THE ROLES OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AND ANTICIPATED CHANGE IN ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT IN PREDICTING EMPLOYEE AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT AND WELL-BEING

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A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department

of Psychology

University of Houston

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In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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By

Jordan E. Kirkland

May, 2017
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ABSTRACT

Organizational support theory (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Kurtessis et al., 2015) suggests that employees form perceptions of the extent to which their organization values them and cares about their well-being (i.e., perceived organizational support, or POS). Despite an abundance of research on POS, little research has examined organizational support from a future-oriented perspective. Given the changing nature of today’s business environment and the increasing need for employees to plan for potential job transitions, I argue that researchers should similarly increase our emphasis on employees’ perceptions of the future of their relationship with the organization. In the present study, I introduce the concept of anticipated change in organizational support (ACOS), or employees’ expectation that the level of support from the organization will change for better or for worse in the future. Two of my hypotheses received support: employees who expected that the organization would increase its support in the future demonstrated greater affective organizational commitment over and above the effect of POS. Further, ACOS moderated the relationship between POS and affective commitment, although the nature of the interaction was different than I predicted. Specifically, the relationship between POS and commitment became stronger at high levels of ACOS. However, neither the main effect of ACOS nor the interaction of POS and ACOS significantly contributed to satisfaction or well-being. The results have theoretical implications for current conceptualizations of organizational support, as well as practical implications for how organizations may enhance employee commitment by promoting anticipated support.
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Chapter I: Introduction

Today’s organizations must navigate a dynamic environment (Nijssen & Paauwe, 2012) characterized by technological advancements, competition, and globalization (Cascio, 2003; Greenhaus & Callahan, 2013). Amidst restructuring, downsizing, mergers, and layoffs, many workers have begun to question and perhaps redefine their relationships with their organizations (Cascio, 2003; Greenhaus & Callahan, 2013; Rousseau, 1997). Not only has the business environment changed, but so too has the day-to-day work of many employees: jobs are shifting from producing goods to providing customized services, work is more interdependent, and social connections are more important (Grant, Fried, Parker, & Frese, 2010). As a result, many jobs now thrust greater cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal demands on employees (Grant et al., 2010). Workers therefore must anticipate potential organizational transitions while also adjusting to the changing demands and expectations of their work. With change replacing stability as the norm in business, employees feel greater pressure to remain marketable, as well as greater responsibility for their own success (Cascio, 2003; Grant et al., 2010). For these reasons, it is important to consider and understand how employees perceive and react to potential changes in their workplaces.

As employees try to manage and prepare for workplace changes, arguably one of the most important factors they consider is their relationship with the organization. Changes and employment uncertainty have altered the traditional expectations between employees and their organizations (Greenhaus & Callahan, 2013) and often call into question the degree to which an organization is honest, trustworthy, and caring toward employees (Cascio, 2003). Just as these “dramatic changes in work contexts” have
prompted researchers to rethink our theory, research, and practice on job design (Grant et al., 2010, p. 145), so too should researchers adjust our perspectives by studying how potential workplace changes may influence the employment relationship, or the relationship between an employee and his/her organization.

Organizational support theory is one framework through which we can explore the employee-organization relationship: this theory describes how employees form perceptions of the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (i.e., perceived organizational support, or POS; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Kurtessis et al., 2015). According to organizational support theory, employees attempt to gain an idea of the organization’s willingness to support them, just as people consider the level of commitment a friend or spouse contributes to a personal relationship (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Employees form these perceptions of support by considering how well or poorly the organization treats them, including the motives behind such treatment.

Organizational support theory explains that POS enhances one major outcome, employees’ affective organizational commitment (i.e., an employee’s emotional bond with the organization; Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002), on the basis of two different processes. First, POS can foster a positive social exchange relationship between an employee and employer. Organizational support theory draws from social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) in explaining that fruitful employee-organization relationships evolve over time as long as organizations and employees trade valued goods or services and conform to implied “rules of exchange” (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005, p. 875). When organizations offer
rewards or positive treatment to workers, they can enhance POS and thus evoke the norm of reciprocity, or the social custom that when we receive positive treatment from someone else, we should reciprocate by treating that person well (Gouldner, 1960). Thus, employees who feel valued and supported by their organization often feel obliged to return the favor by demonstrating high levels of commitment to the organization. In addition to promoting social exchanges, POS also helps fulfill employee socioemotional needs (e.g., needs for approval, affiliation, esteem, and emotional support). When employees feel supported, they form identification with the organization in which their organizational membership contributes meaning and belongingness to their personal identities (Meyer, Becker, & Van Dick, 2006). The perceptions of identification evolving from POS subsequently give rise to positive attitudes, most notably affective commitment to the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Meyer et al., 2006; Riketta, 2005).

In addition to affective organizational commitment, POS is related to a number of other outcomes, including trust in the organization (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Treadway et al., 2004) and work engagement (Kinnunen, Feldt, & Makikangas, 2008; Rich, LePine, & Crawford, 2010). Employees with high POS are also more likely to demonstrate greater effort on behalf of the organization (Kurtessis et al., 2015), higher in-role performance (Cullen, Edwards, Casper, & Gue, 2014), more citizenship behaviors (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997), and fewer counterproductive work behaviors (Colbert, Mount, Harter, Witt, & Barrick, 2004). POS also reduces withdrawal behaviors, such as absenteeism (Eisenberger et al., 1986) and turnover (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002). Additionally, research has consistently
demonstrated that POS plays a role in enhancing employee well-being. Employees with high POS tend to be happier and healthier at work, reporting better mood (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; George, Reed, Ballard, Colin, & Fielding, 1993; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), as well as higher job satisfaction and lower job strain (Baranik, Roling, & Eby, 2010; Cullen et al., 2014; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Kurtessis et al., 2015; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Although years of research indicate that POS is an important contributor to many work attitudes and behaviors, this research has been largely limited to perceptions of current support. However, it is important to understand how employees anticipate and respond to potential changes in support, especially given that uncertainty is a significant source of job strain (Quick, Wright, Adkins, Nelson, & Quick, 2013). Specifically, expanding one of the principles of organizational support theory (e.g., Eisenberger et al., 1986), I argue that employees form perceptions of anticipated support as a means of assessing potential changes in the organization’s support and reducing this uncertainty concerning how supportive the organization will be in the future.

Only a handful of studies (e.g., Boezeman & Ellemers, 2008; Casper & Buffardi, 2004; Mottola, Bachman, Gaertner, & Dovidio, 1997; Thompson, Payne, & Taylor, 2015; Wayne & Casper, 2012; Zheng et al., 2016) have examined employees’ anticipation of future support, and they have typically done so from the viewpoint of prospective or incoming employees. Mottola et al. (1997), for example, found that anticipated organizational support plays a role in employees’ reactions to impending mergers, as the conditions surrounding a merger can send a message to employees concerning how much
support they can expect to receive from the new, merged organization. These perceptions of anticipated support, in turn, predicted greater anticipated commitment to the merged organization. Later research (Boezeeman & Ellemers, 2008; Casper & Buffardi, 2004; Thompson et al., 2015; Wayne & Casper, 2012) examined the importance of anticipated organizational support in employee recruitment. Results from these studies suggest that favorable information about work-life benefits (Casper & Buffardi, 2004; Wayne & Casper, 2012), compensation (Wayne & Casper, 2012), diversity efforts (Wayne & Casper, 2012), flexible work arrangements (Thompson et al., 2015), and general levels of support for employees (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2008) is interpreted by applicants as an indication that the organization would be supportive of them as employees. In each of these studies, high levels of anticipated organizational support contributed to applicants viewing the organization as a favorable potential employer.

Zheng et al. (2016) expanded the scope of this research on anticipated organizational support by sampling new employees as opposed to job applicants. They found that incoming employees who anticipated high levels of organizational support prior to starting a new job engaged in more information seeking behaviors once they began work. As a result, these employees developed higher-quality relationships with their supervisors and were able to adjust to the new organization more effectively (i.e., they reported reduced job strain and turnover intentions and engaged in more extra-role behaviors). On the whole, these studies have provided initial support for the idea that people form perceptions of anticipated organizational support, or the degree to which they feel that an organization would be supportive of them if they were to become a member.
Although these initial results are promising, the notion of studying POS in terms of future, or anticipated, support (as opposed to current support) remains underrepresented in the POS literature. In order to expand our perspective on POS, I argue not only that we should incorporate more of a future-oriented approach to studying POS, but also that we should not limit this perspective to potential or new employees. Given the changing nature of many workplaces, I propose that current employees – not just those who are anticipating employment with an organization – consider how much their organization will support them in the future. Specifically, I introduce the concept of **anticipated change in organizational support** (ACOS), or employees’ expectations that the level of support from the organization will change for better or for worse in the future. I argue that both current and anticipated levels of support (i.e., POS and ACOS) will contribute uniquely to employees’ affective organizational commitment and job-related well-being. Further, I argue that high levels of ACOS should help buffer the negative effects of low POS on employee affective commitment and well-being (see Figure 1 for conceptual model).

In studying how ACOS contributes to employee commitment and well-being, I draw primarily from a pair of well-known organizational theories. First, organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Kurtessis et al., 2015) is the primary theoretical perspective for studying how employees develop perceptions of organizational support. Just as organizational support theory explains that POS fosters positive social exchanges and organizational identification, I propose that ACOS contributes to employee commitment and well-being via the same processes. However, I also use Hobfoll’s (1989; 1998; 2001) conservation of resources (COR)
theory to help explain how employees perceive and respond to potential changes in support. COR theory explains that individuals are motivated to acquire and maintain valuable personal resources (e.g., organizational support; Kurtessis et al., 2015; Marchand & Vandenberghe, 2016; Panaccio & Vandenberghe, 2009), which they use to help buffer against the negative effects of workplace stressors. I draw from COR theory, as well as resource-based explanations of POS (e.g., Hochwarter, Witt, Treadway, & Ferris, 2006; Witt & Carlson, 2006) in order to help develop the present conceptualization of anticipated organizational support. Though often studied separately, organizational support and conservation of resources theories provide complementary frameworks for explaining why employees evaluate potential changes in their relationship with the organization, as well as how those evaluations affect their current work experiences.

The present research makes important theoretical and practical contributions. I present a new perspective on organizational support that expands organizational support theory. Research has not examined the extent to which employees consider potential changes in their level of support from the organization. This research also integrates organizational support and conservation of resources theories in developing the present conceptualization of ACOS. Although several studies have integrated COR theory with both social exchange (e.g., Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2015; Lapointe, Vandenberghe, & Panaccio, 2011) and organizational support theories (e.g., Hochwarter et al., 2006; Witt & Carlson, 2006), we can benefit from more research that combines these unique but compatible perspectives. Finally, practically, this study should provide important information to organizations regarding how their employees assess their current and
potential levels of organizational support. For example, if potential changes in support have a significant impact on employees’ commitment and well-being (over and above the effects of current levels of support), organizations would benefit from promoting anticipated organizational support. Companies who anticipate undergoing transitions, such as mergers or restructurings, may find it particularly beneficial to promote anticipated organizational support as a means of reassuring workers that, even if the organization undergoes changes, it will provide future support to employees.

Perceived Organizational Support

Origins of POS: The Employee-Organization Relationship

In order to introduce the concept of ACOS, it is first necessary to understand its basis in POS and in organizational support theory. POS, or perceived organizational support, refers to employees’ perceptions of the extent to which their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Kurtessis et al., 2015). The concept of POS arose from a tradition in organizational psychology examining the employee-organization relationship, a topic which has long incorporated the idea of exchange between these two parties. Early theorizing (e.g., Etzioni, 1961) about organizations discussed how organizations trade inducements (e.g., pay raises, benefits, promotions) in return for employees’ involvement in, or commitment to, organizational activities. Etzioni (1961) addressed the significance of the role played by individual employees, arguing that one of the most important means of achieving organizational goals is ensuring that members have a positive orientation toward the organization. He further argued that employees demonstrate the most commitment when they see their actions on behalf of the organization as legitimate,
gratifying, and in line with their own internal needs (Etzioni, 1961). Later, Gould (1979) integrated prior work (e.g., Barnard, 1938; March & Simon, 1958; Etzioni, 1961) with Adams’s (1965) equity theory, explaining that the degree of involvement from both parties depends upon an equilibrium of efforts (i.e., the employee’s involvement must match the organization’s inducements). Gould (1979) explained that employees determine their level of commitment based on the present and potential value of the inducements and rewards offered by the organization. These early perspectives thus shared a common belief that employee-organization exchanges are critical for achieving organizational goals, as well as a common recognition that employees’ perspectives matter a great deal in maintaining and cultivating these relationships.

Whereas some early research emphasized exchanges between an employer and employee, other researchers focused more heavily on the attachment that can develop between organization and employee. Barnard (1938), for example, asserted that each employee has a dual personality – an individual personality and an organizational personality. Barnard explained that employees develop relationships with the “cooperative system” based on how the organization treats them. Essentially, an organization’s purpose has no inherent meaning to an individual; rather, people make meaning from their relationship with the organization based on what it provides to them – both by the “burdens it imposes” and the “benefits it confers” (Barnard, 1938, p. 88). Levinson (1965) built upon similar ideas, arguing that employees project human-like qualities onto organizations and thereby relate to those organizations as if they were people. Levinson explained that people generalize their attitudes about people in the organization and ascribe those attitudes to the organization itself. Employees see
organizational members as “agents” of the organization who act on behalf of the organization and serve as an extension of the organization’s power (p. 380). Especially given the fact that employees may not always be able to identify who in an organization has made a particular decision or acted in a certain way, the vagueness of these circumstances contributes to employees’ creation of a generalized “organization” which has human-like qualities and with whom employees can form a relationship, much like they would with a spouse or a friend.

**Organizational Support Theory**

Organizational support theory (OST; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Kurtessis et al., 2015) embraces the work of these early theories and forms the theoretical framework by which we study perceived organizational support. Organizational support theory rests upon the idea that employees develop a general perception of the extent to which their organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (i.e., POS). In the same way that people try to gauge another person’s level of commitment to a friendship or romantic relationship, employees try to determine the organization’s willingness to reward their efforts and meet their needs by making inferences about the organization’s level of support for them (Eisenberger et al., 1986). According to the theory, employees develop some degree of POS based on the organization’s treatment of them. When an organization treats its members well or poorly, those members make attributions concerning why the organization treated them in that way. Employees who perceive that the organization treats them well because of a sincere regard for their welfare are therefore likely to develop high POS.
Organizational support theory descends in part from social exchange theory, which explains the exchange of goods or services – tangible or intangible – between people (Blau, 1964). Individuals are motivated to enter and develop relationships with others when the relationship promises something valuable in return (Blau, 1964). High-quality, mutually beneficial relationships evolve over time only when parties abide by accepted norms, or “rules of exchange” (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). We can readily apply the tenets of social exchange theory to organizations by viewing the employment relationship as one in which an employee offers effort and loyalty in exchange for rewards from the organization. These rewards may be tangible (e.g., pay, benefits, promotions) or social (e.g., recognition, support, esteem). By offering rewards or by providing positive treatment to employees, organizations can enhance employee POS and facilitate the norm of reciprocity, which is the social expectation that when we receive positive treatment from someone else, we should return, or reciprocate, the favor by treating that person well (Gouldner, 1960). In short, when employees feel supported by their organization, they feel compelled to return the favor by demonstrating greater commitment and effort on the job.

Although organizational support theory draws heavily from social exchange theory, it also underscores self-enhancement processes as an important component of the employee-organization relationship. Self-enhancement helps maintain our social identities, which refer to the aspects of our self-image that come from the social categories or groups to which we perceive that we belong (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986). Fundamentally, humans have a need to see ourselves in a positive light, and group identification helps satisfy this need by giving us a sense of belonging and the perception
that we are valued by others (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Meyer et al., 2006). It is because we possess socioemotional needs (e.g., needs for approval, affiliation, esteem, and emotional support) that we are responsive to cues that help us develop and maintain a personal identity (Meyer et al., 2006). Thus, when employees feel supported by the organization, they develop identification with the organization in which their organizational membership becomes a meaningful, positive part of their personal identities.

Identification builds as employees recognize the distinctiveness of the organization’s values and practices, as they perceive that the organization is prestigious or attractive, as they become satisfied with the organization, as they compare the organization to outside groups, and as they accumulate experiences and feelings (e.g., increased interaction, liking, similarity, shared values, a common fate) that draw them closer to the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). These perceptions of identification in turn give rise to positive attitudes, the strongest of which being affective organizational commitment, in which employees feel a strong emotional bond with the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Meyer et al., 2006; Riketta, 2005). Indeed, meta-analytic data has demonstrated that organizational identification partially mediates the relationship between POS and affective commitment (Kurtessis et al., 2015). In sum, organizational support theory maintains that POS contributes to affective organizational commitment not only by promoting social exchanges between employees and their organization, but also by helping to fulfill employees’ socioemotional needs.
Antecedents of POS

Employees develop perceptions of organizational support as they observe and react to cues about how the organization treats them (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Kurtessis et al., 2015). Employees assimilate their experiences with the organization (e.g., communication during the hiring process, communication with management, job conditions, rewards and compensation, supervisor support) and subsequently form an opinion of the extent to which the organization sincerely cares about them (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). For every interaction between the organization and the employee, there exists an opportunity for the organization to convey caring and concern for its workers (or, alternatively, for the organization to convey that it cares little for its workers). In short, a number of workplace conditions and decisions can play a role in either strengthening or fracturing employee perceptions of organizational support.

POS can develop even before an employee begins work at an organization, as applicants make observations about the organization and begin to consider what it would be like to work there (Wayne & Casper, 2012). Companies’ reputations often precede them, especially as the increasing use of technology has brought many organizational decisions and practices into the public eye. Accordingly, pre-employment experiences (e.g., perceived fairness of the interview, expected availability of work-life benefits) can signal whether the organization is supportive of employees (Casper & Buffardi, 2004; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). In the same way that a “first impression” sets the tone for what we can expect from our personal relationships; these initial, pre-employment experiences play an important role in establishing the conditions of
employees’ *psychological contracts*, or the beliefs employees hold regarding the obligations that the employee and the organization have to each other (Rousseau, 1989; 1995). Thus, potential or incoming employees almost immediately begin to consider how much support they can expect from an organization.

Once employees begin working for an organization, they become exposed to even more cues that help them ascertain the organization’s level of support for them. Some of these cues come from the perceived fairness with which the organization treats its members. For example, organizational fairness in making decisions and distributing resources is one of the strongest contributors to POS (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Kurtessis et al., 2015; Loi, Hang-Yue, & Foley, 2006; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). On the other hand, organizational cultures riddled with high levels of politics (e.g., where employees are rewarded based on favoritism rather than merit, where people act in a self-serving manner) can severely reduce POS (Hochwarter, Kacmar, Perrewé, & Johnson, 2003; Kurtessis et al., 2015; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Additionally, given that employees tend to view other organizational members (e.g., supervisors and coworkers) as representatives of the organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Levinson, 1965), the receipt of favorable treatment from organizational members (e.g., supervisor support, transformational leadership, leader-member exchange, coworker support) also enhances POS (Kurtessis et al., 2015; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). In addition to fairness and positive treatment, POS also depends on job conditions and practices. Organizations can demonstrate their support for employees by providing benefits, developmental opportunities, autonomy, and policies that support a healthy work-life balance (Kurtessis et al., 2015; Muse, Harris, Giles, & Field, 2008).
Outcomes of POS

Three decades of research have established POS as a key predictor of a number of work-related attitudes and behaviors. POS researchers have begun to categorize employee outcomes of POS into three main areas: subjective well-being, positive orientation toward work, and behavioral outcomes (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Kurtessis et al., 2015). Given that subjective well-being is an outcome integral to the present study, I will discuss its relationship with POS in greater detail later in the paper. However, to summarize this relationship, research demonstrates that a supportive organization can significantly impact employee health and happiness, whether it be by enhancing their day-to-day mood (Eisenberger et al., 2001; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; George et al., 1993; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) or by contributing to overall feelings of higher job satisfaction or lower job strain (Baranik et al., 2010; Cullen et al., 2014; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Kurtessis et al., 2015; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Another collection of POS outcomes involves the employee’s orientation toward the organization and toward his/her work. Employees with high POS feel valued by their organization, and as a result, they experience more positive attitudes toward the organization and more enjoyment in their work. For example, employees with high POS tend to demonstrate greater affective organizational commitment, as POS helps satisfy employees’ socioemotional needs (Armeli, Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Lynch, 1998; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). POS also helps build employees’ feelings of trust and reduce feelings of organizational cynicism (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Treadway et al., 2004). In all, employees who feel supported also feel more involved
(Kurtessis et al., 2015; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002) and more engaged (Kinnunen et al., 2008; Rich et al., 2010) in their work.

Finally, researchers have linked POS to a number of important behavioral outcomes. When employees feel supported by the organization, they tend to return the favor by demonstrating positive behaviors that benefit the organization (Gouldner, 1960). Accordingly, employees with high POS have been found to demonstrate greater effort on behalf of the organization (Kurtessis et al., 2015), higher in-role performance (Cullen et al., 2014), more citizenship behaviors (Wayne et al., 1997), and fewer counterproductive work behaviors (Colbert et al., 2004). Further, employees who feel supported are less likely to demonstrate withdrawal-related behaviors, such as absenteeism (Eisenberger et al., 1986), turnover intentions (Hui, Wong, & Tjosvold, 2007; Loi et al., 2006; Wayne et al., 1997), job search behaviors (Kurtessis et al., 2015), and turnover (Eisenberger et al., 2002).

Conservation of Resources Theory

Origins of COR Theory: Stress Theories

Here I draw from Hobfoll’s (1989; 1998; 2001) conservation of resources (COR) theory as a framework that complements organizational support theory in understanding how ACOS influences employee commitment and well-being. Hobfoll (1998) introduced his theory because he was skeptical of the “overwhelmingly cognitive” (p. 25) approach of existing stress theories (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In the context of stress theories, cognitions typically refer to individuals’ appraisals, or interpretations, of the job stressors they experience. Hobfoll (1998) argued that, whereas cognitions undoubtedly play a role in stress, it is resources – rather than cognitions – that are the key foundation
upon which stress rests, and individuals’ social and personal resources in fact shape their cognitions. Accordingly, Hobfoll (1998) defines stress as “the state in which valued goals are threatened or lost, or where individuals are unable to create the necessary conditions for obtaining or sustaining these goals” (p. 28).

Hobfoll (1989; 2001) argues that COR theory differs slightly from other types of stress theories (e.g., McGrath, 1970; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Selye, 1950) because it attempts to focus equally on the importance of internal (i.e., individual interpretations of stressors) and external (i.e., the objective, environmental nature of stressors) determinants of the stress process. Hobfoll conceptualizes that stressors are largely universal and socio-culturally framed rather than varying greatly from individual to individual (although individual interpretations of stressors do still play an important role). Many stress theories emphasize an imbalance between a stimulus (i.e., a stressor) and a response (i.e., a person’s capability to respond to the stressor). These theories take a primarily internal approach, arguing that stress hinges on a person’s appraisal that a demand is so taxing that it exceeds his/her capacity to respond to it effectively. Hobfoll (1989; 2001) argued that these theories claim to define stress as a stimulus-response imbalance while in reality studying individuals’ perceptions of this imbalance. He argues that the weakness of these models is that they only inform us of whether or not a resource is sufficient to aid in coping after it is used to counteract a demand (i.e., we can only gauge whether something is a resource retroactively because we have to wait and see how a person appraises their capacity to cope with the demand). In contrast, COR theory accounts for individuals’ behavior not only when they are confronted with stressors, but also when they are not confronted with stressors. According to the theory, people
experiencing stressors seek to minimize the net loss of resources, whereas people not experiencing stressors seek to develop a surplus of resources to minimize the possibility of future loss (Hobfoll, 1989). Thus, individuals do not simply respond or react to resource losses or threats; rather, they also engage in “proactive coping” in order to place themselves in an advantageous position for managing future stressors (Hobfoll, 2001; 2002).

**Principles of COR Theory**

COR theory rests on the idea that people seek to maintain, protect, and build valued resources (Hobfoll, 1989). These goals become threatened when people experience an actual or perceived loss of these resources (Hobfoll, 1989; 2001). Critical to Hobfoll’s theory is the inclusion of both of these adjectives: either *actual* or *perceived* loss of resources is sufficient for producing strain. Accordingly, Hobfoll (2001) defines *resources* as “objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued in their own right, or that are valued because they act as conduits to the achievement or protection of valued resources” (p. 339). Resources have both instrumental (i.e., they are useful in creating and maintaining happiness and success) and symbolic (i.e., they help people define who they are as individuals) value to people (Hobfoll, 1989). Because people ascribe considerable value to their personal resources, we become vulnerable when environmental conditions deplete or threaten our resources.

Today, COR theory fits among a larger family of “resource theories,” which generally seeks to explain how personal resources or characteristics can help buffer against the negative effects of stressors on individuals’ well-being (Hobfoll, 2002). COR theory adopts two central principles: the first is the primacy of resource loss. Hobfoll
(2001) argues that resource loss is the principal driver of the stress process, whereas resource gains become increasingly important only within the context of resource loss (i.e., as you experience greater losses, a resource gain becomes more and more valuable). Hobfoll’s work is consistent with Tversky and Kahneman’s (1981) prospect theory, which explains that individuals consider losses to be more salient than gains because an event framed as a loss incites more risk-taking than an equivalent event framed as a gain. Accordingly, potential or actual resource losses have an asymmetrically strong effect on our well-being, as compared with resource gains (Hobfoll, 2001).

This study especially emphasizes the second principle of COR theory: that people must invest resources in order to protect against resource loss, recover from losses, and gain resources (Hobfoll, 2001). This principle reflects the strategic nature of resource conservation. Hobfoll (1989; 2001) explains that people take a long-term attitude toward conserving resources, often investing their current resources in order to build a resource reservoir. In the same way that people make financial investments, people are often willing to invest greatly in their current resources if it promises a large payoff in the future (Hobfoll, 1989). An employee, for example, might invest his/her available time and energy into a project in order to gain even more valuable resources, such as respect, power, or a promotion. As another example, an employee might invest in helping his/her coworkers in an attempt to receive the return of such help in the future. A pool of resources can be helpful for a couple of reasons: first, it helps shield the individual from future losses and strain; and second, it helps satisfy an individual’s goals by providing something the person deems valuable (e.g., status, possessions, love, or self-esteem; Hobfoll, 1989). On the other hand, people who lack resources are most vulnerable to
additional losses: these individuals must be careful that they use their small amount of resources carefully so as not to begin a loss spiral, in which unsuccessful adaptation to the loss of resources begets further loss of resources (Hobfoll, 1989; 2001).

**Research Based in COR Theory**

Given its composition as a stress theory, much of the research utilizing COR theory has examined hypotheses related to employee well-being. One of the most common work outcomes associated with COR theory has been burnout, which is a psychological strain (characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment) that evolves as a response to chronic job stressors (Leiter & Maslach, 2004; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). In essence, burnout builds over time as employees experience strain associated with the loss of resources, the threat of resource loss, or the frustration of investing in resources but not earning a sufficient gain from the investment (Halbesleben, 2006). Researchers have applied COR theory to a number of research domains. For example, research (e.g., Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Witt & Carlson, 2006) has demonstrated that resources are important for managing work-family conflict and may easily be lost when employees have trouble juggling their personal and work roles. Penney, Hunter, and Perry (2011) also found evidence that employees manage their resources differently depending on their personality traits. As a final example, Byrne et al. (2013) found that when leaders feel that their resources are depleted, the quality of their leadership behaviors often suffers.

Across this diverse research, one of the primary criticisms of Hobfoll’s theory has been its broad definition of resources; namely, that the concept of a “resource” has been trivialized because essentially anything positive can be considered a resource.
Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2015; Hobfoll, 2001; 2002). Hobfoll (1989) describes four general categories of resources that are valuable for unique reasons: first, *objects* (e.g., a home) can offer physical or instrumental value, as well as reflect status or rarity. Second, *conditions* are states that people seek to attain. For example, marriage and seniority are conditions that may help a person resist stressors. Third, *personal characteristics* (e.g., self-esteem) are personal traits or skills that can also aid in resisting stressors. Finally, *energies* (e.g., time, money, and knowledge) are valuable primarily as means for acquiring other types of resources. The numerous resources that fall into these four categories clearly demonstrate the breadth of Hobfoll’s definition of “resources.”

Halbesleben and Wheeler (2015) address the criticism that COR theory’s definition of resources is too vague by differentiating among three different types of constructs that researchers have historically lumped together under the general heading of “resources.” First, perceptions of resource availability (e.g., perceived coworker support) indicate the extent to which individuals perceive that a resource (in this example, coworker support) is available to them. Second, resource investment behaviors (e.g., citizenship behaviors) are behaviors in which individuals engage in an effort to invest in their current resources and secure future resources. Finally, instrumental beliefs about future resource investment (e.g., trust in coworkers) indicate the extent to which someone believes that a resource is a worthwhile investment and will yield resources in the future. Halbesleben and Wheeler (2015) argue that, by understanding employees’ perceptions of resource availability (which in turn increase the belief that investment in the resource will yield additional resource gains), we can predict resource investment behaviors.
If we consider these constructs within the framework of the present research on ACOS, we can see some parallels with these different constructs introduced by Halbesleben and Wheeler (2015). First, we can consider POS partly as a perception of resource availability (e.g., Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). To the extent that organizational support is seen as a valued resource (Kurtessis et al., 2015; Marchand & Vandenberghe, 2016; Panaccio & Vandenberghe, 2009), POS indicates the extent to which employees believe that organizational support is a resource that is currently available to them. On the other hand, ACOS represents an instrumental belief about future resource investment. ACOS captures the extent to which employees feel as if organizational support is a resource that can be counted on, will be instrumental in the future, and is worth investing in. The present study should therefore extend Halbesleben and Wheeler’s (2015) ideas and lend support to their proposal to distinguish among these different types of “resource” constructs.

Comparing Organizational Support and Conservation of Resources Theories

The relationship between COR and social exchange (and, by extension, organizational support) theories is noteworthy (Halbesleben, Wheeler, & Buckley, 2008; Panaccio & Vandenberghe, 2009) and deserves clarification. These theories incorporate similar elements that help develop and support the current conceptualization of ACOS. First, organizational support and COR theories overlap in their emphasis on meeting individual goals and needs. Organizational support theory discusses how employees seek fulfillment of their socioemotional needs, whereas COR theory discusses how employees seek to collect and maintain valued resources. Although these two concepts (socioemotional needs and resources) have largely evolved within separate theoretical
frameworks, their functions in the workplace are actually quite harmonious.

Organizational support and social exchange theories rest on the idea that people have needs for a variety of intangible, socioemotional benefits (e.g., esteem, caring, approval, affiliation; Armeli et al., 1998; Eisenberger et al., 1986). Several of the resources seen in COR theory research (e.g., companionship, affection from others, feeling valuable to others, having one’s accomplishments acknowledged; Hobfoll, 2001) are analogous to the socioemotional resources described by organizational support theory. Putting these two approaches together, we see that “fulfilling socioemotional needs” and “providing socioemotional resources” reflect the same process. In describing an employee whose need for affiliation has been met, I could just as easily discuss him/her as someone who possesses the valued resource of affiliation or companionship. Prior organizational support research has used resource-related terminology, describing how organizations can help meet employees’ “needs for socioemotional resources” (Armeli et al., 1998, p. 289) by providing “resources…in the form of socioemotional support” (Witt & Carlson, 2006, p. 348). Essentially, our socioemotional needs dictate the value we derive from socioemotional resources, and resources are most valuable to us when we have goals related to those resources (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999).

Organizational support and COR theories also share in common the adoption of a long-term orientation that emphasizes investment. Although we tend to associate social exchange with reciprocity (e.g., employees reciprocate organizational support by demonstrating greater affective commitment), social exchange also emphasizes the importance of investment in the exchange relationship. Blau (1964) explains that social exchange requires “investment costs,” in which individuals must expend time and effort
to ensure that they are furnishing services that will be valuable to the other party, thereby proving themselves to be respectable and trustworthy exchange partners (p. 101). In short, “the establishment of exchange relations involves making investments that constitute commitments to the other party” (Blau, 1964, p. 98). Parties must therefore invest in each other and rely on trust that their efforts will be repaid by the other party (Shore, Tetrick, Lynch, & Barksdale, 2006). Meanwhile, COR theory similarly employs an investment-focused perspective, arguing that employees not only seek to protect their existing resources, but also to make investments that help them gather resources that they can use in the future to manage stressors (Hobfoll, 1989).

These two theories therefore converge in their discussion of how employees (1) seek to fulfill their needs and (2) consider investments from a long-term perspective. These processes become relevant to the study of ACOS, which represents a perception of an often-valued resource (organizational support) while also capturing how employees view this resource from a future orientation. Given these areas of theoretical overlap, we see how the COR model “complements and extends” the use of social exchange theory (or, in this case, organizational support theory) (Halbesleben et al., 2008, p. 50). COR theory’s strong focus on future resources and investments makes it especially useful: although I use organizational support theory to guide much of the rationale for my hypotheses, I draw from COR theory for additional insight in developing the concept of ACOS.

**Anticipated Change in Organizational Support**

Despite an abundance of research on perceptions of current organizational support (i.e., POS), surprisingly little research exists concerning perceptions of future
organizational support. In today’s changing business environment where employees feel greater responsibility for managing their own future circumstances (e.g., Cascio, 2003; Grant et al., 2010), I argue that job applicants and new employees are not the only ones who consider whether an organization will support them in the future. As previously reviewed, existing research has examined future organizational support primarily from the perspectives of organizational recruitment and socialization, focusing on perceptions from job applicants or incoming employees toward a potential or new employer. In this study, I seek to further expand our perspective on the anticipation of organizational support. Namely, I introduce the concept of anticipated change in organizational support, or ACOS, which refers to employees’ perceptions of the extent to which the level of support from their organization will change (i.e., increase, decrease, or remain the same) in the future. This conceptualization allows us to consider anticipated support from current employees, as opposed to job applicants or new employees. Given that uncertainty is a significant source of job strain (Quick et al., 2013), I expect that employees attempt to reconcile this uncertainty by trying to determine whether the organization will increase or reduce its support in the future and subsequently forming perceptions of anticipated support.

ACOS and Employee Well-Being

Just as we have no single index of overall “health,” the concept of “employee well-being” also takes many forms. Researchers have operationalized well-being in a number of ways, including affective work states (i.e., emotions and moods experienced at work; Van Katwyk, Fox, Spector, & Kelloway, 2000; Warr, 1990), mental health (Warr, 1990), and subjective well-being (Bowling, Eschleman, & Wang, 2010; Diener, 1984;
Historically, these definitions of well-being have tended to fall within one of two general approaches: first, and most commonly, measuring well-being as job strain or distress; and second, measuring well-being as employee health and happiness. The former, known as the “disease model” of worker health, focuses on identifying and correcting issues of worker dissatisfaction and strain (Schaufeli, 2004; Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). Although most stress research has adopted this perspective, researchers have called for a greater focus on the “health model,” which seeks to identify and strengthen those factors that make people healthy and positive at work (Schaufeli, 2004; Wright & Cropanzano, 2000). As a result, many definitions of well-being now encompass not only the absence of illness, but also the overall completeness of physical, mental, and social well-being (Meyer & Maltin, 2010; Panaccio & Vandenberghe, 2009; Schaufeli, 2004; Warr, 2013). Findings from each of these complementary approaches have made it increasingly clear that both employees and organizations benefit when employees feel well, can work at their best, and have adequate resources to manage workplace stressors. Accordingly, in the present study, I conceptualize employee well-being in terms of both high job satisfaction and low job strain.

POS has emerged as a consistent contributor to employee well-being, as researchers have shown that it can enhance mood (Eisenberger et al., 2001), job satisfaction (Kurtessis et al., 2015; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), organization-based self-esteem (Chen, Aryee, & Lee, 2005; Kurtessis et al., 2015; Lee & Peccei, 2007), and work-family balance (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Kurtessis et al., 2015; Wadsworth & Owens, 2007). According to organizational support theory, POS boosts
employee wellness by enhancing self-esteem, fulfilling socioemotional needs, and providing the expectation that employees will be rewarded for their efforts (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Kurtessis et al., 2015). POS also signifies the availability of the organization’s instrumental support. Employees with high POS feel confident that their organization will provide help and support should they need it, and this expectation puts employees at ease in the face of stressors (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; George et al., 1993; Kurtessis et al., 2015).

Just as employees with high POS feel happier in their jobs, so too should high ACOS contribute to employees’ job satisfaction. Organizational support theory argues that POS contributes to job satisfaction by fulfilling employees’ socioemotional needs, signaling that the organization will provide assistance when needed, and strengthening employees’ confidence that they will be rewarded for good performance (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Kurtessis et al., 2015; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). This notion that employees become more satisfied when they expect to be rewarded and recognized appropriately is consistent with other theoretical perspectives: Vroom’s (1964) expectancy theory, for example, explains that employees develop motivation when they believe their efforts will result in a desired outcome. Anticipated improvements in organizational support should convey a positive regard for employees and signal that the organization cares about their welfare. When employees are confident that their organization will increase its support in the future, this perception represents that – even if current support is low – the organization can be counted on to deliver future support. Therefore, consistent with organizational support theory, ACOS should still contribute to employees’ happiness at work by helping to meet needs for approval and esteem, by
increasing the expectation that the organization will eventually provide the recognition and assistance that employees need, and by promoting a positive emotional attachment to the organization.

Further, COR theory helps explain the unique value of ACOS. COR theory emphasizes the strategic nature of resource conservation: people take a long-term attitude toward conserving resources (e.g., Hobfoll, 2001). Individuals do not simply react to stressors, but rather, they proactively strategize in order to manage their resources and ensure long-term stability and well-being (Hobfoll, 2001; 2002). This long-term perspective implies that workers’ happiness ultimately depends both on current and anticipated availability of resources. In the case of organizational support, current and anticipated resource availability are captured by POS and ACOS, respectively. Therefore, beyond current levels of support, ACOS should enhance satisfaction by offering employees an optimistic, reassuring vision of their future relationship with the organization. Accordingly, I expect that employees with high ACOS will be more satisfied with their jobs, over and above the effect of POS.

*Hypothesis 1a. ACOS is positively related to job satisfaction, controlling for POS.*

Employees with high ACOS should report not only increased job satisfaction, but also reduced job strain. Organizational support theory explains that POS reduces job strain by fulfilling employees’ socioemotional needs, by enhancing employees’ self-efficacy, and by increasing employees’ expectations that the organization will provide help when needed (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Kurtessis et al., 2015; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Using this reasoning, ACOS should similarly reduce job strain, as the anticipation of future support still signals that the organization recognizes and cares about
employees and will provide support in the future. Further, researchers from both the POS (e.g., Kurtessis et al., 2015) and stress (e.g., Marchand & Vandenbergh, 2016) literatures have conceptualized organizational support as a resource that can be valuable in helping employees cope with job demands. Accordingly, Hobfoll (1989) explains that either actual or perceived loss of resources is “sufficient for producing stress” (p. 516). Given the argument that organizational support can be considered a valued resource (e.g., Marchand & Vandenbergh, 2016; Panaccio & Vandenbergh, 2009) that helps buffer against stressors and burnout (e.g., Kurtessis et al., 2015), we can extrapolate that employees’ levels of job strain depend both on the current availability of organizational support (i.e., POS), as well as on any potential or perceived threats or changes to that support (i.e., ACOS). ACOS should therefore reduce job strain over and above the effect of POS.

Hypothesis 1b. ACOS is negatively related to job strain, controlling for POS.

ACOS and Affective Organizational Commitment

Commitment, in a general sense, reflects a bond which compels an individual to “stick with” something or someone. In the workplace, we can direct our commitment toward a number of targets, such as a job, an occupation or industry, a work goal, a union, or an organization (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Researchers have taken a particular interest in organizational commitment, or an employee’s bond to his/her organization (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Organizational commitment’s prevalence in organizational psychology has been reinforced by the strong relationships it has demonstrated with a number of workplace
attitudes and behaviors, including job involvement, job satisfaction, withdrawal, and turnover (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 2002).

Of the many typologies of commitment, Meyer and Allen’s (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991) three-component model has evolved into one of the most prevalent models of organizational commitment. The three-component model (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer et al., 2002) describes three varieties of commitment, each motivated by a particular mindset or psychological state. The first, affective commitment, refers to commitment based on an employee’s identification with, attachment to, and involvement in an organization. The second, continuance commitment, describes commitment due to the potential costs of leaving an organization. Finally, normative commitment refers to commitment based on an employee’s feelings of obligation to remain with an organization. In short, these three components of commitment reflect the extent to which employees remain with an organization because they desire to stay, because they need to stay, or because they feel obligated to stay, respectively.

Of these three components, affective organizational commitment has received the most attention (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) summarize that affective commitment develops primarily via three mechanisms: first, by becoming involved in, motivated by, and absorbed in the organization’s work; second, by recognizing the value of associating with the organization, and third, by deriving identity from being a member of the organization. Affective commitment, compared with continuance and normative commitment, tends to correlate most strongly and favorably with employee-relevant (e.g., stress, work-family conflict) and organization-relevant
outcomes (e.g., job performance, attendance, citizenship behaviors; Lapointe et al., 2011; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001; Meyer et al., 2002).

One of the most well-established outcomes of POS is increased affective commitment to the organization (Kurtessis et al., 2015; Meyer et al., 2002; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001). Organizational support theory explains that POS strengthens affective commitment via social exchange and self-enhancement processes (e.g., Kurtessis et al., 2015). I argue that ACOS will similarly strengthen affective commitment on the basis of these processes. First, ACOS should prompt positive social exchanges between the employee and the organization. When the organization indicates its readiness to increase support in the future, employees may be more willing to develop an emotional bond with the organization as part of this investment in their future. By indicating that it will increase its provision of support in the future, an organization is still demonstrating that it cares for its employees and their future with the organization. This signal of caring from the organization should motivate employees to reciprocate this care in the form of affective organizational commitment (Gouldner, 1960).

Further, even though ACOS does not reflect the receipt of current organizational support, it should still serve to meet employees’ socioemotional needs. ACOS represents an expectation that the organization will be able to increase the extent to which it is able to fulfill individual needs and reward employees for their efforts. By demonstrating high potential to fulfill future employee needs, organizations convey that they care about employee welfare and have supportive values and practices. Given some of the mechanisms by which organizational identification develops (e.g., as employees see the
organization as more attractive, as they become satisfied with the organization, as they develop shared values and a sense of common fate with the organization, and as they recognize the distinctiveness of the organization’s values and practices; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Mael & Ashforth, 1992), employees who perceive that their organization will increasingly care about them and fulfill future needs (i.e., employees with high ACOS) should develop identification with – and, subsequently, affective attachment toward – the organization.

\textit{Hypothesis 2. ACOS is positively related to affective commitment, controlling for POS.}

\textbf{The Moderating Effects of ACOS on Affective Commitment and Well-Being}

Both ACOS and POS ultimately capture some aspect of the employee’s perception of organizational support. Consequently, when studying ACOS, it is important to consider the possibility that ACOS may alter the way POS operates. Given that employees consider both their actual and potential resources (as described previously in the context of COR theory; Hobfoll, 1989; 2001), I expect that employees’ well-being and affective commitment depend simultaneously on their perception of current organizational support (i.e., POS), as well as any expected changes in that organizational support (i.e., ACOS).

Several studies have examined the role of organizational support from the viewpoint of COR theory. Witt and Carlson (2006) used COR theory to explain how POS moderated the relationship between family-to-work conflict. They found that family-to-work conflict was more strongly related to reduced job performance when POS was low rather than high. Essentially, high POS served as a buffer that helped employees reduce
the negative impact of family-to-work conflict, much like how social support might help someone reduce the impact of strain. They found that employees with high POS were more likely to maintain their motivation to perform well (in spite of work-family conflict) because POS provided additional resources, produced a felt obligation to work hard for the organization, and provided the expectation that employees’ efforts would be rewarded appropriately. On the other hand, they reasoned that employees with low POS had limited resources from which to draw, and their lack of motivation to perform well was a means of conserving what few resources they had at their disposal. Witt and Carlson (2006) found support for the motivational process underlying investment in personal resources, as POS served as a substitute for the resources lost due to work-family conflict.

Hochwarter et al. (2006) examined POS from a similar perspective, finding that POS moderated the relationship between social skills and job performance, such that the positive relationship between social skills and job performance was stronger for workers with low (as opposed to high) POS. These authors argued that when an externally-provided resource (i.e., organizational support) was low, employees had to depend more heavily on an internally-based resource (i.e., social skills) to continue achieving high work performance. Their results suggest that workers tend to conserve their internally-based resources during times when the organization is readily providing sufficient resources, but they must use those internal resources when the externally-provided resources are insufficient for their work needs (Hochwarter et al., 2006). These studies have demonstrated the potential value of studying the moderating role of POS within a resource-focused framework, but there is much more we can learn from this line of
research. Therefore, in the following sections, I extend this research by examining how ACOS interacts with POS in predicting commitment and well-being.

**The Moderating Effect of ACOS on Well-Being**

Organizational support research has consistently demonstrated relationships between POS and job satisfaction, as POS fulfills socioemotional needs and gives employees confidence that they will be rewarded for good performance and receive assistance when needed (Kurtessis et al., 2015; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Given Hobfoll’s (1989) argument that strain develops as either current or potential resources become threatened, a combination of both high POS and high ACOS neutralizes both of these potential sources of strain. Employees with both high POS and high ACOS should therefore report the highest job satisfaction because they recognize that their organization is providing ample support, and they need not worry about any future loss of that support. Employees with high POS but low ACOS should still report high levels of job satisfaction because their current levels of POS are able to fulfill their needs and signal the organization’s support. However, these employees should have lower job satisfaction than people with high levels of both POS and ACOS, as low ACOS introduces some concern that, although current organizational support is high, this resource may soon be lost.

When POS is low, however, I argue that ACOS should become a greater contributor to employee job satisfaction. Employees with low levels of both POS and ACOS are likely to have the lowest levels of job satisfaction, as these employees perceive low levels of current support while also lacking optimism that their situation will improve in the future. High ACOS, however, should help buffer the negative effects of low POS.
COR theory explains that in the wake of losing resources, individuals will employ strategies in an attempt to control their losses and minimize any damage to their happiness and well-being, especially when stakes are high. Individuals may utilize other resources as “replacements” for their losses (Hobfoll, 1989; 2001). If a direct replacement is not available, people may also attempt to substitute the lost resource with an indirect or symbolic replacement (Hobfoll, 2001; Hobfoll & Leiberman, 1987). For example, an individual may compensate for losses associated with interpersonal conflict at home by seeking greater support from people or activities at work. ACOS should help buffer the effects of low POS by serving as a substitute for protecting employees’ well-being and satisfaction: ACOS should provide optimism that future organizational support will be available to remedy a current lack of organizational support. Just as employees with low job satisfaction may be motivated to stay with an organization if they expect their situation to improve (Mobley, 1982), ACOS can offer reassurance to employees – even if they perceive little current support – because it demonstrates that there is potential for future improvement in resource availability and suggests that the organization will eventually provide needed support.

*Hypothesis 3a. ACOS moderates the positive relationship between POS and job satisfaction such that POS is more strongly related to job satisfaction at low (as opposed to high) levels of ACOS.*

ACOS and POS should interact to predict not only job satisfaction, but also job strain. The organizational support literature provides meta-analytic evidence for the negative association between POS and job strain, as POS enhances employee self-efficacy, helps meet employees’ socioemotional needs, and assures employees that the
organization will provide help when needed (Kurtessis et al., 2015; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). As suggested by this evidence, current organizational support clearly has a considerable influence on employee well-being. Additionally, COR theory would suggest that POS is valuable because it indicates that employees possess the available resources needed to make further investments in those resources (Hobfoll, 2001).

Employees experiencing high levels of both POS and ACOS should therefore have the lowest levels of job strain, as they can benefit from currently available organizational support while also not having to fear the potential loss of such support. This prediction is, again, consistent with Hobfoll’s (1989) argument that strain evolves when either current or potential resources become threatened. On the other hand, employees with high POS but low ACOS should still report low levels of job strain, although likely not as low as those employees with high levels of POS and ACOS. Although they have the existing support to help meet their needs and protect their current resources, low ACOS may loom over their heads, signaling that they may eventually lose their access to organizational support.

In line with the previously hypothesized ACOS-POS moderation effect on job satisfaction, I argue that, under conditions of low POS, ACOS should become more influential to employee well-being – in this case, in reducing job strain. The combination of both low POS and low ACOS should produce the highest levels of job strain, as these employees have little current support in which to invest, and they also cannot count on any future support to reverse their circumstances. High ACOS, however, should offer some help in mitigating the negative effects of low POS. As explained by COR theory, individuals with low resources will turn their efforts to protecting themselves and
minimizing the strain resulting from their lack or loss of resources (Hobfoll, 1989; 2001). High ACOS should serve as a substitute for low POS in helping to preserve employees’ well-being. Hobfoll (2001) considers optimism and stamina to be resources that fall within the COR model and can be valuable to employees. To some extent, the concept of ACOS captures the value of these resources, which give employees the capacity to remain optimistic and endure through potentially unstable circumstances in order to eventually reach a situation in which the organization will deliver support. High levels of ACOS should therefore help buffer against the negative effects of low POS by reassuring employees that – despite low levels of current support – the organization still cares and will soon be able to provide support.

_Hypothesis 3b. ACOS moderates the negative relationship between POS and job strain such that POS is more strongly related to job strain at low (as opposed to high) levels of ACOS._

**The Moderating Effect of ACOS on Affective Organizational Commitment**

Both the organizational support and commitment literatures have long established the strong relationship between POS and affective commitment that arises from social exchange and identification processes (e.g., Kurtessis et al., 2015; Meyer et al., 2002). These effects are consistent with COR theory, which explains that employees are in the best position to gain future resources (and ultimately ensure their long-term well-being and satisfaction) when they already possess current resources in which they can invest (Hobfoll, 1989; 2001). In other words, employees with high POS are able to make investments because they, in a sense, have organizational support in their “inventory” of available resources. High ACOS should add to the benefit to high POS: employees with
both high POS and high ACOS should develop the highest levels of affective commitment because the organization is currently providing resources (in the form of organizational support) and should continue to do so in the future. However, if POS is high and ACOS is low, current support should still contribute to affective commitment, though this commitment should weaken with the threat of losing that support in the future.

Following the same line of reasoning, ACOS should become increasingly important under conditions of low POS. For people who lack current resources, any decision to invest resources is risky because they have few reserves and simply cannot afford to make a bad investment (Hobfoll, 2001). Even coping in itself contributes additional strain, as attempts to rebound after resource loss involve expending energy, using favors, and risking the loss of self-esteem or other resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Employees with low POS and low ACOS should have the lowest levels of affective commitment because they are not only limited in their current availability of resources, but they also have little reason to think that the organization will be able to provide future resources. Instead of engaging in healthy coping efforts, people with depleted resources are more likely to respond to resource loss by adjusting their attitudes toward those resources (Hobfoll, 1989; 2001). Using one of Hobfoll’s (1989) examples, people who experience a failure at school may try to reduce their strain by convincing themselves that their education “wasn’t that valuable of a resource anyway.” Because strategies such as reframing, withdrawal, avoidance, and denial often require individuals to expend fewer resources than if they were to actively cope with a stressor, they are especially appealing to people who lack the resources to cope effectively with their stressors (Hobfoll, 2001).
Although these strategies are ultimately counterproductive, they often serve as a last resort for people who need to protect themselves from any additional damage to their well-being (Lapointe et al., 2011). I predict that employees with low levels of both POS and ACOS are most likely to attempt to cope with their lack of resources by devaluing the organization’s support and reducing their emotional attachment to the organization.

High ACOS, however, should help compensate for the negative effects of low POS. Even if perceptions of current support are low, high ACOS should still help meet employees’ socioemotional needs and offer reassurance that the organization will provide assistance and recognition in the future. As a result, consistent with organizational support theory (e.g., Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011), ACOS should still contribute to the development of affective commitment, even under conditions of low POS. Again, just as a dissatisfied employee may remain with an organization because of an expectation that his/her situation may improve (Mobley, 1982), ACOS can offer a reason for employees to remain committed – even under conditions of low POS – because it demonstrates that there is potential for future improvement in resource availability, and it offers a reminder that the employee will be valued and supported by the organization in the future.

Hypothesis 4. ACOS moderates the positive relationship between POS and affective commitment such that POS is more strongly related to affective commitment at low (as opposed to high) levels of ACOS.
Chapter II: Method

Participants and Procedure

I obtained data by collecting surveys from undergraduate students at a large southwestern university. Participants were enrolled in an introductory organizational behavior course in the university’s college of business. I invited 395 students to complete surveys online by following a link posted by their instructors on their course websites. One month later, I invited the same students to complete the survey a second time following the same procedures. Although students’ participation was optional, they had the opportunity to earn extra credit in the course by completing the surveys. Each instructor determined the specific amount of extra credit that could be earned for his/her class. Each survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Of the 305 participants who provided complete surveys at Time 1, 171 were employed. I used this ratio (171/305) to estimate the proportion of students sampled who were employed (approximately 221 out of 395 students). Accordingly, I calculated the Time 1 response rate based on this estimated sample of 221 “eligible” (i.e., currently employed) participants. After excluding 13 participants for demonstrating patterns of careless responding (e.g., missing “catch” questions, finishing the survey too quickly), I had 158 usable responses (Time 1 return rate = 71%).

I conducted the same calculations for the Time 2 responses. I received complete surveys from 262 participants, of which 156 participants were employed. I used this ratio to estimate that approximately 235 out of the 395 sampled students were employed. Accordingly, I calculated the Time 2 response rate based on this estimated sample of 235 “eligible” (i.e., currently employed) participants. After excluding 15 participants for
demonstrating patterns of careless responding, I had 141 usable responses (Time 2 return rate = 60%).

To obtain the final sample, I combined the data from both time points, retaining all participants who provided usable responses at both time points. This sample consisted of 106 students, of whom approximately 58% were female, 91% were between the ages of 18 and 25, and 52% had been working for their organization for at least a year.

**Measures**

I administered all measures at both Time 1 and Time 2 (one month after Time 1; see Appendix for full versions of study measures). However, for the analyses, I used predictors (POS, ACOS, and control variables) measured at Time 1 and outcomes (commitment, satisfaction, and strain) measured at Time 2. For each dependent variable, I included its respective Time 1 response as a control. I also controlled for age, organizational tenure, and sex, as meta-analyses on organizational commitment have shown some evidence that employees who are older and have spent more time with the organization may report higher levels of affective commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 2002). Although the observed gender differences in affective commitment remain less consistent, some research does suggest that females may demonstrate greater commitment (e.g., Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

Further, researchers have emphasized the importance of incorporating both negative and positive aspects into our definitions of employee health and well-being (e.g., Meyer & Maltin, 2010; Schaufeli, 2004; Wright, 2003). Following this recommendation, I operationalize job well-being using two measures: job satisfaction and job strain. Additionally, well-being is best measured at the same scope as other relevant study
variables (e.g., Warr, 2013). In the present study, all variables capture employee perceptions that are specific to the work domain. Accordingly, these two measures capture well-being as it relates to one’s job (e.g., as opposed to global, or context-free, measures of well-being).

**Perceived Organizational Support (POS)** ($\alpha = .94$). Participants responded to an eight-item shortened version of the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS; Eisenberger et al., 1986). These items assess employees’ perceptions of the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. Example items are “My organization really cares about my well-being” and “My organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work.” Participants responded on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 7 = *Strongly Agree*).

**Anticipated Change in Organizational Support (ACOS)** ($\alpha = .93$). Participants responded to eight items adapted from the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS; Eisenberger et al., 1986). Whereas the SPOS reflects employees’ perceptions of current support, I modified each item to reflect employees’ expected change in support. For example, I modified the POS items “My organization cares about my opinions” and “Help is available from my organization when I have a problem” to the ACOS items “Change during the next 12 months in how much my organization will care about my opinions” and “Change during the next 12 months in how much help will be available from my organization when I have a problem.” Participants responded on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Great Decrease*, 7 = *Great Increase*).

**Affective Organizational Commitment** ($\alpha = .82$). Participants responded to an adapted version of Meyer et al.’s (1993) 6-item affective organizational commitment
scale. These items comprise the affective subscale of Meyer and Allen’s (1991) 3-component model of organizational commitment. This subscale reflects the degree to which an employee has an emotional attachment to – and a desire to remain with – his/her organization. Example items are “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career working with my organization” and “My organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me.” Participants responded on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree).

**Job Satisfaction** (α = .88). Participants responded to three items (Dunham & Smith, 1979). These items reflect employees’ global satisfaction with their jobs. Example items are “All in all, I am satisfied with my job at my organization” and “My job is enjoyable.” Participants responded on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree).

**Job Strain** (α = .82). Participants responded to four items from the Job-Related Affective Well-Being Scale (JAWS; Van Katwyk et al., 2000). The JAWS assesses emotional (i.e., affective) reactions to work on two different dimensions (pleasure-displeasure and high arousal-low arousal). These four items come from the subscale of the JAWS that reflects low pleasure and high arousal at work. Participants indicated how often they have felt certain emotions during the past 30 days at work. Example items are “At work I felt angry during the last 30 days” and “At work I felt anxious during the last 30 days.” Participants responded on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = Never, 5 = Always).

**Control Variables.** Participants self-reported their age, sex, and organizational tenure.
Chapter III: Results

Table 1 provides means, standard deviations, intercorrelations, and reliabilities of study variables. Prior to testing my hypotheses, I conducted a series of item-level confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) using MPlus 6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998) to verify that the study variables represent distinct constructs. Table 2 provides the results of these analyses. In order to determine whether the hypothesized five-factor model was the most appropriate fit for the data, I constructed several alternate models for comparison. I began by testing two four-factor models. First, given that job satisfaction and job strain are both indices of well-being, I combined these items onto a common factor and compared this four-factor model against the hypothesized five-factor model. Second, given that POS and ACOS both reflect the concept of organizational support, and I derived their items from the same scale, I tested an additional four-factor model in which I loaded POS and ACOS onto a single factor. I then tested a three-factor model in which I combined POS and ACOS, and I also combined job satisfaction and job strain (these combinations left commitment as the third factor). Next, in the two-factor model, I combined the items examined at Time 1 (POS, ACOS) and the items examined at Time 2 (commitment, job satisfaction, job strain). Finally, I tested a single factor model in which all items loaded onto a single explanatory latent variable. Chi-square difference tests revealed that (1) the five-factor model demonstrated significantly better fit than both four-factor models, (2) the four-factor models demonstrated significantly better fit than the three-factor model, (3) the three-factor model demonstrated significantly better fit than the two-factor model, and (4) the two-factor model demonstrated significantly better fit than the single-factor
model. In sum, these findings indicate that the five-factor model demonstrated significantly better fit than the alternate models tested.

Despite the strong fit of the hypothesized model relative to the alternate models tested (as assessed by the chi-square difference tests), the chi-square statistics for goodness of fit were significant for all models. Because a significant chi-square statistic is often an indicator of poor model fit, I further assessed and compared the models by examining various fit indices, including root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), comparative fit index (CFI), and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI). The five-factor model demonstrated the most satisfactory values across each of these indices. Although the RMSEA statistic ideally should fall below .08, the five-factor model produced the only RMSEA value whose confidence interval fell entirely below the recommended cutoff (RMSEA = .088, 90% CI = [.077, .098]; Brown & Cudeck, 1993). The five-factor model also produced the lowest SRMR value (.073), which fell within the recommended cutoff (Hu & Bentler, 1995). Although none of the models reached the ideal cutoff value for the CFI and TLI (.95; Hu & Bentler, 1995), the five-factor model did produce the highest CFI (.858) and TLI (.843) values. Additionally, some of these recommended cutoff values (e.g., RMSEA, TLI) can be sensitive to sample size and potentially over-reject models with low sample sizes (Hu & Bentler, 1995). In sum, given that each of these fit indices met or neared these recommended cutoff values, I concluded that the hypothesized model was a decent fit for the data, and I proceeded to treat the five constructs separately in my subsequent hypothesis testing.
I tested my hypotheses using SPSS 22 (see Figure 2 for statistical model). In order to yield more interpretable results, I first centered all independent variables at their mean values (Aiken, West, & Reno, 1991; Dalal & Zickar, 2012). I tested my hypotheses using multiple linear regression, and I present the results of my regression models in Tables 3-5. Hypothesis 1 predicted that ACOS would be positively related to job satisfaction (H1a) and negatively related to job strain (H1b), controlling for POS. These hypotheses were not supported, as ACOS did not significantly predict job satisfaction ($B = .106$, $SE = .134$, $p = .432$) or job strain ($B = -.090$, $SE = .060$, $p = .137$). Hypothesis 2 predicted that ACOS would be positively related to affective commitment, controlling for POS. This hypothesis was supported, as ACOS did significantly predict commitment ($B = .192$, $SE = .088$, $p < .05$).

Hypothesis 3 stated that POS and ACOS would interact to predict job satisfaction (H3a) and job strain (H3b). These hypotheses were not supported, as the POS × ACOS interaction did not significantly predict job satisfaction ($B = .076$, $SE = .110$, $p = .492$) or job strain ($B = -.024$, $SE = .050$, $p = .633$). Hypothesis 4 stated that POS and ACOS would interact to predict affective commitment. This hypothesis was supported, as the interaction was significant ($B = .155$, $SE = .072$, $p < .05$). Given this significant interaction term, I followed recommendations from Aiken et al. (1991) and Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken (2003) for plotting and interpreting interactions. I plotted this interaction (see Figure 3) and performed significance tests of the simple slopes of the regression model at three different levels of ACOS (at the mean, as well as one standard deviation above and below the mean). Results of the simple slopes analysis reveal that the relationship between POS and commitment was significant at average (simple slope =
.273, \( SE = .084, p < .01 \) and high (simple slope = .425, \( SE = .117, p < .01 \) levels of ACOS. Interestingly, the relationship between POS and commitment was not significant at low levels of ACOS (simple slope = .121, \( SE = .099, p = .225 \)).

Chapter IV: Discussion

In conducting this study, my primary goals were to introduce and test the concept of anticipated change in organizational support, or ACOS. Drawing from theories of organizational support (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Kurtesis et al., 2015) and conservation of resources (Hobfoll, 1989; 1998; 2001), I have argued for the unique importance of examining employees’ perceptions concerning future organizational support in addition to the traditionally studied perceptions of current organizational support (i.e., POS). This study challenged the typical conceptualization of organizational support not only by adopting a future-oriented perspective on POS, but also by questioning the notion that perceptions of anticipated support are limited to prospective or incoming employees. This approach to studying organizational support seems increasingly relevant, as organizations face more dynamic and uncertain futures (e.g., Nijssen & Paauwe, 2012), and employees face questions about how the organization will treat them (e.g., Cascio, 2003). Though not all hypotheses received support, these results are a promising first step in understanding the role of ACOS. In particular, the significant effects of ACOS on affective commitment indicate that this topic warrants additional attention from researchers. Only a handful of studies have examined anticipated organizational support, and this study is the first to assess anticipated changes in that support. The concept of ACOS therefore extends
organizational support theory by suggesting that employee commitment not only depends on current support, but also the expectation of how that support will change in the future.

Altogether, my hypotheses received partial support. My first set of hypotheses assessed the extent to which ACOS has unique associations with other relevant variables, controlling for the influence of POS. ACOS was a significant predictor of affective commitment (H2), but not of job satisfaction (H1a) or job strain (H1b). The latter two findings suggest that ACOS does not help explain variance in employee well-being beyond the effects of POS. Although organizational support theory argues that POS contributes to employee well-being by enhancing self-esteem, meeting socioemotional needs, and giving employees the expectation that they will be rewarded appropriately (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Kurtessis et al., 2015), these results suggest that ACOS does not make a significant contribution to well-being beyond what is already explained by POS. The significant effect of ACOS on commitment, however, indicates that both POS and ACOS have a unique and significant influence on affective commitment. Consistent with processes underscored by organizational support theory that explain how POS enhances commitment (e.g., Kurtessis et al., 2015), this finding lends support to the idea that ACOS similarly contributes to affective commitment by encouraging employees to reciprocate the organization’s care and by meeting employees’ socioemotional needs.

My second set of hypotheses assessed the interactive effects of POS and ACOS, and these results mimic the findings of the direct effect hypotheses: the POS × ACOS interaction was a significant predictor of affective commitment (H4), but not of job satisfaction (H3a) or job strain (H3b). The nonsignificant interaction effects for the well-
being variables indicate that ACOS does not buffer the negative consequences of low POS, as hypothesized. This study’s modest sample size (N = 106) may have also contributed to these nonsignificant findings by reducing the power needed to detect statistical effects.

Although the interaction effect on commitment was significant, it did not take the exact nature I hypothesized. I expected that ACOS would have a buffering effect on the relationship between POS and commitment: specifically, if current support is low, anticipated improvements in future support would compensate for the reduced commitment due to low POS by offering reassurance that support will be provided in the future. I did not find support for this explanation: employees with low POS reported similarly low levels of commitment regardless of whether or not they expected improvements in support. Rather, ACOS strengthened the positive relationship between POS and commitment. One potential explanation for this finding is that high ACOS may change the meaning of POS to indicate a longer-term, favorable orientation by the organization toward the employee. Although POS indicates that the organization evaluates the employee positively, the duration of that positive valuation remains uncertain. High ACOS, however, indicates that the organization is committed to a favorable social exchange relationship with the employee in the long-term. ACOS may therefore increase the value of POS in meeting employee socioemotional needs and in providing a basis for a secure future, thereby leading to an increase in the relationship between POS and affective commitment.

This explanation would also be consistent with processes explained by organizational support theory. In drawing from social exchange theory (Blau, 1964;
Gouldner, 1960), organizational support theory emphasizes that employees develop commitment in reciprocation for support that has already been provided. However, social exchange theorists also explain that – in addition to reciprocating when the other party provides resources – people also look to the future of their exchange relationships and are motivated to invest in relationships that appear promising (Blau, 1964). High ACOS may indicate the organization’s instrumental value in the employee-organization exchange relationship: employees would therefore develop the greatest levels of commitment toward an organization that not only supports them in the present, but also promises increased support in the future.

Finally, in addition to the influence of social exchange, this rationale is also consistent with the self-enhancement process described by organizational support theory (e.g., Kurtessis et al., 2015). This self-enhancement process rests on the idea that, at a fundamental level, individuals seek to satisfy important socioemotional needs. Because these needs are persistent, individuals prefer to be able to satisfy their needs in the long-term (Meyer et al., 2006). People thus are more likely to develop greater identification with an organization that offers stability and promises continued protection of their well-being (Meyer et al., 2006). Taking these theoretical arguments together, the interaction obtained in this study suggests that ACOS strengthens the effects of POS on commitment by giving the employee confidence that the organization will be an instrumental exchange partner and will increase its ability to meet employees’ socioemotional needs in the future. As a result, ACOS may be enhancing the meaning of POS because employees have the security of feeling supported in the long-term rather than just in the present.
Interestingly, the positive relationship between POS and affective commitment was not significant for employees with the lowest levels of anticipated support. In other words, employees who felt supported were only likely to develop affective commitment if they also expected that the organization’s support would remain stable or improve in the future. This finding supports the idea that employees consider the future of their exchange relationship with the organization and develop the most commitment when they feel that the organization is currently supportive but also instrumental as a source of future support. This finding makes an interesting contribution to the POS and commitment literatures, as both literatures have consistently noted the strong relationship between these two variables (e.g., Kurtessis et al., 2015; Meyer et al., 2002; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

Another interesting trend in these results is that the effects of ACOS were significant for affective commitment, but not for the well-being variables. Organizational support researchers therefore may generate further research on ACOS by considering why ACOS appears to relate more strongly to commitment than to well-being. Although COR theory explains that loss of both current and future resources can produce stress (Hobfoll, 1989; 2001), these results suggest that current resources may be more important determinants of well-being than anticipated changes in those resources. Perhaps individuals perceive current resources as more salient and more tangible, compared with future resources, which can only be predicted or anticipated. Existing resources therefore may be more influential than potential resources in influencing well-being, but additional research is needed to help clarify how employee well-being may relate differently to anticipated support, as compared with current support.
**Limitations and Future Research Directions**

Although organizational support researchers have found evidence for the notion that responses from working undergraduate student employees can generalize to the general working population (e.g., Gakovic & Tetrick, 2003), undergraduate samples still present a few challenges. First, although the respondents attended a culturally diverse university, most respondents were between ages 18 and 25. Future researchers should examine these research questions in organizations where respondents’ ages are more representative of the labor force. Additionally, because respondents earned course extra credit for their participation, both surveys had to be administered within a given academic semester. The one-month interval between the first and second surveys may have been insufficient for employees to experience or report significant changes in levels of commitment or well-being. Accordingly, this line of research would benefit from testing how perceptions of anticipated support develop and change across a longer period of time. Conducting more longitudinal research offers the additional benefit of helping to expand the ACOS research model by allowing researchers to test potential mediating mechanisms that may link ACOS to workplace outcomes. For example, perhaps attitudinal variables such as affective commitment serve as mediators that help explain how ACOS may contribute to distal outcomes such as citizenship behaviors or turnover.

Along with the limitations of this sample, this study has some additional methodological weaknesses. First, common method variance should be addressed more thoroughly in future studies. Although the collection of data at two separate time points helps reduce the concern of method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986; Podsakoff), all survey measures were reported by the
focal employee (i.e., a common source). Organizational researchers have commonly assessed the effects of method variance by conducting a separate CFA to estimate the proportion of variance explained by a method factor, following procedures outlined by Podsakoff et al. (2003) and Williams, Cote, and Buckley (1989). In the present analyses, however, this model would not identify as a result of the small sample size (i.e., the number of parameters estimated exceeded the number of participants in the sample). Therefore, estimates from this analysis of method variance would not be dependable. Future researchers can improve upon the present study, however, by collecting data from multiple sources (e.g., supervisor ratings, objective organizational data). An additional limitation involves the creation of the ACOS scale for the current study: I adapted the ACOS items directly from the POS items used in this study. Because I only adapted the phrasing of these items (i.e., the underlying content of each ACOS item remained the same as its corresponding POS item), participants may have developed perceptions or biases while responding to the POS items (which were presented first in the survey) that later influenced their responses to the ACOS items. I recommend that future researchers create ACOS scales by selecting two different sets of items so that the content of the POS and ACOS items do not overlap directly. Additionally, researchers may consider including an additional control item that assesses whether the respondent has changed jobs since taking the first survey. Using this control item would be especially helpful for studies such as this one in which the respondents worked with different employers.

Independent of methodological concerns, the use of a student sample does bring up interesting research questions that can be addressed by further research on this topic. As might be expected in a student sample, many respondents reported relatively short
tenure with their organizations. It may be the case that students – compared with the
typical employee – are more likely to view their jobs as temporary, as we typically
assume that students will seek better or different jobs after completing their college
coursework. This study therefore introduces an interesting research question concerning
whether employees are more or less responsive to potential changes in support depending
on their work status. Although Gakovic and Tetrick (2003) found evidence to suggest that
the strength of employee-organization relationships do not differ based on work status
(i.e., part-time vs. full-time), this difference has not been assessed directly in the context
of anticipated support. Additional ACOS research may provide insight as to whether
perceptions of anticipated support differ across groups of employees (e.g., student vs.
non-student, part-time vs. full-time, contingent workers vs. regularly employed workers).

Further, the relative strength of the relationships that ACOS demonstrated with
affective commitment (compared with job satisfaction or job strain) underscores the
potential for examining additional variables that may help distinguish ACOS from POS.
Given the multitude of variables that researchers have found to be associated with POS
(e.g., Kurtessis et al., 2015; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), POS may have stronger or
weaker relationships with some variables, compared with ACOS. Future research can
help clarify the unique importance of ACOS by identifying outcome variables that are
more strongly linked to ACOS than POS. As an example, turnover intentions may be one
variable that demonstrates stronger relationships with ACOS than with POS. If
employees are considering whether or not to leave a company, perhaps this decision
relies less on current levels of support and more on whether they expect their
employment situation to improve or worsen in the future. In addition, ACOS may alter
the relationships that POS has with other variables, which occurred in this study with affective commitment.

Another future direction for this line of research is to examine antecedents of ACOS. As an example, researchers might consider the extent to which ACOS develops as a result of employees’ expectations regarding various aspects of their work experience (e.g., anticipated training opportunities, changes in available resources, or the potential for a promotion). Expected changes at work may serve as indicators to employees concerning how their support from the organization might increase or decrease in the future. ACOS may also relate to individual difference or human capital variables such as optimism or resilience (e.g., Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007). Because these variables reflect a positive outlook on future outcomes (i.e., optimism) or a positive response to the experience of loss or uncertainty (i.e., resilience; Luthans et al., 2007), they may be associated with higher ratings of ACOS. By identifying antecedents of ACOS, researchers can gain a clearer idea of how – or under what conditions – companies may be most likely to promote high ACOS (or, alternatively, suffer the potential consequences of low ACOS).

**Practical Implications**

Practically, the findings suggest that organizations wishing to enhance employee commitment would benefit from promoting both POS and ACOS. In addition to ensuring that employees feel supported in the present, organizations should also convey that workers can count on increased support in the future. Offering reassurance of increased future support may be especially important for companies that expect to undergo a transition: employees facing the uncertainty of a merger, restructuring, or downsizing
may be especially responsive to organizational cues of anticipated changes in support. Even the effectiveness or clarity with which management communicates future changes to employees may influence whether employees develop optimism or pessimism about their future organizational status.

More research is needed to identify such evidence-based antecedents of ACOS so that we can communicate to practitioners ways that they may promote ACOS. However, based on the present promising initial results, we can speculate about factors that may contribute to ACOS. For example, it may be the case that organizations can enhance ACOS by treating their employees well, and by conveying this care sincerely. Organizational support theory explains that employees are more likely to develop POS when they believe an organization treats them well because it sincerely cares, as opposed to offering superficial praise under a façade of caring (e.g., Eisenberger et al., 1986; Gouldner, 1960). Positive treatment may similarly enhance ACOS: perhaps companies can promote ACOS by providing favorable working conditions or valuable work-life benefit packages. These provisions may signal that an organization is committed to the long-term development and well-being of employees and their families and thereby contribute to the development of high ACOS.

Another approach to identifying antecedents of ACOS can be borrowed from the broader question of how organizations prepare for change. For example, Nijssen and Paauwe (2012) suggest that the increasingly dynamic business environment has forced organizations to develop agility, or the ability to embrace and prepare for changes, in order to survive and thrive. In the same way that organizations may develop competencies to help them maintain their competitive advantage, perhaps they could also
apply this logic at an employee level. In conducting these practices, Nijssen and Paauwe (2012) propose that organizations may facilitate long-term cooperative relationships with their employees by giving employees voice and a sense of direction with their organization. For example, companies could provide training opportunities that expand employees’ skillsets, or management could encourage more employee participation in decision making (Nijssen & Paauwe, 2012). These practices may also communicate to employees that the organization is willing to increase its support in the long-term and is invested in helping them cultivate their ideas and skills.

Conclusion

Just as employees who feel supported by their organization are likely to develop greater affective commitment to the organization, this study suggests that expected changes in organizational support also contribute uniquely to the development of commitment. Workers who sense high levels of support – coupled with expectations that the organization will increase its support in the future – are likely to experience the strongest commitment to the organization. Companies can therefore foster strong bonds with their employees both by ensuring that workers feel supported, as well as by conveying that they are committed to increasing this support in the future.
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Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Study Variables

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<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
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<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. POS</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>(.94)</td>
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<td>2. ACOS</td>
<td>4.59</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>(.93)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>3. Affective Commitment</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>.62**</td>
<td>.37**</td>
<td>(.82)</td>
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<td>4. Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>.57**</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>.64**</td>
<td>(.88)</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Job Strain</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>-.39**</td>
<td>-.26**</td>
<td>-.30**</td>
<td>-.49**</td>
<td>(.82)</td>
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<td>6. Age</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<td>7. Sex</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.17</td>
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<td>8. Organizational Tenure</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>1.05</td>
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<td>-.18</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.20*</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>-.12</td>
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</table>

Note. N = 106. Reliability estimates (Cronbach’s alpha) are provided in parentheses in the diagonal. Sex was coded such that 1 = female and 0 = male. POS = perceived organizational support; ACOS = anticipated change in organizational support. Respondents reported age and tenure using Likert-type scales ranging from 1-8 and 1-5, respectively.

* p < .05, two-tailed.
** p < .01, two-tailed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$\chi^2$ diff</th>
<th>RMSEA</th>
<th>SRMR</th>
<th>CFI</th>
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<tr>
<td>Five-factor model</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>665.890**</td>
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<td>.088</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.858</td>
<td>.843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four-factor model 1</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>752.903**</td>
<td>87.013**</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>.819</td>
<td>.802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four-factor model 2</td>
<td>371</td>
<td>1059.020**</td>
<td>393.13**</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td>.119</td>
<td>.673</td>
<td>.643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three-factor model</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>1145.917**</td>
<td>86.897**</td>
<td>.140</td>
<td>.123</td>
<td>.634</td>
<td>.602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-factor model</td>
<td>376</td>
<td>1195.704**</td>
<td>49.787**</td>
<td>.143</td>
<td>.125</td>
<td>.611</td>
<td>.580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-factor model</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>1363.626**</td>
<td>167.922**</td>
<td>.157</td>
<td>.135</td>
<td>.532</td>
<td>.496</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 106. df = degrees of freedom, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation, SRMR = standardized root mean square residual, CFI = comparative fit index, TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index. Four-factor model 1 = job satisfaction and job strain items were loaded onto a single factor; four-factor model 2 = POS and ACOS items were loaded onto a single factor; both four-factor models were compared with the five-factor model.*

** $p < .01$. 
Table 3
Hierarchical Regression Results and Moderation Analysis for Job Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.074</td>
<td>.169</td>
<td>-.033</td>
<td>-.095</td>
<td>.172</td>
<td>-.042</td>
<td>-.110</td>
<td>.174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>.307</td>
<td>.239</td>
<td>.096</td>
<td>.307</td>
<td>.239</td>
<td>.096</td>
<td>.304</td>
<td>.240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Tenure</td>
<td>-.165</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>-.110</td>
<td>-.149</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>-.099</td>
<td>-.159</td>
<td>.117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1 Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>.527</td>
<td>.115</td>
<td>.453**</td>
<td>.513</td>
<td>.117</td>
<td>.441**</td>
<td>.514</td>
<td>.117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS</td>
<td>.301</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>.242*</td>
<td>.278</td>
<td>.127</td>
<td>.224*</td>
<td>.294</td>
<td>.130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACOS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.106</td>
<td>.134</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.100</td>
<td>.135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS × ACOS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.462**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.465**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.435**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.433**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Δ$R^2$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.003</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.003</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $N = 106$. POS = perceived organizational support; ACOS = anticipated change in organizational support. Sex was coded such that 1 = female and 0 = male.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$. 
### Table 4

*Hierarchical Regression Results and Moderation Analysis for Job Strain*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.077</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>.056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>-.098</td>
<td>.108</td>
<td>-.065</td>
<td>-.096</td>
<td>.108</td>
<td>-.064</td>
<td>-.096</td>
<td>.108</td>
<td>-.064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Tenure</td>
<td>.015</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1 Job Strain</td>
<td>.547</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td>.631**</td>
<td>.550</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>.635**</td>
<td>.551</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td>.635**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS</td>
<td>-.085</td>
<td>.045</td>
<td>-.144</td>
<td>-.056</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>-.096</td>
<td>-.061</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>-.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACOS</td>
<td>-.090</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>-.118</td>
<td>-.088</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>-.116</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>-.036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS × ACOS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>-.036</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.500**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.511**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.512**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>.474**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.481**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.477**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\Delta R^2$</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 106. POS = perceived organizational support; ACOS = anticipated change in organizational support. Sex was coded such that 1 = female and 0 = male.*

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$. 
Table 5
Hierarchical Regression Results and Moderation Analysis for Affective Commitment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>SE B</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.050</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>-.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>.368</td>
<td>.162</td>
<td>.146*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Tenure</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time 1 Affective Commitment</td>
<td>.557</td>
<td>.083</td>
<td>.535**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS</td>
<td>.293</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.298**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACOS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POS × ACOS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>.602**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted $R^2$</td>
<td>.583**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Δ$R^2$</td>
<td>.018*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $N = 106$. POS = perceived organizational support; ACOS = anticipated change in organizational support. Sex was coded such that 1 = female and 0 = male.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$. 
Figure 1. Conceptual Models
Figure 2. Statistical Models

Note. ACOS = anticipated change in organizational support; POS = perceived organizational support; $T_1$ = measured at Time 1; $T_2$ = measured at Time 2; control variables = POS, age, sex, organizational tenure, and the respective dependent variable measured at Time 1.
Figure 3. Interaction of POS and ACOS Predicting Affective Commitment

Note. ACOS = anticipated change in organizational support; POS = perceived organizational support. Simple slopes are plotted at ± 1 SD of ACOS.
Appendix: Study Measures

Perceived Organizational Support (POS)

Items from the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS; Eisenberger et al., 1986).

The following questions ask about the organization for which you work and your experience at your organization. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements using the choices below.


1. My organization values my contribution to its well-being.
2. My organization strongly considers my goals and values.
3. Help is available from my organization when I have a problem.
4. My organization really cares about my well-being.
5. My organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.
6. My organization cares about my opinions.
7. My organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work.
8. My organization tries to make my job as interesting as possible.

Anticipated Change in Organizational Support (ACOS)

Items adapted from the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS; Eisenberger et al., 1986).
The following items concern possible CHANGES that you expect during the next 12 months at work. Please choose one of the following seven amounts of change for each one of the statements below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Great Decrease</td>
<td>Moderate Decrease</td>
<td>Slight Decrease</td>
<td>No Change</td>
<td>Slight Increase</td>
<td>Moderate Increase</td>
<td>Great Increase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Change** during the next 12 months in how much my organization will value my contribution to its well-being.

2. **Change** during the next 12 months in how much my organization will strongly consider my goals and values.

3. **Change** during the next 12 months in how much help will be available from my organization when I have a problem.

4. **Change** during the next 12 months in how much my organization will really care about my well-being.

5. **Change** during the next 12 months in how much my organization will care about my general satisfaction at work.

6. **Change** during the next 12 months in how much my organization will care about my opinions.

7. **Change** during the next 12 months in how much my organization will take pride in my accomplishments at work.

8. **Change** during the next 12 months in how much my organization will try to make my job as interesting as possible.

**Affective Organizational Commitment**

Items adapted from Meyer et al.’s (1993) affective organizational commitment scale.
The following questions ask about the organization for which you work and your experience at your organization. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements using the choices below.


1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career working with my organization.
2. I really feel as if my organization’s problems are my own.
3. I do NOT feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization. (Reverse-coded)
4. I do NOT feel emotionally attached to my organization. (Reverse-coded)
5. I do NOT feel like part of the family at my organization. (Reverse-coded)
6. My organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.

Job Satisfaction

Items from Dunham and Smith (1979).

The following questions ask about the organization for which you work and your experience at your organization. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements using the choices below.


1. All in all, I am satisfied with my job at my organization.
2. In general, my job measures up to the sort of job I wanted when I took it.
3. My job is enjoyable.

**Job Strain**

Items from the Job-Related Affective Well-Being Scale (JAWS; Van Katwyk et al., 2000).

*Below are a number of statements that describe different emotions that a person can feel at work. Please indicate how often you felt each of the following emotions at work during the last 30 days (or less if necessary).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Quite Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. At work I felt furious during the last 30 days.
2. At work I felt angry during the last 30 days.
3. At work I felt frightened during the last 30 days.
4. At work I felt anxious during the last 30 days.

**Demographic Control Variables**

*The following questions ask about your demographic information.*

If you are a male, choose 2. If a female, choose 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 6 months</td>
<td>6 months - 1 year</td>
<td>1 year - 3 years</td>
<td>3 years - 6 years</td>
<td>6 years or above</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How long did you work for the organization about which you answered the questions?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>26-29</td>
<td>30-33</td>
<td>34-37</td>
<td>38-41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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