term if the direct effects of the two facets of POS are sufficient. However, direct effects within or across domains occur when domain-specific POS functions separately; that is, strong current assignment (or off-the-job life) POS alone has a positive effect on either type of adjustment, independent of the level of POS in the other sphere. The discretionary perspective, however, posits that these two POS facets function together. Strong POS in a single domain may not be sufficient to signal enough discretionary effort on the employer’s part, limiting the extent to which the expatriate feels obliged to reciprocate.

**Affective Commitment as a Mediator in Relationships Between Adjustment and Performance**

Within the social exchange framework, (affective) commitment is usually considered a key attitudinal variable (cf. Hofmann and Morgeson 1999, Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002, Settoon et al. 1996, Van Dyne and Ang 1998). *Affective commitment* specifically refers to an employee’s emotional and affective attachment to the organization, and it is associated with stronger job involvement (Allen and Meyer 1990). An impressive number of studies in nonexpatriate contexts have linked affective commitment to workplace outcomes such as task performance, promotability, and organizational citizenship behavior (Colquitt et al. 2007; Meyer et al. 1989, 2002; Riketta 2002; Rosen et al. 2006), as well as to lower turnover and turnover intentions (LeBlanc and Kelloway 2002, Rhoades et al. 2001). Given that the social exchange perspective has provided another theoretical framework to study the expatriation process (Wang and Takeuchi 2007), it is important to integrate affective commitment into the examination of that process. Therefore, in the current study, we consider the possibility that expatriates’ affective commitment may play an important role as an attitudinal consequence of adjustment, which, in turn, may influence their performance.

Specifically, adjustment is expected to have a positive impact on affective commitment (Aycan 1997). Although to the best of our knowledge, previous expatriate studies have not explicitly theorized and examined this relationship, a meta-analysis on (newcomer) adjustment by Bauer et al. (2007) based on 70 studies found that (newcomer) adjustment was positively related to organizational commitment as well as performance. In the expatriate context, if expatriate employees are better adjusted to the foreign environment because of, in part, the supportive practices of their organization, they should feel more involved and should be more likely to identify with the parent company. Similarly, if expatriates are well adjusted to the general cultural environment in the foreign country, they are also more likely to become attached to the organization (Guzzo et al. 1994). This is because the positive feeling of being well adjusted to the foreign environment and experiencing personal growth (cf. Shaffer and Harrison 2001) is likely to spill over to the work domain to influence expatriates’ attitudes toward the organization, thereby increasing their affective commitment (cf. Takeuchi et al. 2002). The social exchange perspective then predicts that expatriates who become more committed to the organization will experience a higher-quality relationship with their organization, and as a result, will be willing to reciprocate by exerting themselves in their jobs (Settoon et al. 1996).

Aycan (1997, p. 9) noted that, “[e]xpatriates perform better and stay committed to their assignment to the extent that they feel content about their lives in the new cultural context.” Other studies have demonstrated the importance of adjustment in predicting task and contextual performance (Kraimer et al. 2001, Takeuchi et al. 2005, Wang and Takeuchi 2007), and a meta-analysis by Bhaskar-Srinivas et al. (2005) has confirmed the often assumed but seldom tested relationship between adjustment and performance. These findings provide strong empirical evidence for the association between expatriate adjustment and performance.

On the other hand, previous research by Kraimer and Wayne (2004) failed to find a significant relationship between parent company commitment and task performance in contrast to findings in the nonexpatriate literature (e.g., Colquitt et al. 2007; Meyer et al. 1989, 2002; Riketta 2002; Rosen et al. 2006). They did note, however, that expatriates who were highly committed would be motivated to complete their job responsibilities. This suggests that expatriates who have high affective commitment will feel obligated to perform effectively as a result of their involvement, attachment...
to and identification with the company and its goals (Beyer et al. 2000, Meyer et al. 2002). Thus, expatriates who become more psychologically involved in the organization (i.e., have higher affective commitment) are more likely to exert themselves during expatriate assignment. From a social exchange perspective, commitment is likely to be the lynchpin in the reciprocity involved in the social exchange relationship between expatriates and their organizations (Eisenberger et al. 1986). It is conceivable that expatriates who feel well adjusted because of the support of the organization will develop greater emotional attachment to that organization. The norm of reciprocity, which is central to social exchange theory, then predicts that such expatriates are likely to seek to reciprocate by delivering superior performance (Choi 2006, Colquitt et al. 2007). Finally, given that there are several different variables that may also act as mediators between adjustment and performance, such as person-job fit (e.g., Bauer et al. 2007) or lack of work stress (e.g., Takeuchi et al. 2005), we expect the mediating effects of affective commitment to be partial.

**Hypothesis 5.** Affective commitment partially mediates the relationship between (1) work and (2) general adjustment on expatriate job performance.

**Method**

**Research Design and Procedure**

As part of the ongoing larger research effort (Takeuchi et al. 2005, Wang and Takeuchi 2007), a multinational corporation, which manufactures automobiles and automobile parts in China, permitted the research team to collect data from its expatriate employees. A week before receiving the first (Time 1) survey, the expatriates received a letter from the vice president in charge of the human resource department pointing out the importance of the survey for improving management practices and asking for their voluntary participation. The survey was then distributed to each expatriate along with a cover letter assuring them that their responses would be kept confidential and that their participation was optional. The survey was administered during company time, and expatriates responded on answer sheets. The Time 2 survey was administered one year after the initial assessment, using the same procedure. Finally, six months after the second survey, job performance ratings of each respondent were prepared by their direct supervisors specifically for this research (Time 3). Each expatriate was appraised by one supervisor. No data were collected on the supervisors. For both the survey and performance ratings, English was used, as all the expatriates spoke English fluently.

**Sample**

Because of the strong and supportive corporate sponsorship and the use of company time to fill out the survey, the Time 1 survey had a 98.21% response rate (167 of 168 possible respondents). Among the 167 respondents, two left more than half of their responses blank, and they were excluded from the analyses. The remaining 165 expatriates were working in various Chinese cities, including Beijing (10.3%), Qingdao (15.8%), Shanghai (52.1%), and Shenyang (18.8%). The majority of the expatriates (70.30%) came from the United States, followed by Canada (13.90%), Australia (10.30%), the United Kingdom, and Hong Kong. Eighty-six percent (N = 141) of the respondents were male with an average age of 36.81 years (SD = 5.78). On average, they had been in China for 1.61 years (range: 1–5 years, SD = 0.84) at Time 1, and they had worked for the parent company for 7.23 years (SD = 1.83). On average, these expatriates had 66.09 weeks of previous international work experiences (SD = 73.80) and 6.03 weeks of previous foreign travel experience (SD = 7.14). The majority of respondents were married (71.50%), and most of those who were married had their spouses (60.60%) and at least one child with them (50.30%) in China.

Of the 165 Time 1 respondents, 133 also responded to the Time 2 survey, a 79.64% response rate. It should be noted that there was no turnover, which refers to a situation where an expatriate departs from the employing company while on international assignment (Black and Gregersen 1990), or premature return between Time 1 and Time 2 among the expatriates who responded to the Time 1 survey. Analysis of variance was applied to evaluate the pattern of nonresponses, using a dummy variable coded 0 for those Time 1 respondents who did not respond to the Time 2 survey, and 1 for those Time 1 respondents who also responded at Time 2. The Time 1 current assignment POS and off-the-job POS scores for the two groups were compared. Not too surprisingly, Time 2 nonrespondents (N = 32) perceived significantly lower current assignment POS (F = 5.46, p ≤ 0.05) at Time 1 (M = 3.38, SD = 0.98) than those who responded to both surveys (M = 3.80, SD = 0.92). However, the off-the-job life POS scores at Time 1 did not differ significantly between these two respondent groups (F = 0.15, ns).

At Time 3, supervisor performance ratings were obtained for 110 of the Time 2 respondents. Again, the pattern of nonresponses was evaluated by conducting analyses of variance using a dummy variable (coded 0 for those who did not receive a performance rating and 1 for those who did). In this analysis, Time 1 current assignment POS and off-the-job POS, and Time 2 work adjustment, general adjustment, and affective commitment were all compared. These two groups of participants were significantly different in their Time 1 average
current assignment POS ($F = 4.32, p \leq 0.05$), but not in terms of other variables. Specifically, participants who did not receive supervisor performance ratings perceived significantly lower current assignment POS at Time 1 ($M = 3.51, SD = 1.00$) than those who later received performance ratings ($M = 3.83, SD = 0.90$), which suggests that their Time 1 perceptions were accurate.

Overall, it seems that the nonresponse may have been partly related to Time 1 current assignment POS. If so, assuming the missing data to be completely at random (MCAR; Little and Rubin 1987) was not appropriate. In the substantive analyses, therefore, missing values were modeled with an expectation-maximization (EM) algorithm by assuming that the data were missing at random (MAR; Little and Rubin 1987).

Measures
The study variables were quantified using scales, which had been developed previously with 7-point Likert-type anchoring that ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7), unless noted otherwise.

POS. We used a shortened seven-item version of the POS scale developed by Eisenberger et al. (1986) that was used in the Guzzo et al. (1994) study to assess expatriates’ perceived support in the current assignment and off-the-job life (see Table 1). In addition, following Guzzo et al. (1994), we asked the expatriates to respond to these same set of seven items twice, once with respect to their current assignment and again with their off-the-job life. Sample items for current assignment and off-the-job POS were, respectively: “The organization really cares about my well-being with regard to (1) my current assignment, or (2) off-the-job life.” The reliability of these two domains was 0.87 for the current assignment and 0.93 for off-the-job life.

Mplus 4.0 software (Muthén and Muthén 2006) was used to conduct confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) to examine scale dimensionality for POS in the two domains. Two models were run. The first involved a two-factor CFA with each item loading on one of the two latent factors (i.e., current assignment POS and off-the-job life POS). The results of this two-factor CFA showed a very good fit to the data ($\chi^2(76) = 78.08, p \geq 0.1$, incremental fit index (IFI) = 1.00, comparative fit index (CFI) = 1.00, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.01). All items also loaded onto the respective factors significantly ($p \leq 0.01$; standardized estimates ranged from 0.62 to 0.86). Because the two latent factors were significantly correlated ($r = 0.57, p \leq 0.01$), the corresponding nested model (single-factor CFA) was tested, where the correlation between the two domains was restricted to 1. A chi-square difference test was used to examine the appropriateness of the factor structure. The results of this constrained model were $\chi^2 = 348.24$ with 77 degrees of freedom ($p \leq 0.01$), IFI = 0.75, CFI = 0.75, and RMSEA = 0.15. The significant change in chi-square between the latter, single-factor, constrained model, and the two-factor model indicates that the two-factor model provides superior fit ($\Delta \chi^2[1] = 270.16, p \leq 0.01$). The results of this CFA provide support for maintaining the two distinct POS domains. The factor loadings of this CFA are listed in Table 1.

Work and General Adjustment. Black and Stephens’ (1989) three- and seven-item scales were used to measure

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<tr>
<th>Table 1 Confirmatory Factor Analytic Results on POS Facets</th>
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<tr>
<td>POS Items</td>
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<tr>
<td>With regard to your current job assignment:</td>
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<tr>
<td>The organization really cares about my well-being.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The organization strongly considers my goals and values.</td>
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<td>The organization would ignore any complaint from me.*</td>
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<td>The organization disregards my best interests when it makes decisions that affect me.*</td>
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<td>The organization shows very little concern for me.*</td>
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<td>Help is available from the organization when I have a problem.</td>
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<td>The organization cares about my opinions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>With regard to your off-the-job life:</td>
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<tr>
<td>The organization really cares about my well-being.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The organization strongly considers my goals and values.</td>
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<td>The organization cares about my opinions.</td>
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Note. Both unstandardized and standardized factor loadings (in parentheses) are reported.

*denotes reverse coded items.
work and general adjustment, respectively. Many scholars have used this scale in empirical research on expatriates with acceptable reliabilities in various settings (e.g., Kraimer and Wayne 2004, Kraimer et al. 2001, Shaffer and Harrison 2001, Takeuchi et al. 2002). A sample item for work adjustment asked, “How well are you adjusted in terms of [specific job responsibilities]?” while one for general adjustment asked “How well are you adjusted in terms of [living conditions]?” A 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from very unadjusted (1) to very adjusted (7) was used. The reliability of the work and general adjustment scale (at Time 2) was 0.80 and 0.90, respectively.

**Affective Commitment.** Affective commitment toward the parent organization was assessed with five items selected from the Mowday et al. (1982) organizational commitment questionnaire. Consistent with the methods of other researchers, items were chosen that (1) did not assess intentions to quit (e.g., Guzzo et al. 1994) and (2) were not negatively worded (e.g., Bozeman and Perrewé 2001). The items used were: “I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond the normally expected in order to help this organization be successful,” “I find that my values and the organization’s values are very similar,” “I am proud to tell others that I am a part of this organization,” “I really care about the fate of this organization,” and “This organization really inspires the very best in me in terms of job performance.” Cronbach’s alpha for this five-item scale was 0.90 at Time 2.

**Overall Job Performance.** At Time 3, the expatriates’ immediate supervisors rated them using a five-item in-role job performance scale developed by Podsakoff and MacKenzie (1989). This scale has also been used by Janssen and Van Yperen (2004), who observed an alpha of 0.85. A sample item from this scale is, “This employee fulfills all responsibilities required by his/her job.” A 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) was used. The reliability of this overall in-role job performance scale was 0.86.

**Covariates.** Because previous studies (e.g., Gong and Fan 2006) have suggested that age, gender, the presence of a spouse on an international assignment, and current assignment tenure may affect adjustment variables, supplementary analyses were run, including these covariates as controls. The results were highly consistent with the results without the covariates and did not indicate the need for any substantive reinterpretation; therefore, for clarity of presentation, only the results without the covariates will be discussed. The results of the supplementary analyses with control variables are available from the authors.

**Results**

Where appropriate, the means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliabilities for the variables are described in Table 2. As expected, most of the substantive variables were significantly intercorrelated. In particular, current assignment POS significantly correlated with work adjustment ($r = 0.16, p \leq 0.05$). Off-the-job life POS significantly correlated with general adjustment ($r = 0.30, p \leq 0.01$). Affective commitment significantly correlated with work adjustment ($r = 0.25, p \leq 0.01$), general adjustment ($r = 0.31, p \leq 0.01$), and job performance ($r = 0.40, p \leq 0.01$).

**Test of Measurement Models**

Following one of the suggestions made by Podsakoff et al. (2003), a set of CFAs was performed first to examine the possibility of common method bias for all the measures included in the study. Specifically, a measurement model that included all the measures used in the current study (i.e., six latent variables) was estimated first. It included POS in both domains at Time 1, the two adjustment variables (i.e., work and general adjustment), affective commitment at Time 2, and job performance at Time 3. Using Mplus 4.0 software, missing values in the measures were modeled with an EM algorithm by assuming that the data were missing at random (MAR;
Little and Rubin 1987). This measurement model provided a very good fit to the data ($\chi^2(512) = 602.78, p \leq 0.01$, IFI = 0.96, CFI = 0.96, and RMSEA = 0.03). In addition, all the scale items (i.e., indicators) loaded significantly on their corresponding latent constructs (standardized factor loadings ranged from 0.62 to 0.91), demonstrating clear distinction among all the latent constructs included in this model. To estimate a common method model, 7th (self-reports) and 8th (supervisor ratings) latent factors were added, with the dual loadings for every indicator specified accordingly. The correlations between these method factors and other factors were constrained to 0. The correlation between the two method factors was also constrained to 0. This common method model had the following fit indices: $\chi^2(478) = 599.97, p \leq 0.01$, IFI = 0.95, CFI = 0.95, and RMSEA = 0.04. Comparing this common method model to the measurement model, the restricted chi-square test yielded a nonsignificant result ($\Delta \chi^2(34) = 42.81, p \geq 0.1$), suggesting that adding common method factors did not improve the model’s fit significantly. This alleviated concerns about common method bias.

**Test of Structural Models**

Using Mplus 4.0 software, a full mediation model (M1) based on the measurement model estimated earlier was estimated to test Hypotheses 1 and 2. This full mediation model was virtually the same as the model depicted in Figure 1, but without the interaction effects between the two POS domains and adjustment variables. In this model, the correlation between the exogenous variables (i.e., between current assignment POS and off-the-job life POS) was unconstrained. M1 yielded a good fit to the data ($\chi^2(521) = 629.90, p \leq 0.01$, IFI = 0.96, CFI = 0.96, and RMSEA = 0.04) and all of the hypothesized paths were significant.

Next, on the basis of M1, a partial mediation model (M2) was estimated by allowing direct paths from work and general adjustment to job performance. This model yielded a good fit to the data ($\chi^2(519) = 617.94, p \leq 0.01$, IFI = 0.96, CFI = 0.96, and RMSEA = 0.03), but only the direct path from work adjustment to job performance was significant ($\gamma = 0.38, p \leq 0.01$). Therefore, an improved model (M3) was estimated in which the path from general adjustment to job performance was eliminated ($\chi^2(520) = 618.00, p \leq 0.01$, IFI = 0.96, CFI = 0.96, and RMSEA = 0.03). Comparing this to the full mediation model (M1), M3 fitted the data significantly better ($\Delta \chi^2(1) = 11.90, p \leq 0.01$); therefore, this improved partial mediation model was used. In M3, the direct path from current assignment POS (Time 1) to work adjustment (Time 2) was significantly positive ($\gamma = 0.51, p \leq 0.01$). This result provides support for Hypothesis 1, which posited that current assignment POS should be related to work adjustment.

Similarly, the direct path from off-the-job life POS to general adjustment was significantly positive ($\gamma = 0.28, p \leq 0.01$). This result provides support for Hypothesis 2, which posited that off-the-job POS should predict better general adjustment.

To test Hypotheses 3 and 4, a moderation model (M4) was estimated on the basis of the improved partial mediation model (M3), which included the latent interaction effects between current assignment POS, off-the-job life POS, and the work and general adjustment constructs. These latent interaction effects were estimated by performing a maximum likelihood estimation using the numerical integration technique suggested by Klein and Moosbrugger (2000). This moderation model (M4) ($-2LL = 9,362.45, \chi^2(518) = 607.68, p \leq 0.01$, IFI = 0.96, CFI = 0.96, and RMSEA = 0.03) fitted the data significantly better than the improved partial mediation model (M3) ($\Delta \chi^2(2) = 11.32, p \leq 0.01$). The structural path coefficients and correlations of M4 are presented in Figure 2. Specifically, the latent interaction between current assignment POS and off-the-job life POS showed a significant relationship with work adjustment ($\gamma = 0.13, p \leq 0.05$) and with general adjustment ($\gamma = 0.17, p \leq 0.05$), supporting Hypotheses 3 and 4. Compared with M3, the pseudo-$R^2$ of work adjustment improved from 0.168 to 0.184, which suggests that the latent interaction effect included in M4 accounted for an additional 1.6% of the variance in work adjustment. Similarly, compared with M3, the pseudo-$R^2$ for general adjustment in M4 improved from 0.070 to 0.095, which suggests that the latent interaction accounted for an additional 2.5% of the variance in general adjustment. These relationships are plotted in Figures 3 and 4. In particular, the positive relationship between current assignment POS and work adjustment became stronger when off-the-job life POS support was also perceived to be strong. Similarly, the positive relationship between off-the-job life POS and general adjustment became stronger when current assignment POS was also high.

Finally, Hypothesis 5, which posited a mediating effect of affective commitment in the relationship between adjustment and job performance, was tested on the basis of the partial mediation model (M3), as this was the most suitable for further investigating the hypothesized indirect effects described in Hypothesis 5. Following suggestions from MacKinnon et al. (2004), Preacher and Hayes (2008), and others, the significance of the hypothesized indirect effects in M3 was tested directly using both a Sobel test and a bootstrapping approach. In the bootstrapping test, both 95% bootstrap confidence intervals (CIs) and 95% bias-corrected bootstrap (BCB) CIs were obtained using 1,000 bootstrap samples. Table 3 presents the Sobel test results and bootstrap CIs for the indirect effects, as well as the total effects relating the adjustment constructs with job performance. From Table 3, it can be seen that the results of the Sobel tests and the bootstrap CIs are highly consistent. Specifically, affective
commitment significantly mediated the relationships of work adjustment ($z_{\text{Sobel}} = 2.03, p \leq 0.05$) and general adjustment ($z_{\text{Sobel}} = 2.10, p \leq 0.05$) with expatriate job performance, supporting Hypothesis 5.

**Discussion**

The main objective of this study was twofold: (1) to advance how current assignment POS and off-the-job life POS affect expatriate general and work adjustment independently as well as jointly and (2) to explicate the mediating mechanisms through which POS facets affect expatriate performance with particular focus on the role of affective commitment. We found the main effect of POS facets to be on work or general adjustment, which is in line with the domain-specific perspective. In addition, we found interaction effects between two facets of POS that can be considered to represent more complex forms of spillover effect. To the best of our knowledge, this has been one of the first studies to examine interactions among organizational support perceptions in different spheres. The findings suggest that POS in the work (i.e., current assignment POS) and nonwork (i.e., off-the-job life POS) domains interact in such a way that consistent support leads to better work adjustment as well as better general adjustment. Multinationals need to ensure that they provide a full range of support, which addresses issues both on and off the job.
It is plausible that POS in one domain might act as a buffer even when support in another domain is perceived to be low, just as organizational justice studies have found that one positive aspect of the work environment (such as procedural justice) can compensate for the lack of another (e.g., distributive justice) (e.g., Cropanzano and Folger 1989). However, this was not found to be the case where POS is concerned. The importance of discretionary judgment in the ongoing social exchange relationship between the expatriate and employer suggests the importance of consistently positive organizational practices, and the data support this. Thus our findings indicate that providing support in one of the domains, while beneficial, does not appear to be sufficient for ensuring the highest levels of work and general adjustment. This finding is particularly informative because the adjustment levels were measured one year after the initial POS measurements were taken, making a somewhat stronger case for the underlying causality. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first POS study that has examined social exchange processes using a longitudinal design across three time periods.

We view the adjustment process and its outcomes to be the result of social exchange between the employee and employer (cf. Eisenberger et al. 1986, Wayne et al. 1997). This approach widens the theoretical perspective from seeing expatriate adjustment as a one-way street (i.e., how expatriates react to and handle the stress) to seeing it as a two-way exchange in which both the expatriate and employer take action on the basis of the other party’s behaviors and follow exchange rules. The relationship between POS and adjustment may not even hold for some employees working in a domestic context, simply because their adjustment involves much less disruption and uncertainty than in a foreign context (Black et al. 1991). Thus furthering our understanding of POS and its impact in the expatriate context (a special case) contributes to the overall relational view of organization life, while providing a better understanding of how expatriates’ perceptions might affect their well-being.

Our findings that relate to the facets of POS extend Kraimer and Wayne’s (2004) findings regarding the positive relationship between current assignment POS and (overall) adjustment. They did not examine the relationships between current assignment POS and facets of adjustment (such as general or work adjustment), or the relationships between other facets of POS (such as career and financial) and (overall) adjustment. More specifically, we found a domain-specific effect, whereby current assignment POS increased work adjustment while off-the-job life POS increased general adjustment. In addition, a significant interaction was evident between these two domain-specific perceptions, indicating a more complex form of spillover effect in the expatriate adjustment context.

Some of the results of the current study contrast with Kraimer and Wayne’s (2004) findings. For instance, they did not find significant relationships between (overall) adjustment and task performance or between parent company commitment and task performance. Such null findings may be a result of the cross-sectional design of their study, which might not have been able to capture the longitudinal effects of POS, adjustment, and commitment. In addition, their results indicated a negative correlation between current assignment POS and task performance. In our study, we found a positive correlation between current assignment POS and job performance. Perhaps, the current impact of POS may be different from its longer-term influence. Future studies might adopt a panel design to examine if changes in aspects of POS have any impact on expatriates’ attitudes and behaviors.

Moreover, the results show that both work and general adjustment were related to affective commitment, which, in turn, is positively related to overall job performance. These findings were consistent with a social exchange process in which expatriates perceive high levels of POS as they are exposed to the organization’s practices during their overseas assignment, and adjust better in both the work and nonwork domains, which is also associated with higher commitment to the organization. To reciprocate, expatriates exert extra effort on the job, resulting in better overall job performance. More specifically, our

| Table 3 Sobel Estimates and Bootstrap Confidence Intervals for Indirect and Total Effects of Adjustment Variables on Job Performance via Affective Commitment |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Antecedents     | Mediators       | Sobel estimates | 95% Cl (PB)     | 95% Cl (BCB)    |
| Work adjustment | Affective commit | 0.03*            | [0.007, 0.064]  | [0.008, 0.075]  |
|                 | Total effect    | 0.17**           | [0.085, 0.270]  | [0.088, 0.278]  |
| General adjustment | Affective commit | 0.05*            | [0.012, 0.097]  | [0.014, 0.107]  |
|                 | Total effect    | 0.05*            | [0.012, 0.097]  | [0.014, 0.107]  |

Notes. Unstandardized estimates are reported. CI = Confidence Interval; PB = Percentile Bootstrap; BCB = Bias-Corrected Bootstrap.

∗p < 0.05; **p < 0.01.
results indicated that affective commitment acted as a mediator of the relationships between work adjustment and job performance, and general adjustment and job performance. The mediation for work adjustment was partial and it also had an independent positive effect on overall job performance. Perhaps, this is not surprising given that there may be additional mediator variables (e.g., person-job fit) not examined in the current research.

Limitations and Future Research
There are certain limitations innate to the study design and choice of variables. First, although the use of longitudinal design, test for interaction effects, and collection of performance data minimized concerns about common method bias, the design might have introduced some other limitations. For instance, we could not obtain the performance data at Time 3 for 23 expatriates who were still employed by the sponsoring organization at that time. Because the performance ratings were received after all the other measures had been collected, it is hard to tell whether there was attrition in this dependent variable. As a result, the ostensibly significant relationships among adjustment, affective commitment, and performance should be interpreted with caution. This also relates to our interpretation of the mediating role of affective commitment on the relationship between adjustment facets and job performance. While we found statistical support for this mediation, the independent variables (work and general adjustments) and the proposed mediator (affective commitment) were measured at the same time (Time 2). Thus, it is possible that affective commitment improved work and general adjustments, which, in turn, led to high job performance. We encourage additional studies to explore these issues.

A primary objective of this study was to integrate multiple aspects of social exchange into an overarching framework by examining the variables deemed most relevant to this process. However, only a limited number of variables were used. Additional variables known to be related to expatriate adjustment (e.g., Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. 2005) should be incorporated in the future. Interaction adjustment at Time 2 was not included because the original items developed by Black and Stephens (1989) capture general interactions (“Socializing with host nationals,” “Interacting with host nationals on a day-to-day basis,” and “Speaking with host nationals”) and do not clearly differentiate work from nonwork domains (except one item: “Interacting with host nationals outside of work”). Thus they did not fit well with the domain-specific perspective of the initial survey. We encourage future studies to replicate and extend our findings by including all aspects of adjustment. Moreover, we examined two types of support perceptions. Given the relative lack of studies examining multiple types of POS, their interaction effects, and lack of agreement regarding a universal measure of POS in an expatriate context, we feel that this was appropriate. However, future studies need to examine other types of POS.

Another line of future research might examine the impact of simultaneous support both on and off the job on repatriation. One of the recurring problems of expatriation is the difficulty of retaining employees after they have been repatriated to the home country (Black and Gregersen 1991). However, if expatriates make positive evaluations of the employer and develop trust in their employer’s intention to support them both on and off the job, they may become more resistant to any setbacks and obstacles encountered during repatriation. They are also more likely to remain committed to the parent company, which reduces turnover costs.

Practical Implications
These findings have practical implications for multinationals offering expatriate assignments. First, providing support in all domains of an international assignment is likely to have a positive synergistic effect on the expatriates. Multinational companies need to realize that strong support in only one area, work or life, is suboptimal. Because of the complexity of the adjustment, expatriates need well-rounded support from the employer, not targeted support. Although it may sound counterintuitive, multinationals may be able to increase the overall return on their investment in the support offered to expatriates by spending more and putting more effort into ensuring that expatriates receive support in both job-related and off-the-job matters. Further, it should be noted that the expatriates surveyed gave higher ratings to their perceptions of off-the-job support (M = 4.46, SD = 1.22) than to their perceptions of the support they were receiving in connection with their current assignment (M = 3.72, SD = 0.94). Although it is not appropriate to statistically compare them (because they measure different constructs), to some extent, the difference may reflect the general practice of paying more attention to supporting expatriates off the job than in the workplace (e.g., Guzzo et al. 1994). This may be because the difficulty of adjusting to the foreign living environment is more salient to supervisors who are themselves expatriates. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that it is also important for the organization to support its expatriates in the work domain.

Repatriation turnover, where expatriates returning to the parent company quit within a year, has been estimated to be 20% (Black and Gregersen 1991). When this happens, the multinationals do not receive any long-term return on their substantial investments in expatriates. Assuming that positive outcomes after repatriation are likely to result from expatriates’ overseas experience, multinationals are likely to receive a worthwhile return
on the cost of providing continued support both on and off the job.

An organization can best manage its human capital and generate synergies by consistently providing support in different domains to expatriated employees. Once recognized by the employees, they will reciprocate with attitudes and behaviors favorable to the organization. While this study examined job performance as an important employee behavior, employees may reciprocate in other ways as well, such as improved organizational citizenship behavior and reduced turnover.

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