INTEGRATIVE CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

Job Embeddedness: A Multifoci Theoretical Extension

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Integrating the expanding job embeddedness (JE) literature, in this article we advance a multifoci model of JE that is theoretically grounded in conservation of resources (COR) theory. From COR theory, we posit that employees’ motivation to acquire and protect resources explains why they become embedded and how they behave once embedded. Our COR-based JE model highlights contextual antecedents that clarify how employees become embedded within different foci. Its multifoci theoretical lens also illustrates how different forms of work-focused embeddedness differentially affect work outcomes and how they interact with nonwork foci to influence those outcomes. Along with directions for further research, we further discuss theoretical and practical implications of our integrative formulation.

Keywords: job embeddedness, conservation of resources, turnover, work performance

As originally articulated by Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablynski, and Erez (2001), their driving research purpose was to “present a new construct called job embeddedness . . . a key factor in understanding why people stay on their jobs” (p. 1102, emphasis added). More than a decade of subsequent research has investigated the predictive validity of job embeddedness (JE), evaluated alternative ways to measure the JE construct, and yielded sufficient findings to complete a meaningful meta-analysis of the behavioral outcomes associated with JE (Jiang, Liu, McKay, Lee, & Mitchell, 2012). All told, various narrative and quantitative reviews (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Eberly, 2008; Jiang, Liu, et al., 2012; T. W. Lee, Burch, & Mitchell, 2014) have concluded that JE clearly predicts staying across a variety of contexts.

Although originally conceived to explain staying, JE also predicts other important work outcomes, including in-role and extrarole performance, counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs) and absenteeism (T. W. Lee et al., 2014; T. W. Lee, Mitchell, Sablynski, Burton, & Holtom, 2004; Ng & Feldman, 2009). Given that the JE construct is increasingly deployed to account for outcomes other than staying in an organization (e.g., job performance) and other forms of staying (e.g., occupational embeddedness; Ng & Feldman, 2009), we believe that additional theoretical refinements are needed to better ground the expanding construct space. The purpose of this article is to articulate a more complete JE model with theoretical roots in conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 2001).

In particular, we seek to demonstrate how COR theory offers a parsimonious explanation for the growing nomological network relating JE to its many antecedents and consequences. Indeed, the originators of the JE construct recently prescribed more explanatory accounts. As T. W. Lee et al. (2014) noted, “[W]e highlight that we did not feel that the underlying theory for how JE affects performance is very strong. These mechanisms need to be explained and examined if we are to move forward” (p. 211). In the following sections, we review JE and COR theory before describing how the latter can inform the former. Integrating both views, we then introduce a framework that yields testable propositions that promote understanding of organizational participation and performance (March & Simon, 1958).

A COR Perspective on JE: A Theoretical Integration

JE Underpinnings

Mitchell et al. (2001) construed JE as the totality of forces that solidify staying in organizations. The amalgam of theories invoked to define the JE construct yielded three key dimensions. In partic-
ular, employees’ formal or informal ties to other individuals or groups at work or in the community (links) keep them from departing. In addition, people stay due to their fit—or overall compatibility with the job or surrounding environment. Further, sacrifices embed people who would otherwise forfeit material or psychological benefits when leaving organizations or communities.

Two fundamental underpinnings of JE are worth noting. First, JE represents a state of inertia (“stuckness”) as opposed to an energizing force because “most of the time, [staying] is not even seen or considered as a choice process” (Mitchell & Lee, 2001, p. 213). From a turnover perspective (March & Simon, 1958), JE reduces the desirability of movement. Second, Mitchell et al.’s (2001) view implies that JE links, fit, and sacrifices manifest additive and compensatory effects on staying. For example, dissatisfied employees may not necessarily leave if they have many attachments to people or feel compatible with the work setting (Mitchell & Lee, 2001). Thus, embedding forces likely differ in strength with stronger (or more numerous) forces compensating for weaker ones.

Although conceived as an integrated web of forces, various theoretical mechanisms were promulgated to account for how the three JE dimensions embed people. For example, job links may foster staying (Allen, 2006; Mitchell & Lee, 2001) by imposing normative pressures to stay (Maertz, Stevens, & Campion, 2003) or building social capital (Holtom, Mitchell, & Lee, 2006). Relationships off the job (e.g., friends) or community memberships (church, volunteer groups) also may exert normative control over staying (Hom, Mitchell, Lee, & Griffeth, 2012; Maertz & Griffeth, 2004).

To explain why work environment fit impacts staying, JE scholars applied Schneider’s (1987) attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) paradigm. Through an ASA lens, individuals and organizations select one another when they are mutually attracted (Wheeler, Gallagher, Brouer, & Sablynski, 2007). An employee remains in an employing institution insofar as mutual attraction persists; if—or when—either party no longer fits, she or he voluntarily or involuntarily leaves (Wheeler et al., 2007). Moreover, individuals’ appreciation of community qualities (e.g., climate, locale, culture, amenities, activity levels; Mitchell et al., 2001) was purported to enhance their fit to the places where they live.

Explanatory mechanisms translating the impact of sacrifices were grounded in turnover theories (Mobley, 1977; Rusbult & Farrell, 1983; Shaw, Delery, Jenkins, & Gupta, 1998). These theories posit that higher perceived costs of leaving deter incumbents from vacating jobs. For example, nonportable benefits or training become investments that escalate over time and embed people (Mitchell & Lee, 2001). Other less conspicuous benefits, such as a window office or familiarity with office politics (“better the devils you know than those you do not”), can likewise become sacrifices when leaving. Extending turnover perspectives, JE theorists also recognized how community sacrifices can prove embedding. That is, people also stay where they live to avoid giving up family friendly neighborhoods or even “football tickets or ballet seats that took 20 years of seniority to obtain” (Mitchell et al., 2001, p. 1105). In sum, the JE foundation rests on a broad range of eclectic theories (T. W. Lee et al., 2014).

COR Theory

According to COR theory, individuals strive to acquire, protect, and retain resources—or “those objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued” (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516). Resources are valued because they help people meet external demands (e.g., added domestic duties when spouses travel for work), attain valued goals (e.g., promotion; Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, & Westman, 2014), or protect against potential future resource loss (e.g., lost paychecks due to dismissal). Aside from personal (e.g., self-esteem, communication skills) and environmental (e.g., coworker aid, work tools) resources, Hobfoll (1989, 2001) distinguishes between resources valued for their own sake (e.g., health, companionship, home) from instrumental resources (e.g., optimism, money, time) that can be invested for the acquisition or protection of other valued resources.

COR theory puts forth two principles. The first principle—“the primacy of resource loss”—holds that resource loss elicits stronger affective and behavioral reactions than equivalent resource gains. When deciding whether to stay or accept another job, an employee may fear giving up existing job benefits (sacrifices) more than he would experience anticipatory satisfaction of equivalent benefits in a new job. The second principle—“resource investment”—posits that individuals invest resources to accumulate resources that enable them to meet demands, attain goals, recover from resource loss, or protect against future losses. Thus, one might invest in education or training to increase the odds of promotion (resource acquisition) or minimize the odds of layoff (resource protection).

Hobfoll (2001) further deduced corollaries based on the resource investment principle. The first is that people already endowed with ample resources are less vulnerable to resource loss and more capable of gain. Two more corollaries concerned resource losses or gains over time. Because resources must be invested to attain more resources or prevent loss, people lacking resources may risk ever-increasing resource losses (or a “resource loss spiral”). On the other hand, initial resource gains beget additional gains for resource-endowed individuals. A fourth corollary stated that resource-depleted persons conserve resources or adopt a conservative stance toward resource investment. That is, they become increasingly protective over resources (including refraining from investments) as their resources dwindle. In brief, individuals express hedonistic tendencies in investing and conserving valued resources.

JE: A COR Theoretical Perspective

We believe that COR tenets provide a viable, unifying theoretical foundation to clarify how JE influences staying and other vital work outcomes. To illustrate, JE theorists asserted that people stay and perform well due to fit, links, and sacrifices (T. W. Lee et al., 2004). A COR perspective can parsimoniously explain why: people stay to retain resources that hold intrinsic (sacrifices) or instrumental (fit and links) value as resource loss is distressing (Principle 1). Furthermore, JE promotes job performance because instrumental resources (fit and links) enable employees to fulfill job responsibilities more effectively, enabling them to acquire more resources (e.g., recognition, promotion; Principle 2). COR theory also can help account for compensatory and buffering JE effects. Illustrating compensatory effects, Mitchell and Lee (2001) contended that incumbents dissatisfied with a job may...
nonetheless stay by focusing on other desirable features in the work environment (e.g., attachments to projects or people). Explaining such compensatory JE effects, the resource substitution COR hypothesis holds that resources from one domain (e.g., colleague support) can be expropriated to substitute for resources lost in another domain (e.g., emotional exhaustion; Halbesleben, 2006). Demonstrating buffering effects, Burton, Holtom, Sablynski, Mitchell, and Lee (2010) observed that job-embedded employees do not react with worse performance or lower organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) when experiencing negative job shocks, such as poor performance reviews or low pay raises. In COR parlance, buffering arises because embedded individuals have more resources and thus can better withstand job-related resource losses (e.g., demotions, pay cuts, image violations; T. W. Lee & Mitchell, 1994). When confronted with resource loss, embedded employees may thus focus on compensatory embedding resources (e.g., “feeling valuable to others,” “status/seniority at work”; Hobfoll, 2001) or respond by investing more resources to stave off further resource losses (e.g., improve job performance to restore self-confidence; avoid dismissal).

Based on this overview of how COR theory offers parsimonious explanatory mechanisms for JE effects, we seek to accomplish four objectives. First, we discuss the diverse focal points or foci in which people can become embedded. Second, we explore the variety of contextual antecedents that embed individuals in different foci. Third, we examine outcomes associated with the varied foci. Fourth, we review the implications of an expanded JE model based on COR (see Figure 1) that undergirds future inquiry into JE.

Multifoci View of Embeddedness

Originally, Mitchell et al. (2001) conceived two prime foci—the job and the community—within which employees become embedded. Recent theoretical extensions have highlighted other embedding foci for individuals (Feldman & Ng, 2007) or their families (Feldman, Ng, & Vogel, 2012; Ramesh & Gelfand, 2010). The different embeddedness foci are empirically distinct and differentially affect outcomes (staying, performance, work–family conflict; T. W. Lee et al., 2004; Ng & Feldman, 2009, 2012a; Ramesh & Gelfand, 2010). In the following sections, we review the emerging literature on multifoci JE.

On-the-job and organizational embeddedness. Ng and Feldman (2007) first distinguished between on-the-job and organizational embeddedness. Mitchell et al. (2001) assumed that people embedded in jobs also were embedded in organizations. However, Ng and Feldman (2007) reasoned that incumbents could be embedded in one but not necessarily the other. For example, employees may fit job demands, have multiple ties to colleagues in local work environs, and sacrifice a corner office if they leave a job. Yet these employees may lack fit with corporate values, have few links to employees outside work units, and possess few organizational perks (e.g., pension) that they forfeit on leaving. In short, they are embedded in a particular job but not the organization. Because jobs are nested within firms, on-the-job embeddedness often translates into higher workplace retention. Job-embedded incumbents may nonetheless quit if their employer reassigns (or promotes) them to a different job that they find less fulfilling or perform less proficiently (Ng & Feldman, 2007). Despite how on-the-job and organizational embeddedness can differ, JE researchers have largely treated them synonymously. Following Ng and Feldman (2007), we thus advocate separating these distinct embedding foci as they may differentially affect work outcomes.

Occupational embeddedness. Feldman and Ng (2007) introduced occupational embeddedness—or “the totality of forces that keep people in their present occupations” (p. 353)—to clarify why incumbents remain in occupational fields and may even leave companies to hone or practice their professional skills elsewhere. Unlike Mitchell et al.’s (2001) original JE construct, this embed-

![Figure 1. Expanded model of job embeddedness. HPWP = high-performance work practices; P = proposition; CWB = counterproductive work behaviors; OCB = organizational citizenship behaviors.](image-url)
dedness form may not necessarily promote staying in a specific organization. Feldman and Ng (2007) further conceptualized that people were embedded in occupations via links (e.g., industry contacts, involvement in professional societies), fit (e.g., compatibility with occupational demands and rewards), and sacrifices (e.g., human capital investments, occupational status). In support, Ng and Feldman (2009) found that occupational embeddedness explained unique variance in task performance, CWBs, and creativity after controlling organizational embeddedness.

Community embeddedness. Influences outside workplaces—such as family responsibilities, work–family conflicts, or spousal retirement preferences (Hom & Kinicki, 2001; Lee, Mitchell, Wise, & Fireman, 1996; Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979; Price & Mueller, 1981)—have been sporadically noted in prevailing turnover research (Hom et al., 2012). Capturing these diverse concepts and findings, Mitchell et al. (2001) envisioned a broad set of “community” forces that shape staying: community links (family, friends, social institutions), fit (compatibility with weather and local culture), and sacrifices (safe neighborhood, brief work commutes; Holtom & Inderrieden, 2006). Such forces play a dominant role when leaving jobs for alternatives entails geographic relocation, particularly if a person actively participates in community organizations (e.g., church leadership) or has a working partner or children in school (Hom et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 2001). Recent meta-analytic evidence (Jiang, Liu, et al., 2012) shows that off-the-job embeddedness is inversely related to turnover. However, its effects on quit intentions and behavior (corrected correlations are −.22 and −.12, respectively) are weaker relative to on-the-job embeddedness (−.48 and −.19, respectively). Though off-the-job embedding forces translate into higher job retention, their effects may prove immaterial if local labor markets offer abundant employment prospects such that leavers can change jobs without relocating (Allen, 2006).

Family embeddedness in the community. Recent embeddedness viewpoints advance a major reconceptualization of outside-work forces keeping individuals bound to their current locale (Feldman et al., 2012; Ramesh & Gelfand, 2010). Defining off-the-job embeddedness “as the cumulative forces of an individual’s family, community, and nonwork activities which bind an individual to his or her current location” (p. 215), Feldman and associates (2012) differentiated what personally embeds an individual in the community (e.g., recreational pursuits) from that which embeds an individual indirectly through his or her family (e.g., domestic partner and other relatives living in the household). Thus, an employee’s family may be embedded in a geographic area (e.g., spouse owns a local business, teenagers attend magnet schools), thereby embedding the employee. Such “embeddedness by proxy” (or “family embeddedness in community”; FEC) should not be conflated with other extrafamilial community forces for people may remain to avoid disrupting spousal careers or children’s schooling, but not feel community attachment. Likewise, Hom et al. (2012) also theorized that felt extrinsic constraints (i.e., family pressure) can emanate from family embeddedness and drive different withdrawal states than do other embedding forces.

Ramesh and Gelfand (2010) also promulgated “family embeddedness” as families becoming embedded within workplaces when they favorably appraise firms, befriend other employees, and partake of job benefits. People may thus stay in a job or community they misfit because their families prefer that they stay or receive benefits from their employment (e.g., health insurance, family status). In support, Ramesh and Gelfand (2010) demonstrated that family embeddedness in the organization explains additional variance in turnover beyond that of on-the-job and community embeddedness. Following Mitchell et al.’s (2001) original view of embedding family influences and Feldman et al.’s (2012) recent “embeddedness by proxy” extension, we thus emphasize FEC.

Multifoci Job Embeddedness: A COR Perspective

People become embedded in foci to avoid losing resources that hold value in those contexts (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Some resources hold intrinsic value in a specific context (e.g., safe neighborhood), thus becoming sacrifices embedding individuals in that context (i.e., community). Other resources (links and fit) have instrumental value because they help individuals acquire more resources within a domain (e.g., ability to meet job demands can garner higher pay). So, based on COR, resources hold value—and thus embed individuals—within a given context either because they are desired ends in their own right or because they are instrumental for attaining desired resources in that context (Halbesleben et al., 2014).

Antecedents to Embeddedness Foci

According to Hobfoll (2001, 2002), resources can be tangible (e.g., money) or intangible (e.g., energy and time), and can reside within the individual (e.g., hardness or resilience) or can be obtained from the social contexts of the individual (e.g., a company’s human resource management system, family). In the present paper we highlight contextual variables that supply resources that embed individuals in specific foci. Hence, our taxonomy of antecedents is not exhaustive as we omit individual differences, such as personality or demographic characteristics (Giosan, Holtom, & Watson, 2005). Mitchell and Lee (2001; Mitchell et al., 2001) originally—and later Feldman et al. (2012)—envisioned a broad array of embedding contextual forces. We identify the most salient contextual characteristics (both work- and nonwork related) and theoretically ground their antecedent role in COR.

Organizational Practices

Strategic human resource management (HRM) scholars increasingly have emphasized “bundles” of high-performance work practices (HPWP) that affect firm performance (Becker & Huselid, 1998). Efforts to identify HPWP combinations often adopt the ability-motivation-opportunity (A-M-O) framework (Combs, Liu, Hall, & Ketchen, 2006; Lepak, Liao, Chung, & Harden, 2006). Likewise, we use the A-M-O framework to describe different bundles of HPWPs (skill-enhancing, opportunity-enhancing, and motivation-enhancing) that differentially embed employees in occupations, organizations, or jobs. This taxonomy succinctly captures the range of HRM practices that embed employees (Allen, 2006; Hom et al., 2009; Trevor & Nyberg, 2008). We expect differential effects as resources supplied by different bundles likely hold more value in certain contexts (embedding foci), thereby embedding individuals more strongly in those foci.

Skill-enhancing HPWPs. Skill-enhancing bundles increase the collective stock of human capital—or knowledge, skills, and
Thus, we offer the following propositions:

Proposition 1a: Skill-enhancing HPWPAs are positively related to occupational, organizational, and on-the-job embeddedness.

Opportunity-enhancing HPWPs. Opportunity-enhancing practices improve employees’ capacity to more fully contribute to organizational objectives by empowering them with expanded decision-making authority, autonomous teamwork, and dispute resolution (Gardner et al., 2011). These HRM practices yield resources (e.g., “understanding from my employer,” “stable employment”; Hobfoll, 2001, p. 342) that primarily embed employees in their organization and job.

Fit. Companies that allow employee input into decisions and treat them with respect foster person–organization (P–O) fit by satisfying employees’ competence and autonomy needs (Gardner et al., 2011). By offering job security, flexible scheduling, and procedures for airing grievances, such firms also signal commitment to employees’ long-term employment and well-being (Subramony, 2009), thereby satisfying essential material and psychic needs. Finally, quality improvement groups and suggestion systems enhance demands-abilities P–O fit by increasing employees’ role-breadth self-efficacy (S. K. Parker, 1998).

Links. Opportunity-enhancing practices encourage extra-unit collaborations (e.g., working parties, joint management–worker committees), thus connecting people who do not usually interact (Combs et al., 2006; Hom et al., 2009). From a social network perspective, these practices also yield social capital, such as novel information from cross-functional relationships (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001), access to resources from higher management levels (Seibert et al., 2001), and power when network ties span structural holes (allowing one to broker resource and information flow between disconnected parties; Burt, 2005; Carpenter, Li, & Jiang, 2012; Phelps, Heidt, & Wadhwa, 2012). The teamwork and social interactions inherent in opportunity-enhancing practices also foster more stable and enduring (thus more embedding) links throughout the organization (Holtom et al., 2008) as employees share information, exchange resources, and take greater responsibility for their interpersonal processes and collaborative efforts (Batt & Colvin, 2011).

Sacrifices. Bountiful resources from opportunity-enhancing practices create firm-based sacrifices (e.g., participative decision-making, firm-specific KSAs; Combs et al., 2006) that embed incumbents who are resource-loss averse. Indeed, opportunity-enhancing practices produce abundant COR resources (e.g., feelings of control, status and seniority; Hobfoll, 2001) that would be forfeited on leaving. When employees have sufficient resources to meet organizational requirements or fulfill their needs, they remain to continue such resource flow—a prime human motive states COR theory.

We expect opportunity-enhancing practices to most bolster organizational embeddedness. Indeed, such practices as employee involvement and job rotation integrate employees into the organization’s larger social system (Subramony, 2009). This entices them to remain long term as they acquire greater organizational know-how, enabling them to accomplish their career goals within the organization (Kraimer et al., 2011). Employees in misfit jobs might nevertheless stay in anticipation of a desirable transfer or promotion within the firm (Maertz & Campion, 2004; Mobley et al., 1979). Moreover, COR theory suggests employees are loathe...
to part with strong and nontransferable organizational ties as they are motivated to avoid loss. Thus, accumulated internal social capital may have an inertial effect because it has limited transferability (Borgatti & Cross, 2003; Levin, Whitener, & Cross, 2006). In support, research has shown that opportunity-enhancing practices are a strong predictor of retention (Gardner et al., 2011; Jiang, Lepak, Hu, & Baer, 2012).

**Proposition 2a:** Opportunity-enhancing HPWPs are positively related to occupational, organizational, and on-the-job embeddedness.

**Proposition 2b:** Opportunity-enhancing HPWPs are more positively related to organizational embeddedness than they are to occupational or on-the-job embeddedness.

**Motivation-enhancing HPWPs.** Motivation-enhancing practices energize, sustain, and direct employees’ efforts toward pursuing work objectives (Subramony, 2009). Inducements such as regular performance feedback, individual and group incentives, and other pay-for-performance rewards fuel extrinsic motivation by linking employees’ efforts to external rewards (Jiang, Lepak, et al., 2012). Such HRM practices supply resources (“positively challenging role,” “acknowledgment of my accomplishments,” “motivation to get things done”; Hobfoll, 2001, p. 342) that induce on-the-job embeddedness.

**Fit.** Coupled with incentive compensation, performance appraisals (incorporating goal-setting and performance feedback) build demands-abilities job fit by encouraging desired behaviors and cultivating necessary skills and knowledge (Hom et al., 2009; Ostroff & Bowen, 2000). Motivation-enhancing practices also furnish financial (generous individual and team incentives) and psychological (performance feedback, growth opportunities) resources that satisfy employees’ competence and relatedness needs (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

**Links.** Because incentives and pay-for-performance rewards concentrate employees’ efforts toward achievement of individual or team performance goals (Subramony, 2009), such variable pay will likely prompt employees to form job-specific, high-density advice networks, “through which individuals share resources such as information, assistance, and guidance related to the completion of their work” (Sparrowe, Liden, Wayne, & Kraimer, 2001, p. 317). In particular, collective performance-based incentives can “create feelings of group belonging” (Gardner et al., 2011, p. 320) or task and outcome interdependencies (Van Der Vegt, Emans, & Van De Vliert, 1998, 1999). Such interdependency may impel individuals to help group members (e.g., share materials, information, advice), resulting in stronger links to immediate colleagues and workgroups (C. P. Lin, Hung, & Chiu, 2008).

**Sacrifices.** Motivation-enhancing practices foster job-specific sacrifices because competitive compensation, incentive plans, and elite status based on membership in high-performing teams are lost by changing jobs (Peterson & Luthans, 2006). Other job-specific inducements, such as developmental appraisals, also become sacrifices incurred when relinquishing a job, thus diminishing the desirability of intrafirm mobility (e.g., transfer, promotion) as well. In short, COR theory implies that motivation-enhancing practices embed incumbents in their job by providing resources enabling them to meet performance objectives and by rewarding them for achieving these objectives.

Although motivation-enhancing practices may foster occupational (e.g., acquire more credentials to gain higher payoffs) and organizational (reward structure is idiosyncratic to the organization) embeddedness, we expect them to most deepen job-focused embeddedness. For example, organizational compensation policies broadly dictate reward type and criteria for specific jobs, yet managers often have significant leeway in distributing rewards to individual incumbents, including offering rewards not specified in employment contracts (e.g., special job assignments or recognition; Kristof, 1996). Indeed, some employees may receive nonreplicable idiosyncratic deals (nonstandard, individualized agreements with superiors; Ng & Feldman, 2008; Rousseau, 2001) binding them to their job. Finally, workgroups—even within the same organization—differ in interdependencies and effectiveness (Kristof, 1996; Van Der Vegt et al., 1998). Thus, the social capital available to members of a workgroup may not be available in other workgroups in the organization.

**Proposition 3a:** Motivation-enhancing HPWPs are positively related to occupational, organizational, and on-the-job embeddedness.

**Proposition 3b:** Motivation-enhancing HPWPs are more positively related to on-the-job embeddedness than they are to occupational or organizational embeddedness.

**Off-the-Job Characteristics**

We reviewed embeddedness perspectives (Feldman et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 2001) and related scholarship in other disciplines (e.g., sociology, environmental psychology, information management/technology) to identify contextual off-the-job characteristics that offer resources embedding employees or their families where they live. Although striving to be comprehensive, we pay special attention to off-the-job characteristics that supply resources addressing demands imposed on working individuals or families (e.g., Gareis & Barnett, 2008; Voydanoff, 2001, 2005). We then grouped antecedents into three broad categories: nearby extended family, community characteristics, and professional communities.

**Nearby extended family.** Accessible support from family members living nearby can help employees (or their immediate families) manage conflict between work and family demands, thus embedding them where they live—directly or indirectly. Quite likely, this embedding effect depends on the structural and qualitative features of those familial ties (Feldman et al., 2012; Price & Mueller, 1986). In particular, nearby extended family ties are more likely to supply embedding resources when they are strong (e.g., frequent contact, greater interdependency and emotional intensity; Granovetter, 1973; N. Lin, 2001), represent a higher proportion of one’s entire family (i.e., having all or most of one’s family nearby), and have a positive valence ascribed to them (e.g., looking forward to dinner with the in-laws).

**Fit.** Strong and high-quality ties to nearby extended family can satisfy residents’ needs-supplies community fit (e.g., babysitting, family gatherings for holidays, dining, or birthday celebrations), thus strengthening their attachment to a geographic place. Indeed, “community saved” perspectives of urban communities (e.g., Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974) have long recognized that family ties foster community fit by nurturing feelings of inclusion, compatibility, and belongingness (Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010),
thus embedding employees or their immediate families (i.e., spouses and children) where they live.

**Links.** Frequent interaction and high relational quality with local relatives (e.g., employee’s parents, children’s cousins) create stronger and more enduring links through ongoing (social) exchange of valued resources. Indeed, COR maintains that people are motivated to continually gain resources and will invest resources where they can expect the most return (Halbesleben & Wheeler, in press). Individuals who receive valued resources from nearby relatives (e.g., help with tasks and childcare; Hobfoll, 2001) will in turn reinvest in those relationships to fortify links to continue receiving resources (or repay social debt, such as adult children caring for elderly parents).

**Sacrifices.** Resources from local extended family become sacrifices as strong or high-quality family bonds are not easily replicated in other communities (DaVanzo & Morrison, 1981). Such nonportable kinship support (e.g., retired parents who care for children or drive them to school, siblings lending emotional comfort during divorce) is valuable to individuals (especially dual-income couples) in meeting job demands and lessening family-to-work conflicts (Hobfoll, 2001). Further, as individuals are motivated to safeguard the health and emotional well-being of their loved ones (e.g., “children’s health,” “spouse/partner’s health”; Hobfoll, 2001, p. 342), they might avoid uprooting them to prevent familial resource losses to household members (e.g., children spending less time with grandparents or cousins).

**Proposition 4a:** Having nearby extended family members that furnish nonwork embedding resources is positively related to community embeddedness.

**Proposition 4b:** Having nearby extended family members that furnish nonwork embedding resources is positively related to community embeddedness.

**Community characteristics.** Workers and their immediate families live in communities—a physically bounded space, such as a neighborhood, city, town, or suburb—that vary in resources they offer, such as nearby elementary schools or public transportation (Bookman, 2005). Based on COR theory, communities that supply abundant resources are likely to bind workers (or their families; Feldman et al., 2012) to their residential locales.

**Fit.** Some communities better conform to peoples’ (or their families’) values or interests (i.e., person–group fit; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005), such as those embracing ethnic, retirement, or gay-friendly enclaves (Feldman et al., 2012). Other communities offer more amenities and employment prospects, better satisfying employees’ (or their families’) needs and aspirations (e.g., employees can fish year-round, domestic partners can start businesses, children can attend parochial schools; Barnett & Gareis, 2008; Cowell & Green, 1994). A community’s natural environment or biophysical aspects (e.g., climate, mountains, beaches, wildlife; Brehm, 2007) can also maximize person–environment fit by enhancing a sense of belonging (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001) or lifestyle fit (opportunities to surf or ski). In short, such geographic characteristics sustain community fit by supplying resources that satisfy values and lifestyle needs and strengthen identification and feelings of belonging outside of work (e.g., Voydanoff, 2005).

**Links.** Some environments furnish a wider range of community organizations or social institutions (e.g., civic or religious organizations, sporting clubs; Feldman et al., 2012; Kasarda & Janowitz, 1974) that become links binding individuals to current residence. To illustrate, urban residents participate in leisure and social activities more than rural dwellers (Sampson, 1988; Theodori & Luloff, 2000). The family’s community participation further expands employees’ off-the-job links via their family’s own networks of friends and acquaintances. One may thus come to know the coach of children’s sporting teams and parents of children’s schoolmates. In addition, a community’s natural amenities help foster links with community and family (e.g., regular hiking with friends or family). Overall, based on COR theory, such community attributes expand off-the-job links by helping employees (or their families) bond with local institutions and find “friends with similar values and at similar life stages” (Feldman et al., 2012, p. 215).

**Sacrifices.** Greater access to amenities and services (e.g., dog kennels, elder care, retail markets) become sacrifices that directly (e.g., Terence Mitchell’s Seattle Seahawk season tickets; T. W. Lee et al., 2014) or indirectly (e.g., physician-spouse has large patient clientele; Feldman et al., 2012) diminish movement desirability. Resident families might feel reluctant to leave communities that supply full-day childcare, special medical services (e.g., cancer center, renown neurosurgeon), retail and supermarket access outside of regular work hours, and natural landscapes and outdoor recreation—especially if attractive features are distinctive or unique to their particular locale (e.g., Brehm, 2007). Based on COR theory, residents value such amenities because they enhance the quality of life and reduce family conflicts.

**Proposition 5a:** Community characteristics that supply nonwork embedding resources are positively related to community embeddedness.

**Proposition 5b:** Community characteristics that supply nonwork embedding resources are positively related to FEC.

**Professional communities.** Professional communities are pervasive within the increasingly “boundaryless” career environment (P. Parker, Arthur, & Inkson, 2004; Zeitz, Blau, & Fertig, 2009). Advances in online technology also brought into existence virtual professional communities through which participants can derive career support, professional development, and specialist knowledge (Chen & Hung, 2010). Humanities and Social Sciences Online (http://www.h-net.org/) thus permits humanities and social sciences scholars to disseminate expertise and adopt new methods and practices. Professional communities primarily reinforce occupational embeddedness as they principally offer career-relevant resources (P. Parker et al., 2004).

**Fit.** Involvement in professional communities can help socialize occupational newcomers who become enmeshed in their occupation’s language, rituals, and norms through face-to-face or online interactions (Chiu, Hsu, & Wang, 2006; P. Parker et al., 2004). They further deepen occupational fit as community participants receive meaningful information and support from peers with specialist knowledge and shared professional interests (“involve-ment with others who have similar interests,” “people I can learn from”; Hobfoll, 2001, p. 342). What is more, professional communities may foster needs-supply fit through access to job opportu-
tunities (e.g., professional associations maintain forums for job market information; LinkedIn [http://www.linkedin.com/] users receive hiring notifications from companies).

**Links.** Participation in professional communities can also bolster the breadth and strength of links to occupational peers, institutions, or associations. For example, the Academy of Management conference (http://aom.org/annualmeeting/) brings together geographically dispersed members, and LinkedIn members can “follow” companies. On the one hand, professional communities canabet the formation of weak ties through local networking meetings, breakfast events, or online users’ groups where participants can maintain large, dispersed networks with little investment of time and energy (Wellman et al., 1996; Zeitz et al., 2009). Such weak ties yield social capital, such as job contacts or tacit knowledge useful for solving complex work problems (Chiu et al., 2006; Zeitz et al., 2009). On the other hand, professional communities also can promote strong links. For example, they facilitate trust and resource exchange as members are brought together by shared interests, goals, or needs (Chiu et al., 2006; Zeitz et al., 2009). The “placelessness” of online communities also enables enduring relationships despite geographic distance among members (Wellman et al., 1996) and can assist those who otherwise have difficulties developing and maintaining companionships in the “real world” (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Finally, professional communities yield opportunities to build developmental ties, through which one can secure mentoring services (e.g., exposure, visibility, sponsorship; Higgins & Kram, 2001), building occupational embeddedness (e.g., MentorNet, Society for Human Resource Management Mentor Program; “Creating a Mentor Program,” n.d.; http://mentornet.org/).

**Sacrifices.** Participation in professional communities can create occupational sacrifices by upgrading occupation-specific know-how and professional status (Allen & Lewis, 2006), reinforcing one’s professional identity and career focus (Ellison et al., 2007; P. Parker et al., 2004), and providing career-relevant support systems and development opportunities (Ensher, Heun, & Blanchard, 2003; Higgins & Kram, 2001; Zeitz et al., 2009). From COR theory, such side bets or investments should thwart occupational change as employees fear the loss of such resources (e.g., status and seniority, companionship; Hobfoll, 2001).

**Proposition 6:** Involvement in professional communities is positively related to occupational embeddedness.

Having discussed how and why employees become embedded in work- and nonwork foci, we now consider organizational outcomes of these diverse foci. From COR theory, we contend incumbents more readily stay in situations where they possess valued resources and will invest in relevant foci when they have instrumental resources helping them acquire more resources in that domain. Further, building on Mitchell et al.’s (2001) articulation of direct JE effects, we synthesize the growing JE literature that points to both direct and indirect effects.

**Embeddedness Foci and Work-Related Outcomes**

Besides deterring turnover, JE also influences various forms of organizational contributions, such as OCBs and job performance (Jiang, Liu, et al., 2012). Consistent with earlier scholarship (Feldman et al., 2012; T. W. Lee et al., 2004; Ng & Feldman, 2009), we examine three classes of organizational contributions commonly associated with JE. *Core task performance* represents activities required as part of the job that are recognized by the organization’s formal reward system and contribute to its technical core (Motorllo, Borman, & Schmit, 1997). OCBs are behaviors not formally required by the employment contract or job description but nonetheless can sustain organizational functioning (e.g., attend voluntary functions, defend the company against criticism; K. Lee & Allen, 2002). Finally, we include CWEs, broadly defined as “intentional employee behavior that harms or intends to harm organizations and its members” (e.g., theft, sabotage, wasting time, withholding effort, mocking coworkers; Spector et al., 2006, p. 447). Based on the resource investment COR principle, we suggest that JE should elicit higher work performance because embedded employees possess the instrumental resources (fit and links) that can help them acquire more resources (e.g., pay raises) via superior performance.

**Direct Effects of Embeddedness Foci**

T. W. Lee et al. (2004) first documented that on- and off-the-job embeddedness decrease turnover and absenteeism, while increasing OCB and job performance. Later research corroborated and extended those findings, demonstrating that on-the-job embeddedness affects workplace attitudes (turnover intentions, job satisfaction, affective commitment) and behaviors (job search, performance) more strongly than does off-the-job embeddedness (Allen, 2006; Jiang, Liu, et al., 2012; Ng & Feldman, 2014; Wheeler, Harris, & Sablynski, 2012).

COR offers three parsimonious explanations for why on-the-job embeddedness affects workplace outcomes more strongly than does off-the-job embeddedness. First, off-the-job embedding forces have little impact on turnover when employees live in communities where they can easily find alternative employment (Allen, 2006). Under such circumstances, employees can readily switch jobs (for better fit or greater benefits) without having to move. They can thus maintain or continue amassing valued off-the-job resources from their residential locale. In short, off-the-job embedding forces do not discourage incumbents from vacating their job when they can readily secure alternative jobs locally.

Second, COR’s resource substitution premise holds that resources may be substituted for one another to achieve the same goal (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Because many desirable characteristics that make particular communities attractive devolve from the larger economic, social, and cultural context (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012), they may not be unique to any particular location (Feldman et al., 2012). For example, good weather, childcare, public transport, and nightlife recreation are available in many places. Thus, even if relocation is a requirement, other geographic locales might supply equivalent resources that similarly serve personal or family needs. However, sacrifices binding employees to their occupations (professional status), organizations (seniority-based benefits), or jobs (i-deals; Rousseau, 2001) may be more idiosyncratic and less easy to replicate in other places of employment.

Finally, the COR premise that resources must be useful for a given purpose (or in a given setting) to be invested profitably can explain why on-the-job embeddedness exerts greater effects on organizational contributions (Wheeler et al., 2012). From the COR
perspective, we argue embeddedness prompts workplace contributions because people strive to build their stock of resources. Not all resources however have instrumental value within a given setting or for a given purpose (Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993). Off-the-job links or fit (e.g., social capital from community and family ties) may be more instrumental for resource gain in the nonwork domain than for attaining desired work outcomes (Halbesleben, 2006; Hobfoll, 2001). Because individuals “are somewhat strategic in how they determine resource investment” (Halbesleben et al., 2014, p. 13), their willingness and capacity to invest in their work contributions to amass more resources should mostly rest on work-related instrumental resources. Put simply, work-related instrumental resources (e.g., social resources inherent in organizational networks; Hom & Xiao, 2011) can be invested more profitably to accumulate work-related resources as both resource domains are bound by the same context. To be clear, we do not imply that off-the-job forces are immaterial to turnover and performance. Rather, our COR viewpoint holds that they are less important. The foregoing rationale thus yields the following propositions:

- **Proposition 7a:** Work-based and nonwork embeddedness foci are negatively related to organizational turnover and CWBs.

- **Proposition 7b:** Work-based and nonwork embeddedness foci are positively related to OCBs and task performance.

- **Proposition 7c:** Work-based embeddedness foci are more negatively related to organizational turnover and CWBs than are nonwork embeddedness foci.

- **Proposition 7d:** Work-based embeddedness foci are more positively related to OCBs and task performance than are nonwork embeddedness foci.

Although all three forms of work-based embeddedness might affect voluntary turnover and performance in the same direction, the relative strength of these relationships might differ based on resources having more or less value in the different foci. We organize our discussion of differential foci effects around different outcomes.

**Organizational turnover.** Consistent with past JE research, our theorizing focuses on organizational turnover—or “voluntary cessation of membership in an organization” (Hom & Griffeth, 1995, p. 5)—as opposed to other forms of turnover (job or occupational). From COR theory, employees stay in organizations to avoid loss of intrinsic (sacrifices) or instrumental (links and fit) resources. All three forms of work-related embeddedness should therefore lessen turnover due to the primacy-of-resource-loss principle (Hobfoll, 2001). However, organizational embeddedness should be the strongest (negative) predictor of turnover. As turnover involves leaving the organization (rather than job or occupation per se), resources derived from the organizational context (i.e., organizational fit, links, and sacrifices) should be most subject to a primacy-of-loss effect.

Indeed, interorganizational mobility (within the same industry) does not necessarily diminish one’s occupational resources (e.g., professional connections or occupation-specific know-how). Along similar lines, on-the-job embeddedness should matter less to turnover decisions as well. Although job-embedded incumbents might remain in the organization to conserve job-based resources (e.g., Feldman & Ng, 2007), such loss avoidance will likely be more transient and less powerful than loss salience associated with strong intrinsic attachment to the organization (e.g., Hom et al., 2012). After all, employees can often find equivalent well-fitting jobs elsewhere (e.g., sales, skilled trades, physical therapists) where they can perform as effectively (as jobs require similar KSAs) and experience as satisfying (offering similar intrinsic rewards). Furthermore, as with occupational embeddedness, job-focused losses might be less applicable to turnover decisions as employees can remain organizational members, despite having low on-the-job embeddedness. For example, incumbents who misfit with their job or superior can transfer to another job internally rather than quit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

- **Proposition 8a:** Occupational, organizational, and on-the-job embeddedness are negatively related to organizational turnover.

- **Proposition 8b:** Organizational embeddedness is more negatively related to organizational turnover than is occupational or on-the-job embeddedness.

**CWBs.** CWBs (e.g., Internet surfing, abusing colleagues) can lead to termination, lost opportunities for advancement, or a tarnished reputation, thus depleting one’s resources (Feldman et al., 2012; T. W. Lee et al., 2004; Rotundo & Sackett, 2002). As COR’s primacy-of-loss principle implies, all forms of work-related embeddedness should lessen CWBs. However, in the case of CWBs, the losses should be felt most intensely for those highly embedded in their occupation (Ng & Feldman, 2009). This is because resource losses can spill over into the occupational context (professional reputation, employability within the industry; Ng & Feldman, 2009), hampering occupational goals and aspirations (making career advancement more difficult). The greater difficulty of changing occupations versus changing jobs or organizations further magnifies such losses (Blau, 2000). Furthermore, high occupational embeddedness may suppress CWBs directed at organizations (not just occupations) in which employees implement their professional skills (e.g., Mayo Clinic doctors, Ford automobile engineers, Google software engineers). They may avoid abusing coworkers or taking excessive breaks there. In fact, occupation-embedded individuals in disagreeable jobs or organizations are more likely to emerge as “job crafters” (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) who invest time and energy to alter their task and relationship boundaries to build positive resources. Thus, CWBs should be least likely among occupation-embedded incumbents:

- **Proposition 9a:** Occupational, organizational, and on-the-job embeddedness are negatively related to CWBs.

- **Proposition 9b:** Occupational embeddedness is more negatively related to CWBs than is organizational or on-the-job embeddedness.

**OCBs.** COR theorists maintain that individuals invest resources (e.g., effort, time, opportunity costs; Halbesleben et al., 2014) into extrarole behaviors (e.g., socializing newcomers, attending outside work functions, helping colleagues) as a means to accumulate more resources (support, extrinsic rewards, recognition; Halbesleben & Wheeler, in press; Ng & Feldman, 2012b; Podsakoff, Whiting, Podsakoff, & Blume, 2009). Thus, one might
act altruistically toward superiors or colleagues to build goodwill and reciprocity to repay such kindness (earning them higher performance reviews, including favorable 360-degree feedback). Drawing from the resource investment COR principle, we infer that people embedded in occupations, organizations, or jobs should be willing to exhibit more OCBs. This is because they are motivated to invest resources to build resources, and because they have the instrumental resources (fit and links) to help them do so (Hobfoll, 2001).

COR theory however states that instrumental resources can be utilized more profitably to gain more resources when they are useful for a given purpose (Hobfoll, 2001). This principle implies that organizational embeddedness should be the strongest (positive) predictor of OCBs (Ng & Feldman, 2009). That is, organization-focused instrumental resources (corporate fit and links) should be more useful to individuals wishing to perform OCBs to convey a favorable workplace impression (and establish goodwill) to procure more rewards (Rioux & Penner, 2001). For example, better P–O fitting—and thus more trusted—employees who perform OCBs are likely to be seen as “genuinely nice people...who are also willing to go the extra mile” (Bolino, Varela, Bande, & Turnley, 2006, p. 294). Likewise, employees with broad links within and outside their business units can keep up with latest developments and offer ideas to improve organizational functioning (K. Lee & Allen, 2002).

On the other hand, occupational and on-the-job fit and links may not invoke OCBs as much because they are less useful for employees wishing to perform them. Moreover, the finite nature of resources means that individuals likely invest them in ways that best helps them meet goals or environmental demands (Halbesleben et al., 2014). For one thing, high embeddedness in occupational or job domains can drain resources, leaving people with less time and energy to invest in OCBs toward the firm. All the same, the return on investment associated with OCBs might not be as lucrative for job- or occupation-embedded employees, who strive for higher accomplishments in a job (earning better pay or job assignments) or profession (expediting career advancement). Particularly in the case of job-focused embeddedness, diverting resources toward OCBs could lead to lower in-role performance and subsequent loss of valued benefits (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007).

Proposition 10a: Occupational, organizational, and on-the-job embeddedness are positively related to OCBs.

Proposition 10b: Organizational embeddedness is more positively related to OCBs than is occupational or on-the-job embeddedness.

Task performance. High performing employees can expect greater extrinsic (e.g., favorable reviews, pay raises, promotions) and intrinsic (e.g., feeling valuable, competent) benefits (Lanaj, Chang, & Johnson, 2012; Rotundo & Sackett, 2002; Salamin & Hom, 2005). People embedded in occupations, organizations, and jobs should thus be motivated to invest time and effort toward superior task performance to acquire (or protect) resources that enable them to meet professional goals. Yet, on-the-job embeddedness should most promote job performance. This is because job-embedded incumbents have the requisite demands-abilities job fit (Kristof, 1996) and links (social capital from high-density colleague networks; Sparrowe et al., 2001) to reach high performance standards, and thus, will be most motivated to invest resources toward this performance domain to maximize their return (Halbesleben et al., 2014). For example, strong demands-abilities job fit helps employees improve their work group’s efficiency and effectiveness, leading to more rewards (Erdogan & Bauer, 2005).

Because employees embedded in occupations and organizations strive to “get ahead” (Barrick, Stewart, & Piotrowski, 2002) through inter- or intra-organizational advancements (Feldman & Ng, 2007), their motivation to accomplish work tasks should also be high. Yet, at the same time, their heavy investments in areas outside in-role performance (e.g., leading organizational committees and participating in professional associations) may deplete resources and thus their capacity to be fully task focused. Furthermore, consistent with COR thinking, those embedded in occupations or organizations may be more selective in how they allocate resources as they seek maximal return from their investments (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007). Hence, they may resist copiously investing in the task domain, which could actually diminish their chances for desired mobility within (supervisors are reluctant to transfer or promote them) or outside (skills become too job specific) the firm (Feldman & Ng, 2007). In fact, their attachment to the job may last only until more attractive organizational (e.g., managerial promotion) or professional opportunities come along. Job-focused embeddedness, on the other hand, compels more intense and enduring attachment to the immediate job, producing greater motivation toward task accomplishment (Hom et al., 2012).

Proposition 11a: Occupational, organizational, and on-the-job embeddedness are positively related to task performance.

Proposition 11b: On-the-job embeddedness is more positively related to task performance than is occupational or organizational embeddedness.

Nonwork Embeddedness Foci: Moderating Effects

According to Feldman and colleagues (2012), the effects of work-focused embeddedness on work outcomes should be highest when employees also have high off-the-job embeddedness. From COR theory, we add precision to this perspective by proposing that whether off-the-job embeddedness strengthens or weakens work-focused embeddedness effects depends on the nature of the work outcome (e.g., OCB vs. CWB). Beginning with March and Simon (1958), organizational scholars (e.g., Hanisch & Hulin, 1991; Hom et al., 2012; T. W. Lee et al., 2004) have differentiated organizational contributions based on their association with the decision to stay (participate) or perform. Whereas withdrawal behaviors such as voluntary turnover and work avoidance (a form of CWB where employees distance themselves from work; Harrison & Newman, 2013) reflect employees’ motivation to (not) stay, OCBs and task performance reflect motivation to perform (Hanisch & Hulin, 1991; Hom et al., 2012; T. W. Lee et al., 2004). Because off-the-job embeddedness foremost compels “the desire to remain in the present location—and the necessity of maintaining employment to do so” (Feldman et al., 2012, p. 227, emphasis added), it should increase work-focused embeddedness effects on behaviors reflecting the desire to stay (turnover and CWBs). On the other hand, off-the-job resources (e.g., community social capital) should not facilitate better work
performance because they are less instrumental in the work context (Halbesleben, 2006). For example, off-the-job links may help employees meet work performance obligations (e.g., relatives help alleviate work–family conflict), yet such support is less useful for enabling exceptional work performance (e.g., formulating work-role or organizational improvements). In fact, individuals may feel compelled to reinvest into supportive nonwork relationships to continue acquiring resources from those sources (Halbesleben & Wheeler, in press). As resources are finite and “a heavy investment of time in the personal life domain is likely to cut into time which can be spent at work” (Feldman et al., 2012, pp. 225–226), individuals will have less time and energy to invest in work performance. This suggests that off-the-job embeddedness should attenuate the beneficial impact of work-focused embeddedness on performance. This suggests that off-the-job embeddedness should attenuate the beneficial impact of work-focused embeddedness on OCBs and in-role performance. In the following sections, we expand our reasoning for each of the outcome variables in turn.

Moderating effects on organizational turnover. From the COR view, employees whose families are embedded in the community (Feldman et al., 2012) will stay to protect resources available to their family and to them indirectly (i.e., harmonious family relations, spousal income supplement). When they also are embedded via work-focused fit, links, and sacrifices, their motivation to stay due to loss avoidance should be elevated. Together then, due to the primacy-of-resource-loss COR tenet, the negative effects of work-focused embeddedness on turnover should be strongest when employees also are embedded in their communities, directly or indirectly due to family pressures (or altruistic concerns for family well-being; Feldman et al., 2012). Indeed, Mitchell et al. (2001) reported that the additive effect of on- and off-the-job embeddedness on turnover was stronger than the effect of each dimension individually. Because we proposed that organizational embeddedness would have the strongest negative relationship with turnover, we expect these moderating effects to likewise be strongest for organizational embeddedness.

Proposition 12a: The negative effects of occupational, organizational, and on-the-job embeddedness on organizational turnover are stronger for employees whose families are embedded in the community.

Proposition 12b: FEC moderates the effect of organizational embeddedness on organizational turnover more strongly than the effects of occupational or on-the-job embeddedness.

Proposition 12c: The negative effects of occupational, organizational, and on-the-job embeddedness on organizational turnover are stronger for employees embedded in the community.

Proposition 12d: Community embeddedness moderates the effect of organizational embeddedness on organizational turnover more strongly than the effects of occupational or on-the-job embeddedness.

Moderating effects on CWBs. For reasons similar to those given in the previous section, high off-the-job embeddedness also should have an additive effect, intensifying negative relationships between work-focused embeddedness and CWBs (especially extreme acts, such as violence or sabotage; Feldman et al., 2012).

From the COR perspective, we deduce that when employees are highly embedded in the work domain, they assiduously refrain from CWBs to avoid personal resource losses. Because work-based losses can spillover and produce resource losses in the nonwork context (e.g., less income to support recreational pursuits or family’s material needs), the motivation to refrain from such behaviors should be strongest when both work-focused and off-the-job embeddedness are high. Indeed, termination can make reemployment in the immediate community more difficult (Feldman et al., 2012). Being forced to relocate under such circumstances could create enormous off-the-job losses that are detrimental to familial well-being (e.g., “family stability,” “good marriage”; Hobfoll, 2001, p. 342).

Proposition 13a: The negative effects of occupational, organizational, and on-the-job embeddedness on CWBs are stronger for employees whose families are embedded in the community.

Proposition 13b: FEC moderates the effect of occupational embeddedness on CWBs more strongly than the effects of organizational or on-the-job embeddedness.

Proposition 13c: The negative effects of occupational, organizational, and on-the-job embeddedness on CWBs are stronger for employees who are embedded in the community.

Proposition 13d: Community embeddedness moderates the effect of occupational embeddedness on CWBs more strongly than the effects of organizational or on-the-job embeddedness.
ans, chauffeuring children) (Bakker et al., 2008). Because those whose partners (or families) are highly embedded in the community face more external demands, they will have less discretionary time to invest in OCBs (Feldman et al., 2012). Indeed, they must reinvest resources into the family unit (i.e., fulfill expanded domestic duties) to maintain family harmony or well-being. Taken together, community embeddedness and FEC should mitigate the positive impact of work-focused embeddedness on task performance.

Proposition 14a: The positive effects of occupational, organizational, and on-the-job embeddedness on OCBs are weaker for employees whose families are embedded in the community.

Proposition 14b: FEC moderates the effect of organizational embeddedness on OCBs more strongly than the effects of occupational or on-the-job embeddedness.

Proposition 14c: The positive effects of occupational, organizational, and on-the-job embeddedness on OCBs are weaker for employees who are embedded in the community.

Proposition 14d: Community embeddedness moderates the effect of organizational embeddedness on OCBs more strongly than the effects of occupational or on-the-job embeddedness.

Moderating effects on task performance. High off-the-job embeddedness may likely weaken the beneficial impact of work-focused embeddedness on task performance. Unlike OCBs, failure to fulfill role requirements directly leads to dismissal or sanctions (e.g., demotion, pay cut), which can reduce personal or family resources. Thus, high off-the-job embeddedness might interfere with an employee’s ability to achieve outstanding productivity (Lanaj et al., 2012). This is because greater external demands (e.g., partners or families are highly embedded in the community) draw from people’s (or spouses’) finite pool of resources, preventing them from expending intense effort toward in-role tasks (working longer hours and weekends, achieving stretch targets). Such external resource drains will exert downward pressure on employees’ ability to meet high performance standards (Halbesleben et al., 2014) and may eventually lead them to perform at a level that is “just enough not to get fired” (Hom et al., 2012, p. 842). Off-the-job embeddedness should thus attenuate the positive effects of work-focused embeddedness on task performance.

Proposition 15a: The positive effects of occupational, organizational, and on-the-job embeddedness on task performance are weaker for employees whose families are embedded in the community.

Proposition 15b: FEC moderates the effect of on-the-job embeddedness on task performance more strongly than the effects of occupational or organizational embeddedness.

Proposition 15c: The positive effects of occupational, organizational, and on-the-job embeddedness on task performance will be weaker for employees who are embedded in the community.

Proposition 15d: Community embeddedness moderates the effect of on-the-job embeddedness on task performance more strongly than the effects of occupational or organizational embeddedness.

Research Implications

Our COR-based JE model yields propositions that provide direction for future research. Besides furnishing a more robust theoretical foundation for JE, the basic assumptions of our model also can be extrapolated to related research domains (i.e., human and social capital; Feldman & Ng, 2007; Ng & Feldman, 2007) to enrich understanding of JE linkages with those domains. In the following sections, we expand on these implications (including model testing requirements) and suggest new research avenues.

Our COR-grounded model of JE furnishes theoretical integration and parsimony for explaining JE antecedents and outcomes. That is, our model identifies key mediating mechanisms—namely, motivation to protect and accumulate resources—that explain how JE works, addressing the lack of compelling or integrative theory underpinning this construct (T. W. Lee et al., 2014). Along these lines, our model reframes the predominant view of JE as a passive state of stuckness (e.g., Feldman et al., 2012) because individuals can make proactive and strategic choices to “protect against resource loss, recover from losses, and gain resources” (Hobfoll, 2001, p. 349). Overall, our COR approach goes beyond the prevailing academic wisdom to understand JE in new ways.

To begin, our formulation provides a more informative account of why employees become embedded in various foci. They become embedded because they seek to avoid losing resources that hold intrinsic (sacrifices) or instrumental (fit and links) value in those contexts (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Our model also furnishes a more nuanced perspective on the differential effects of embeddedness foci on work outcomes. Embeddedness scholars have established that relative to off-the-job embeddedness, work-focused embeddedness more strongly determines work outcomes (e.g., Jiang, Liu, et al., 2012). Going further, our model asserts differential effects among work-related foci as well. Finally, the model lends new insight into the question of whether off-the-job embeddedness reinforces or weakens the effects of work-focused embeddedness on work outcomes (Feldman et al., 2012). Embeddedness scholars generally concur that the effects of job embeddedness are strongest when employees are highly embedded off the job as well (Feldman et al., 2012; T. W. Lee et al., 2004; Mitchell et al., 2001). Yet COR theory clarifies that the type of work outcome determines whether off-the-job embeddedness yields synergistic or counteractive effects.

Links to Human Capital

We specified resources that build human capital (i.e., skill-enhancing practices) embedding employees in their occupations. Yet, it is important to explore how embeddedness affects subsequent human capital development behaviors (e.g., Ng & Feldman, 2010). Our model offers opportunities to comprehend this relationship in new ways. For example, people who invest too much in off-the-job activities or have too many links in the community might have limited time and energy to invest in human capital development. After all, human capital investments consume considerable time and energy (e.g., formal training at/inside work, learning a second language, weekend MBA program).
Links to Social Capital

Drawing from COR theory, we inferred that links embed incumbents in foci by providing access to social capital holding value in those contexts. Our model also can incorporate additional ways by which relationships yield social capital and thus embed incumbents. To date, JE scholarship has not fully delineated how embedding links engender social capital as JE researchers have primarily scrutinized the number rather than quality of links or links’ interconnectivity (Holtom et al., 2008; Hom & Xiao, 2011). Integrating social capital theory (Burt, 1997; N. Lin, 2001), we next discuss how different network structures can embed incumbents and how impending social capital losses can de-embed incumbents.

Link strength. Besides sheer number of links, N. Lin (2001) proposed that strong or high-status links may confer additional resources. Work friends may offer support (empathy, comfort) to employees under duress (Ng & Feldman, 2012a), while superiors with whom employees have favorable leader–member exchanges (LMX, Sparrowe & Liden, 2005) may express confidence that employees can surmount challenges (psychosocial support; Higgins & Kram, 2001). Employees also can receive instrumental resources from close work ties (N. Lin, 2001), such as a colleague’s help to finish job assignments (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008) and supervisory authorization for more job influence (Sparrowe & Liden, 2005). Our COR model suggests that strong or powerful links should embed employees where they are (e.g., Feldman et al., 2012) as they would suffer resource losses if they should sever such links by leaving.

Network centrality. Social capital scholars also have recognized that an employee’s prominence in social networks—or “network centrality”—can deliver social assets (Feeley & Barnett, 1997; Feeley, Hwang, & Barnett, 2008; Moss holder, Settoon, & Henagan, 2005). Traditional JE research assessed the number of links that employees perceive that they have (or their out-degree centrality). However, in-degree centrality measures—the number of times other network contacts claim an (ego) respondent as a friend or informational source—have been shown to decrease turnover (Moss holder et al., 2005). Also, unlike other measures, betweenness centrality captures social capital available to respondents who join together disconnected parties in social networks (Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 2001). Such “go-betweens” control information flow and knowledge sharing across the firm (Feeley, 2000; Mehra et al., 2001), thus amassing more social influence and becoming more embedded in the firm.

Network closure. Network closure (Hom & Xiao, 2011) can yield distinct types of embedding social capital. Participants in closed networks are mutually affiliated and thus can end up closer as “repeated contact . . . is more likely between people with . . . many mutual friends and acquaintances” (Burt, 2001, p. 622). When enmeshed in multiple third-party ties (Burt, 2005), dyadic ties thus evolve into trusting, robust “Simmelian ties” (Krackhardt, 1998) in which parties more freely and amply exchange resources (e.g., Halbesleben & Wheeler, in press). What is more, close-knit networks more promptly deliver expressive resources as interconnected friends readily notice and attend to each other’s need for comfort (Balkundi & Harrison, 2006). They can thus receive more and timelier emotional support to help them cope with work stress (Lazarova, Westman, & Shaffer, 2010), making it harder for them to quit (or relocate) and thereby relinquish such support.

Social capital losses. Krackhardt and Porter (1986) first demonstrated how exiting network contacts may influence others in equivalent roles to also leave. Later, Felps et al. (2009) extended these findings on turnover contagion, showing that coworkers who are poorly embedded or actively seeking jobs can induce others to quit. Likewise, turnover scholars find that exiting leaders may prompt subordinates to quit. For example, subordinates are more liable to quit when leaders with whom they have favorable LMX (and thus derive social capital) exit (Ballinger, Lehman, & Schoorman, 2010). Likewise, Feeley and Barnett (1997) found that employees more often quit if their friends exit as they suffer psychic costs when deprived of friends (Shah, 2000). Fitting COR theory, subordinates may thus leave to join colleagues or leaders in other workplaces where they can maintain access to (or avoid loss of) their resources. Overall, JE scholars should assess other social relationship features to more fully document how links embed incumbents.

Model Testing

Attempting a complete model test is challenging as rigorous testing of our propositions requires longitudinal data from multiple sources (employees, their families and colleagues, HR managers, supervisors, archival records, etc.), firms, and geographical locations. Given our model’s complexity and its data requirements, we thus recommend that subsets of propositions be bundled and tested in more focused studies (contextual antecedents → JE foci; JE foci → outcomes; moderating effects on JE foci → outcomes relationships). Antecedents of JE foci (Propositions 1–6) could be investigated using HR manager ratings of HPWPs (Gardner et al., 2011), social network name generators (e.g., Seibert et al., 2001) to assess social capital derived from nearby extended family, and archival data on community characteristics (“Forbes’ Best Cities for Working Parents”; Dill, 2014). Existing valid scales are available for assessing embeddedness foci (Crossley, Bennett, Jex, & Burnfield, 2007; Felps et al., 2009; Ng & Feldman, 2009, 2012a, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2001), excepting FEC. For the latter, community embeddedness scales could be adapted to include quality of spousal employment (e.g., job rank, prestige, income), family links to the community (e.g., spouse’s parents live nearby), family community participation (e.g., children belong to varsity sports teams), and sacrifices owing to relocation (e.g., children’s education is disrupted; Feldman et al., 2012). For Propositions 7 to 15, we suggest soliciting peer and supervisory ratings of performance,
OCBs, and CWBs. Personnel records can be tapped to assess turnover voluntariness and date (for Cox regression).

We recommend multilevel analysis (i.e., multilevel structural equation modeling or random coefficient modeling) for analyzing the model. After all, individual employees are nested in multiple organizations as well as multiple communities. Indeed, the data structure may actually represent three levels if investigators sample employees (Level 1) from firms (Level 2) that are in turn nested within communities (Level 3). For a two-level analysis, investigators should sample at least five employees from at least 40 organizations or communities to achieve adequate statistical power (Scherbaum & Ferreter, 2009). Because the model focuses on cross-level effects of higher level antecedents on lower level outcomes, sampling even more firms or communities to test how their characteristics affect average embeddedness or performance scores would attain higher statistical power than sampling more employees (Mathieu, Aguinis, Culpepper, & Chen, 2012). As Mathieu et al. (2012) stated, “if the researcher is . . . interested in testing cross-level direct effects, that may suggest emphasizing the number of units that are sampled” (p. 960).

Measurement Issues

Our model’s assumptions also bring a new perspective on the issue of whether embeddedness should be measured as a global gestalt variable (Crossley et al., 2007) or an equally weighted composite (Mitchell et al., 2001). Both the global and composite JE indexes have strengths and shortcomings (Zhang, Fried, & Griffeth, 2012). In terms of strength, the global measure recognizes that different embedding facets and dimensions may be more or less important to different people depending on their personal circumstances. Thus, respondents can subjectively weigh different forces binding them to the firm or community based on their importance. However, unlike the composite, the global scale focuses on the feeling or motivational state of being embedded (Hom et al., 2012; Meyer, Stanley, Parfyomenova, 2012) rather than explicitly referencing antecedents of this condition, such as links, fit, and sacrifices. Yet these dimensions help differentiate job embeddedness from related constructs and best match Mitchell et al.’s (2001) initial conceptualization of a formative-indicator construct defined by its dimensions. By capturing embedding fit, links, and sacrifices, the composite measure allows researchers to understand their differential associations with antecedents and outcomes.

On balance, we believe a composite measure may yield more precise tests of our propositions. Based on COR theorizing, we associated fit and links with instrumental resources that enable resource acquisition (by enhancing performance capability). By comparison, we associated sacrifices with intrinsically valued resources that deter leaving, yet possess little instrumental value in terms of facilitating work performance (e.g., Kiazad, Seibert, & Kramar, 2014). Thus, despite a high preference for staying (driven by high organizational sacrifices), those lacking instrumental fit or links in a job or organization may not be high performers (e.g., Hom et al., 2012). Indeed, Feldman et al. (2012) noted that sometimes only one factor might drive embeddedness in work (e.g., excellent benefits) or nonwork (e.g., ailing parents) domains. The composite measure overcomes this by helping to establish the differential effects of embedding dimensions toward lessening turnover or improving performance (Jiang, Liu, et al., 2012) for a particular sample of respondents when distinct dimensions are inputted as separate predictors in a regression equation.

Time Issues

We encourage future researchers to adopt longitudinal methods to test the hypothesis that resource-context fit may underlie JE fluctuations over time (Ng & Feldman, 2013). Barring few exceptions (Ng & Feldman, 2007, 2010, 2013), issues of time have not been adequately addressed in JE scholarship. Ng and Feldman (2007) eloquently captured time issues, describing how different resources yield embedding influence at different career stages. Building on these ideas, and fitting COR, it would be useful to test the impact of “resource usefulness” over time to capture changes in JE over time. Because the value of resources depends on their utility in a given context, people should become increasingly embedded over time if the resources they accumulate persist in satisfying their particular needs or goals (Halbesleben et al., 2014). However, resources may become less embedding should they no longer meet individuals’ particular needs or goals. For example, nightlife and outdoor opportunities might embed a young couple in their neighborhood, yet such embedding force might diminish once they have children and their needs change.

Practical Implications

Our model suggests that organizations should scrutinize the HPWPs they adopt to enhance operational and financial outcomes. Some organizations explicitly try to maximize collective human capital for organizational benefit (i.e., skill-enhancing firms), yet skill-enhancing tactics also might boost collective levels of occupational embeddedness. Although lessening CWBs, occupational embeddedness does not foster motivation to stay long-term and contribute to organizational functioning through OCBs (Feldman & Ng, 2007; Ng & Feldman, 2009). By supplementing skill-development investments with opportunity-enhancing practices that build organizational embeddedness, these unwelcomed side effects on ease of movement and extrarole performance can potentially be offset.

Motivation-enhancing tactics may contribute to organizational performance by increasing collective on-the-job embeddedness. At the same time, such practices potentially thwart motivation to elicit behaviors not formally rewarded or recognized, such as OCBs. Furthermore, if transferred to a less-fitting job within the company, job-embedded incumbents may feel little desire to remain, which could cause them to reduce task performance to merely acceptable levels (Hom et al., 2012). Again, it is prudent for organizations to combine motivation-enhancing practices with opportunity-enhancing practices to boost collective motivation to stay and contribute broadly to organizational objectives. Overall, our model suggests that managers should supplement their skill- or motivation-enhancing practices with opportunity-enhancing practices to lessen collective turnover and maximize workforce performance (Gardner et al., 2011).

Our theoretical arguments for off-the-job embeddedness suggest it can “cut both ways” when it comes to influencing work outcomes. On one hand, off-the-job embeddedness might strengthen negative relationships between work-focused embeddedness and withdrawal outcomes (i.e., turnover and CWBs). On the other
hand, managers should not overlook how nonwork demands make it difficult for employed parents to achieve high performance standards (Bakker et al., 2008). Furthermore, off-the-job embeddedness may be more instrumental for enriching quality of family interactions than high work performance. At the same time, firms might benefit from implementing work–family HRM bundles (e.g., flextime, on-site day care, childcare copayment, elder care assistance; Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000) to furnish more time and energy for employees to contribute toward job and organizational objectives (Trevor & Nyberg, 2008), especially for those lacking such support off the job.

Conclusions

Our aim was to strengthen the JE perspective by integrating multifoci insights and theoretically grounding this expanded view within COR. This integrative theoretical extension, we believe, provides a parsimonious lens through which to broaden and enrich understanding of JE antecedents, processes, and consequences.

References


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