

**MAKING OLD FRIENDS: THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF MAINTAINING
FORMER COWORKER RELATIONSHIPS**

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MAKING OLD FRIENDS: UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF MAINTAINING FORMER COWORKER RELATIONSHIPS

Abstract

In this paper, we seek to recast scholarly thinking about workplace relationships by exploring their lasting value. Drawing on a two-wave survey study, we find that ties with former coworkers have a positive relationship with individuals' social integration into new workplaces. We further explore why individuals maintain such ties, focusing on the effects of being hired and employed at particular points in time. Age at hire has an inverted curvilinear relationship with the number of relationships one maintains, with a peak that corresponds with the midlife transition. We find that length of tenure, and the extent to which it involves the midlife transition, is positively related to the maintenance of ties to former coworkers. Organizational growth at the time of hire has a positive effect on relationship maintenance and reduces the influence of age at hire. Change in profit margin during one's tenure has a positive effect on tie maintenance. Lastly, the positive effect of employment during the midlife transition is enhanced by employment growth during one's tenure. These findings draw attention to the temporal dynamics of workplace relationships, providing support for the notion that when ties form and take root shapes the extent to which they survive.

Keywords: life cycle; social integration; socialization; time; workplace relationships

Organizational research has consistently documented the importance of coworker relationships during an individual's tenure in a workplace (Blau, 1964; Burt, 2002). But what happens to these relationships when employees leave an organization? While scholars have tended to argue that the loss of a shared context would create substantial obstacles that lead such relationships to atrophy (Burt, 2001; Dahlander & McFarland, 2013), they have also recognized the merit of ties to individuals who "move in different social circles" (Granovetter, 1983: 205). Such relationships can foster job engagement (cf. Halbesleben, 2006) and provide access to novel opportunities and information (Kleinbaum, 2012; Levin, Walter, & Murnighan, 2011). These ideas suggest that ties to individuals who are associated with one's past are both difficult and important to maintain. Further, the prospect for relationships with former colleagues is an ever more salient characteristic of organizational life as a result of the increasing mobility of the contemporary workforce and the exposure to rotating casts of coworkers it affords. The rise of corporate alumni associations is a testament to the growing salience of such ties (Bardon, Jossierand, & Villesèche, 2015; Walsh & Bartunek, 2011).

Despite the evidence that ties to former coworkers are both consequential and ever more prevalent, research on workplace relationships has been largely confined to explaining the nature of ties among current coworkers. To the extent that scholars have considered the effects of relationships among former coworkers, they have tended to emphasize the benefits that stayers attain by remaining in touch with leavers (e.g. Bartunek, Huang, & Walsh, 2008; Kleinbaum, 2012). But what impact do such ties have on those who have exited? There has been little direct consideration of their longer-term effects on individuals who transition to new workplaces. We thus believe that scholarly understandings of workplace relationships would be more thorough if theories attended to the effects and motives associated with maintaining ties to former

coworkers. Do relationships with prior coworkers make a difference in individuals' current workplaces? And why do they maintain such ties? We drew on the results of a two-wave survey study of former employees of a technology firm to find answers to these research questions.

In our initial examination of our data, we found differences in relationship maintenance activity between those individuals who reported being employed in another organization at the time of taking the survey and those who did not. This finding suggested that relationships with former coworkers might influence individuals' experiences in subsequent work roles. It led us to investigate the relationship between maintained ties and social integration in new work contexts. While shedding light on the impact of ties with former coworkers, our findings make an important contribution to the literature by clarifying the theoretical intersection of one's relationships with past and present colleagues.

In addition, respondents were asked to explain in their own words why they chose to take steps to maintain ties with former colleagues. A thematic analysis of the statements they made revealed a number of motives that were broadly consistent with the roles scholars have previously ascribed to relationships, including social and instrumental value (e.g. Blau, 1964), nostalgia (Bardon, et al., 2015; Iyer, Bamber, & Barefield, 1997), and legacy perpetuation (e.g. Walsh & Glynn, 2008). However, we were struck by the frequency with which individuals surfaced an unexpected theme. Specifically, respondents often discussed their interest in former coworkers as a function of the particular years of their lives in which they worked at the organization, which were likened to a formative period. For instance, respondents referred to their employment as "a time that represented many milestones for me," "a formative time in my career", and as "an important part of my life." The formative character of their tenures was often grounded in age-based explanations. Respondents pointed to the "stage of life" at which they had

worked at the organization, likening it to their “roots” and contrasting it with other periods, such as high school or college. The lasting importance of the ties was underscored through comments that portrayed coworkers as “people who did so much to shape me later in life.” Taken together, these comments suggested that the timing of tie formation, specifically the ages at which individuals form and develop relationships, may play a role in how important they remain after exit. These ideas are consistent with evidence that suggests an individual’s age may play a role in fostering engagement in the workplace (Avery, McKay, & Wilson, 2007). We thus set out to specifically test the idea that age at hire, tenure, and age during employment may impact one’s efforts to maintain relationships with former coworkers.

In light of this preliminary evidence that an individual’s life stage during employment could be an important determinant of tie maintenance, we also wondered whether an organization’s life stage played a role in an individual’s propensity to keep in touch with former coworkers. While this idea is broadly consistent with the notion that the quality of relationships owes in part to the nature of the context in which they are formed (Kram, 1988), there has been little consideration of the potentially formative influence of an organization’s performance on the ties members form with one another. Thus, we also sought to test the idea that being hired and employed during periods of profitability and growth would impact individuals’ inclinations towards developing ties that become worthy of being maintained.

This study represents an initial step in developing theory about maintenance of workplace relationships in the absence of a shared context. Our research provides insight regarding the reasons individuals maintain ties under conditions where scholars would typically expect them to wither. We now turn to explaining the ways in which research on workplace relationships, employment and aging, and conservation of resources shaped our ideas.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH FORMER COWORKERS

The Impact in Subsequent Workplaces

There is perhaps no greater challenge for an organizational newcomer than becoming socially integrated with one's newly encountered colleagues. It is thus not surprising that relationship-building efforts are particularly prominent during socialization and plateau after the first three months of employment (Song, Liu, Shi, & Wang, forthcoming). While socialization research has tended to explain relationship formation in terms of characteristics of a newcomer and/or the work environment (e.g. Morrison, 2002; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), scholars have found that individuals' behavior in newly joined contexts may also be shaped in part by their prior relational experiences (e.g. Kleinbaum, 2012). These ideas suggest that the nature of an individual's relationships with former coworkers may play a role in their inclinations towards new coworkers.

As newcomers navigate their way through the uncertainty of socialization (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979) maintained relationships may provide valuable social support (cf. Halbesleben, 2006), reservoirs of mutual trust, and sources of novel information (cf. Granovetter, 1973). Relationships with former coworkers offer value even after extended periods in which individuals have had no contact because of the access they provide to different social circles and novel insights (Levin et al., 2011). However, investing time and staying in touch with former coworkers reduces one's availability to build relationships with new coworkers. Further, devoting extensive time to former coworkers may lead one's newly encountered colleagues to conclude an individual is disinterested or unavailable to develop relationships with them. Thus, we sought to test whether ties to former coworkers heighten or dampen one's social integration into a subsequent workplace.

The Impact of Age and Tenure

Individuals enter organizations at particular points in their lives, and their work-related motives can vary with age (Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004; Kooij, de Lange, Jansen, Kanfer, & Dikkers, 2011; Ng & Feldman, 2010). In the first years of their working lives, individuals are likely to be relatively ambivalent about developing close relationships in a newly joined workplace. Young people experience great uncertainty and often flounder, changing jobs frequently without much clarity or direction (Arnett, 2015; Mortimer & Simmons, 1978). As they move through the “trial period” of early adulthood (roughly corresponding with one’s twenties and thirties) and are presented with a greater number of career opportunities, individuals are likely to experience an uptick in their work-based motives (Boumans, de Jong, & Janssen, 2012), becoming increasingly focused on demonstrating to those around them that they have professionally established themselves (Mortimer & Simmons, 1978). Thus, as they join new workplaces later into early adulthood, individuals could be expected to see greater merit in forging strong relationships with their coworkers (cf. Kooij et al., 2011). As a result, individuals progressing through early adulthood are increasingly likely to embrace opportunities for socializing themselves in new workplaces they join (Arnett, 2015). These ideas suggest that, all else equal, individuals who are hired at later points in early adulthood, are more inclined to accrue more workplace ties than their younger counterparts.

Individuals undergo a midlife transition as they approach their forties that entails a “renegotiation” of their life goals (Nakai, Chang, Snell, & Fluckinger, 2011) that leads them to gradually recast their developmental concerns (Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004). As they progress through middle adulthood, individuals realize a more solid footing in their work lives. Their

concerns about establishing themselves likely taper off as their aspirations converge around a particular set of ideals (Levinson, 1986; 1996). Middle-era adults increasingly come to focus on exploiting resources and capabilities they have already developed and become steadily less concerned with developing new ones (Kooij et al, 2011; Ng & Feldman, 2012). As individuals age, they are more inclined to focus on meaningful relationships they have already developed (Ng & Feldman, 2010). Thus, we expect interest in forming workplace relationships of adults hired later in middle adulthood to mirror that of those hired earlier in early adulthood, albeit for different reasons. In sum, the closer newcomers are to the midlife transition, the more likely they are to develop valuable workplace ties.

The aging and socialization literatures provide less guidance regarding individuals' motives to preserve and sustain such ties. Conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 2001) suggests that individuals will strive to preserve coveted social resources in situations that place them at risk, and doing so can foster effective adaptation (Dutton, Roberts & Bednar, 2010). As individuals exit organizations, their relationships with their erstwhile coworkers are at an elevated risk of dissolving due to the loss of the shared social context that fostered their development (Dahlander & McFarland, 2013; Feld, 1997). The importance of such relationships is amplified by the uncertainty individuals experience after exit (Ibarra, 1999; Kleinbaum, 2012). The degree to which individuals have cultivated valuable relationships will likely shape their diligence about maintaining them. In contrast, those whose ties are largely inconsequential or served strictly instrumental purposes in the workplace may simply let them dwindle away (cf. Burt, 2001).

The value of relationships develops through repeated interactions over time (cf. Dahlander & McFarland, 2013). Thus, we suspected that tenure in an organization will be positively related to the maintenance of relationships. However, individuals' access to valuable relationships is not

uniform throughout one's career. For instance, Burt (2016) found that managers have the greatest access to advantageous relationships in the middle years of their careers¹. This finding led us to expect that the extent to which an individual's employment encompasses the midlife transition will be positively related to one's maintenance of relationships with former coworkers.

The Impact of Organizational Performance and Growth

Given the formative influence of contextual characteristics on relationships (Kram, 1988), we further considered how organizational conditions at the time of hire and during employment could play a role in individuals' maintenance of ties with former coworkers. Amidst evidence that an organization is highly profitable and/or experiencing high growth, members are particularly likely to hold it in high regard. To the extent that they attribute an organization's success to their newly encountered coworkers, individuals may be prone to see ties with them as important to develop and sustain (cf. Schein, 1985). Thus, we expect that the extent to which individuals' tenures are marked by organizational profitability and growth will positively impact their maintenance of ties with former coworkers by conditioning the perceived value of their ties. More specifically, our awareness of the heightened susceptibility of newcomers to imprinting (Marquis & Tilcsik, 2013) suggests that the level of organizational performance and growth at the time of hire would condition their relational inclinations. Thus, we also sought to test the idea that profitability and growth at the time of hire has a positive effect on tie maintenance.

We expect that concerns about relationship maintenance are likely to stem from a confluence of the individual attributes and organizational characteristics we have identified. The visible trappings of performance and growth, such as the expansion of facilities or public acclamations by leaders, are likely to induce a consensus among members that an organization is successful.

¹ Burt (2016) also finds that the actual returns to network advantage vary over the life course and the timing and trajectory of the "peak" is influenced by the broader social norms of the organization.

Such widespread agreement is broadly consistent with a “strong situation” (Mischel, 1977) that could induce newcomers to more consistently invest themselves in ties regardless of their ages. These ideas are consistent with the notion that organizations are capable of providing a context that affords a sense of belonging and being an “insider” to older members (Armstrong-Stassen & Schlosser, 2011), who may otherwise show relatively low levels of interest in forging and eventually maintaining ties with their coworkers. Thus, we expected that the effect of age at hire will be reduced by higher levels of profitability and growth at the time of hire. Strong situations also provide more coherent shared work climates (Haggerty & Wright, 2009), which we expect would enhance the quality of the interactions that give rise to workplace relationships. Thus, we further expected that experiences of success in organizational contexts would amplify the effects of tenure and age during employment on tie maintenance.

METHODS

Data

Our analysis is based on two rounds of surveys of former employees of Digital Equipment Corporation (DEC), a technology firm that was dissolved following its acquisition in 1998. Given that it is defunct, DEC represents a useful setting for exploring individuals’ propensities towards relationships with former coworkers and their value in subsequent workplaces. When an organization is active, relationships with former coworkers could owe to other causes, such as its explicit attempts to keep in contact with former members (Iyer et al., 1997) or individuals’ aspirations for re-employment. Moreover, our theoretical interest in the maintenance of relationships without the support of a shared social context can be more credibly studied when the context has dissolved.

All former employees of DEC were eligible to complete our study. All respondents stopped being members of DEC at least ten years before our study began, providing a particularly long time horizon for exploring individuals' attunement to relationships with former coworkers. Unlike members of intact settings, former employees cannot be readily identified and enumerated within the broader social context, and constructing a true sampling frame in such cases is impractical. In studying "hidden populations", Salganik and Heckathorn (2004) recommended the use of respondent-driven sampling procedures, which rely on "seeds," or known members to complete and distribute a survey to others not known to the researchers. We initiated our contact with former members through alumni associations for former employees of DEC. Participants in the survey were encouraged to share the survey announcement, which was also posted on the websites of alumni groups. Approximately 35 percent of respondents reported being alumni group members, suggesting that the surveys were broadly distributed beyond the initial seeds. We collected complete responses from 1678 individuals through the first survey. For our second survey, which was conducted six years later, we contacted all original respondents for whom we had current contact information, and received 704 responses, of which 539 were complete. The individuals whose responses were complete did not differ significantly from those with incomplete responses in terms of demographics (e.g., age, gender, education) or work-related characteristics (e.g., hierarchical position, functional disciplines).

Three possible concerns can be raised about our data collection method. First, reliance on chain-referral methods may result in a sample that overrepresents individuals with a large number of relationships and underrepresents individuals with few or no relationships (Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004). However, the distribution of the number of reported relationships does not seem to suggest such bias. When these data are plotted in a histogram, the highest density area

pertains to respondents with no relationships with former coworkers (27% of the sample). This finding likely owes to the posting of the survey announcement on a number of industry message boards and the ease with which individuals can join alumni associations without interacting with any former colleagues. Thus, it does not appear that our sample underrepresents unconnected individuals. In addition, less than 14% of respondents reported more than nine ties, suggesting that our sample does not overrepresent those with many ties. Second, our sampling approach could raise questions about bias towards alumni group members, who might be expected to systematically have more relationships with former coworkers. Therefore, we compared the mean number of friendships that alumni group members, former group members, and non-members reported they had originally formed at DEC and were now maintaining (3.91, 3.81, and 3.75, respectively). This analysis suggested there were no significant differences among the three subgroups. While our reliance on members and former members of alumni groups as seeds could introduce some bias, it would be more likely to result in a regression line having a higher intercept than in one with a materially different slope. Third, it could also be argued that our reliance on online surveys may introduce a bias against older individuals, who may be less inclined to have email or Internet access. However, the distribution of ages in our sample ranged from 30 to 81 and follows an almost perfectly normal distribution. Given that there is no reason to expect former employees of DEC would follow an atypical distribution, we believe age-based bias is unlikely to have unduly impacted our analysis.

Measures

Dependent variables. To measure *social integration in new workplaces*, we asked individuals to consider the workplaces they joined immediately after leaving DEC and presented them with an established seven-item scale that measures social integration (Morrison, 2002). All

items for this scale have loadings greater than 0.7 on a single factor ($\alpha = 0.89$)². To measure *maintained relationships with former coworkers*, we used a conventional name generator (Marsden, 1990), asking respondents to list up to twelve former members with whom they were presently in contact³. We asked them to indicate the frequency of contact and eliminated anyone with whom they were not in contact on at least an annual basis to focus our inquiry on active relationships and to exclude ties that are dormant (Levin et al., 2011). We also asked respondents to note whether the relationship with each contact was formed prior, during, or after their employment at DEC, and to classify it into one of the following categories: family, personal friend, client/customer, business contact, and current coworker. Given that our posited arguments pertain to workplace relationships, we excluded any ties that were formed before or after one's tenure at DEC. In light of our interest in understanding the survival of relationships in the absence of a shared social context, we only counted former coworkers who were identified as personal friends, since those associated with the other categories were potentially anchored in another environment, such as one's home or current place of work. Because respondents had to specify the nature of their current relationships with individuals they listed, our measure should not merely reflect names of individuals that respondents could recall from their time as members.

Independent variables. We calculated *age at hire* using the date respondents reported joining DEC and their reported age at the time of the first survey. To measure *tenure*, we calculated the number of years an individual worked at DEC based on their reported hire and exit dates, for up to three distinct periods of employment. Based on scholarly arguments that the

² We measure relationship maintenance in the present and social integration at an earlier point in time. This seems against the basic rule of causality. However, it is likely the reported relationships are the same or less than those that existed at the time of exit (cf. Burt, 2002). Model 2 is thus likely to be a conservative test.

³ This cap could truncate our dependent variable and bias our estimation if many respondents maintain more than 12 relationships. However, our sample contains only 68 responses with 12 active contacts (4% of the sample). Our results were not materially different when we excluded these responses (analysis available upon request).

midlife transition represents a multi-year process that tends to commence as individuals approach their forties (cf. Levinson, 1996), we created a measure of employment during *midlife transition*, which indicates the number of years between the ages of 35 and 45 each individual was employed at DEC. We also counted the number of *pre-midlife transition* years and *post-midlife transition* years each individual worked at DEC (i.e., the number of years employed at DEC when under the age of 35, and over the age of 45, respectively) and used these as controls.

To assess DEC's performance at the time of hire and during employment, we gathered electronic or paper copies of DEC's annual reports, including those that were published before it was a public firm. These reports provided a host of metrics related to DEC's performance, including net profit, revenue, and total employment. We used these data to calculate the organization's *profit margin at hire* (i.e., the year an individual was hired), and *change in profit margin over tenure* (i.e., the difference in profit margin between one's final and first year of employment at DEC). We also captured *employment growth at hire*, measured as the percentage change in the number of employees in the year of hire over the prior year and used the same data to calculate *employment change over tenure* (i.e., the difference in employment between one's final year and first year of employment at DEC).

Control variables. In all of our analyses, we controlled for *gender* and *education*. The latter measure is a dichotomous variable that indicates whether a respondent reported holding a bachelor's degree or above. In our exploration of the effect of maintained ties on social integration, we controlled for *age at exit from DEC*. Based on our interest in a respondent's experience in one's subsequent workplace, this measure should closely approximate the age of joining it. To account for possible occupational effects, we used dummy variables capturing respondents' reported *area of specialization* (e.g., marketing, finance, engineering). We also

included measures for two personality traits that could incline an individual towards becoming socially integrated: *need for affiliation* (Steers & Braunstein, 1976); and *self-monitoring* (Snyder & Gangestad, 1986), which encompasses three factors: acting ability, extraversion, and other-directedness (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984). Finally, we controlled for the number of other types of maintained relationships (*other contacts*) that respondents had reported (e.g., business contacts, family members), since such relationships likely provide task and social support that are conducive to becoming socially integrated (cf. Halbesleben, 2006). Pre-existing connections with other former DEC employees in a newly joined context may provide a signal of one's worthiness as a relational partner, thereby facilitating the process of social integration.

In testing our ideas about the factors underlying relationship maintenance, we controlled for some individual characteristics that could systematically influence the number of relationships one has with former coworkers. *Current age*, as directly reported by respondents, helps to isolate the effect of age at hire from possible generational effects because it is an individual's current age that corresponds to one's generation. We accounted for the number of *alumni group affiliations* each individual claimed, since such groups could be providing a shared context to facilitate relationships (e.g. Bardon et al., 2015). In addition, we controlled for whether individuals were *seeking a job*, *currently unemployed*, or working as an *entrepreneur*, since these factors could systematically prime individuals to maintain ties with former coworkers. We also controlled for three other work-related factors that could influence the number of relationships one has with former coworkers: the number of different *functional areas* in which one worked, *work location* (USA = 1), and length of *tenure with DEC's acquirer*.

We recognized the possibility that DEC's distinctive culture (Schein, 2004) could produce idiosyncratic effects that are less applicable to other organizational contexts. Specifically, DEC's

reputation for adhering to the principles of an internal labor market might systematically influence the number of relationships its members developed and maintained. For instance, it is possible that newcomers to DEC were particularly inclined to have a sizable number of pre-entry ties with existing employees, which would provide a natural advantage for forming additional valuable relationships. To partly account for this possibility, we controlled for the number of maintained relationships individuals reported forming prior to working at DEC (*pre-entry relationships*). Given that those working at higher echelons of an organization may be more capable of taking advantage of internal labor market practices, we also controlled for an individual's *highest hierarchical position*.

Statistical Analysis

To explore the impact of maintained ties on social integration, we used an Ordinary Least Squares regression model with robust standard errors. To investigate factors that influence the maintenance of ties, we utilized a Poisson regression model, because the survey data are cross-sectional, and the dependent variable is a count measure. The insignificant results of a χ^2 test suggest the dependent variable does not exhibit serious overdispersion. Because our analyses entail the testing of quadratic and interaction effects, the potential for multicollinearity among our predictor variables could mask the true effects of individual measures. However, Table 1 indicates the included variables have relatively low correlations. We also mean-centered our measure of age at hire before forming its squared term. All variables in the models reported in our paper have VIF scores ranging from 1.08 to 9.55 with the average VIF scores for all models only hovering around 2, suggesting that multicollinearity has not unduly influenced our results.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

RESULTS

Table 2 presents the results of our analysis regarding the value of maintained ties in subsequent workplaces. Model 1 presents only controls and Model 2 includes our measures of maintained friendships and the other types of relationships. It indicates that the number of maintained friendships with former coworkers had a significant positive effect on social integration into a subsequent workplace, providing evidence of the value of such ties.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

Table 3 presents analyses that test our ideas about the factors underlying individuals' maintenance of relationships with former coworkers. Model 3 only includes our control variables. Model 4 introduces a linear measure of age at hire, and Model 5 includes a square term to test our ideas about its potential curvilinear effect. Model 5 indicates that the estimated coefficients of age at hire and its squared term are significant with expected signs as illustrated graphically in Figure 1, thus strongly indicating a curvilinear relationship between age at hire and the number of maintained relationships. The peak corresponds to a raw value of roughly 38. This value closely corresponds with the transition from early to middle adulthood (Levinson, 1986), lending credence to our posited ideas.

Our findings also provide support for our ideas regarding the impact of organizational tenure. Results from Model 4 indicate a positive and significant effect of tenure on the number of relationships one maintains. Building on this analysis, Model 6 tests our ideas about age at employment. It replaces tenure with variables that measure the number of midlife transition years an individual was employed at DEC as well as the number of pre-midlife and post-midlife transition years employed. As predicted, when controlling for the latter two variables, the

coefficient for midlife transition years is positive and significant. It is worth noting that the coefficient for pre-midlife transition years is also positive and significant. However, a post hoc Wald test indicates that the effect of midlife transition years was marginally greater than that of pre-midlife transition years ($\chi^2 = 3.81$, $p = 0.06$). It appears that working at an organization during the midlife transition has a pronounced impact on tie maintenance.

We also examined the effects of organizational conditions at the time of hire and over the course of one's employment on tie maintenance. As shown in Model 4, the estimated coefficient for employment growth at hire is positive and marginally statistically significant, suggesting that individuals who joined the organization as its workforce was expanding more rapidly went on to maintain a greater number of relationships than others. We note that there is no significant effect for change in employment growth over tenure. In addition, we note that the coefficient for profit margin at hire is not significant. However, the coefficient for change in profit margin over one's tenure is positive and significant, suggesting that individuals with tenures coinciding with periods of financial growth maintained a greater number of ties than others.

We also tested the moderating effect of organizational performance factors. Model 7 in Table 4 explores the effects of higher levels of employment growth at the time of hire on maintained relationships. Specifically, we found that employment growth rate negatively moderated the linear term (which reflects the experience of those hired in early adulthood) and positively moderated the quadratic term (which reflects the experience of those hired in middle adulthood and beyond). While the results only offered marginal statistical support ($p = 0.05$), they suggest that the curvilinear effect of age at hire on maintained ties is dampened by higher levels of organizational growth at the time of hire. Figure 2 plots the relationship at one standard deviation above and below the mean organizational growth value. We also explored whether

profit margin at hire moderated the effect of age at hire as presented in Model 8, but the results were not statistically significant.

Models 9 and 10 in Table 4 explore whether the effect of employment growth and higher levels of profitability during one's tenure moderated the effect of organizational tenure. We find no significant relationships. However, when splitting organizational tenure into pre-midlife transition, midlife transition, and post-midlife transition, we find more promising results. While we find no interactions with profitability over tenure (Model 11), we find that the positive impact of employment during the midlife transition was enhanced by employment during growth periods (Model 12). Individuals whose tenures coincided with the midlife transition and were marked by workforce growth maintained even more relationships than others.

INSERT TABLES 3 & 4 AND FIGURES 1 & 2 ABOUT HERE

Post Hoc tests of alternative explanations

To explore the statistical sensitivity of our results, specifically the extent to which the effects of our core age-related variables are contingent upon the inclusion of controls, we also ran simplified models. Results of models including only the posited independent variables, were largely consistent with those that include the control variables. To address three other possible alternative explanations of maintained ties, we conducted post-hoc tests using data gathered in the second survey. First, we sought to investigate whether our findings were merely an artifact of the total number of relationships individuals originally formed while they were members. Thus, using the results of our second survey, we also conducted an additional test about age-related effects that attempted to control for the number and interconnectedness of individuals' relationships during the time of their employment. The lapse of time would make it difficult for

individuals to recall the exact number of ties they had, so we instead developed a six-item scale ($\alpha = 0.84$) about the size of their social networks during their employment⁴. The items highly load on one factor with loadings greater than 0.6. We also adopted a visual scale item developed by Mehra and colleagues (2014) to measure the interconnections among their ties. The item contains visual representations of five network structures with varying degrees of interconnectedness of relationships among contacts.

Second, we wanted to explore whether maintenance of ties was actually a function of present-day geographical proximity with former coworkers, so we also controlled for each individual's current distance from their primary work location while employed at DEC. Including this measure allowed us to account for the possibility that those who remain physically near their former workplaces may be particularly inclined to share other social contexts (such as local civic associations or sporting leagues) with their former coworkers that provide a basis for their ongoing relationships. Third, we wondered whether personality characteristics could be driving relationships with former coworkers, so as in the prior test of our ideas about social integration, we also controlled for self-monitoring and need for affiliation. Because a smaller number of individuals responded to the second survey, we focused on investigating the main effects posited in our core analysis⁵. In Table 5, Model 13 shows that the personality and social network controls are positively and significantly related to the number of relationships one has with former coworkers. Even with these controls and a much smaller number of observations,

⁴ The six items were: I had a large number of friends who also worked at the company; I was highly intertwined with the social network of DEC employees; I was highly engaged with other employees at the company; I only had a small number of close contacts who worked at the company; I regularly organized social activities with other employees; I attended social events with other employees.

⁵ Those who responded to the second survey are more likely to have relationships with former colleagues, thereby limiting the variance in the dependent variable and making it more difficult to find supportive evidence. Thus, Models 13-16 constitute a conservative test of our theory.

Model 14 supports the effects of tenure and organizational growth at the time of hire and Model 15 provides continued evidence of the curvilinear effect of age at hire. Model 16 indicates that the measure of midlife transition years is marginally significant in this limited sample.

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study recasts scholarly understanding of the potential staying power of workplace relationships in the absence of a shared social context, which has long been considered a crucial and necessary anchor for sustaining them (Dahlander & McFarland, 2013; Feld, 1997). With few exceptions, studies of workplace relationships have focused exclusively on the experience of active organizational members, implicitly assuming that relationships are likely to degrade as individuals exit and lose the structural embeddedness and shared context afforded by an organizational environment. Indeed, prior research seems to confirm this perception by showing that relationships decay significantly within the first year following an individual's departure from a shared context (Burt, 2001). Against this backdrop, this study provides the first systematic examination of the potential "stickiness" of relationships with former coworkers. Thus, this paper provides greater clarity about the potential for relationships to survive without structural supports and to even outlast the organizations in which they were created.

This expansion in scope is in no way trivial; relationships with former coworkers offered material advantages in newly joined contexts. Our findings suggest that such ties are not just vehicles for nostalgia, but instead enable individuals' functioning as they become acclimated to new work roles (e.g. Burt, 2002). While the socialization literature has long recognized the importance of bonds with coworkers in reducing uncertainties encountered by newcomers (e.g.

Morrison, 2002; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979), our findings suggest that relationships with former coworkers may also play a formative role in enabling individuals to navigate their way through newly encountered social structures. Having a solid foundation of close contacts from other contexts may provide crucial support for individuals through the access to diverse information and emotional support they provide (Gershon, 2017). This finding is consistent with the notion that oscillating between deep engagement with a group of new colleagues and with former colleagues may positively influence a newcomer's performance in a new work setting (cf. Burt & Merluzzi, 2016). Rather than positioning ties with former and current coworkers as a "zero sum game", it demonstrates how ties from one's past serve as important catalysts in the creation of new relationships.

Our findings draw attention to the importance of the timing of relationship formation and supports the notion that when ties are formed and developed may play a role in their capacity to last. The consistent patterns of support in our findings suggest that individuals who enter and work in an organization at different ages vary in terms of the salience of relationships with former coworkers in their post-exit lives. Through our focus on the effect of age at hire, we draw attention to how relationships are shaped by the extent to which individuals are concerned about their professional development when they join an organization. As organizations socialize newcomers of varying ages, it is those individuals whose membership in an organization coincides with the midlife transition who will be most prepared to create valuable relationships that are worthy of being maintained after they exit it. However, our findings regarding the effect of tenure suggest that this value accrues over time. We propose that this result owes to the greater opportunities for meaningful interactions that are afforded by working together for longer periods of time within a shared context. Our findings about the impact of working during the

midlife transition supports the notion that the years of the midlife transition may be a particularly “fertile” period of time for forging valuable workplace ties. This finding affirms the importance of the midlife transition as a time when individuals are particularly motivated and capable of investing themselves in developing lasting relationships.

We also find evidence that the organizational performance context influenced the development of valuable relationships in our sample. Specifically, the degree to which an organization’s workforce is expanding at the time of hire and the growth of its profitability during an individual’s tenure were found to have a positive relationship with relationship maintenance. Similarly, context enhanced the positive effect of employment during the midlife transition and moderated the effects of age such that employment growth dampened the curvilinear relationship of age at hire. This latter result suggests periods of optimism and expansion counteract the relative disinterest in creating workplace relationships of newcomers who are at the earlier or later points in their careers. This finding indicates the merit of exploring additional contextual circumstances, such as organization-specific norms related to age, that might also impact relationship maintenance behavior. For instance, Burt (2016) finds that peak periods of network advantage vary across organizations based on how age is perceived within each organization (i.e., “old valued”, “old devalued”, “old and young devalued”). We speculate that the extent to which relationships are valued in the organizational context will influence how individuals perceive value in the relationships formed in that context, thus enhancing or dampening the importance of age on relationship development.

This study has a number of important theoretical implications. First, it recasts scholarly thinking about the relational implications of employment and aging. Scholars have found evidence that progression through the life cycle substantively re-orient individuals’ work-related

motives (e.g. Kooij et al., 2011). Indeed, age shapes the ways in which individuals relate to their work roles (Nakai et al., 2011; Ng & Feldman, 2008) and their colleagues (Avery et al., 2003). As individuals age, they are inclined to more effectively contribute to “noncore domains of performance” (Ng & Feldman, 2008: 413), such as by increasing their efforts at citizenship behavior, adherence to safety standards, and aversion to counterproductive behaviors. At the same time, while many stereotypes about older workers have been debunked, there is evidence that they become less inclined towards training programs and professionally developing themselves (Ng & Feldman, 2012). Our work confirms and advances this line of work by drawing attention to the ways in which individuals’ concerns about relationships with their coworkers evolve over the course of their careers, with older workers seemingly becoming less oriented towards forming lasting relationships with new colleagues.

The curvilinear effect of age at hire suggests that the flow and ebb of individuals’ interest in forging new ties is demarcated by their passage through the midlife transition. Our work in part corroborates the idea that, upon realizing their goals with regards to professionally establishing themselves, individuals progressing through middle adulthood may prefer to invest their time in curating the connections they have already established (cf. Nakai et al., 2011). It also echoes evidence from prior studies about the curvilinear influence of age on individuals’ behavior in organizations (Ng & Feldman, 2008). The nature of this effect suggests that the qualitatively different experiences of moving through early and middle adulthood motivates evolutions in how individuals interact in organizational environments and interpret their connections in them.

By attending to the impact of relationships at a point in time that is years or even decades after they were formed, our findings draw attention to a latency effect of workplace ties. Our

findings suggest that the value embedded in workplace relationships provides a crucial touchstone for sustaining them amidst conditions where they would typically be expected to atrophy (Dahlander & McFarland, 2013; Levin et al., 2011). Our findings provide insights about the value of relationships as a rationale to explain their survival against the odds (Burt, 2001; Hobfoll, 2001) and as a mechanism that supports individuals in their efforts to form ties with others. Further, our work suggests that the availability of this value owes in part to the personal and organizational circumstances that defined an individual's entry into an organization. Specifically, our work suggests that individuals who are closer to the midlife transition when they enter organizations that are growing rapidly may more readily initiate the development of ties that have the potential to be maintained. Further, exposure to longer periods of high organizational performance may strengthen such ties by providing more opportunities for high quality interactions, thereby enabling them to withstand the risks of dissolution that emerge when one or both relational partners exit.

Our research also advances scholarly understanding of the role of shared social contexts in relational processes. Through its demonstration of the potential for ties to thrive in the wake of exit and the closure of the organization where they formed, it suggests that shared social contexts may not be as crucial in the maintenance of relationships as previously posited. Further, our work advances scholarly understandings of the role played by shared contexts by drawing attention to their potential to change over time. While DEC existed as an organizational entity for four decades, it provided distinctly different conditions to its employees for building relationships over time. Our findings suggest that organizational success can heighten individuals' attentiveness to developing relationships with their coworkers.

Practical Implications

Our findings can inform how organizations socialize new members in two respects. First, considering age at hire can help employers design more suitable socialization processes that reflect a newcomer's openness to developing value-laden relationships. In particular, those individuals who are closest to the midlife transition may respond in a particularly favorable manner to collective and investiture tactics that provide opportunities for supportive interactions with other members (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). On the other hand, younger or older entrants, who may be more reticent to invest in socialization (Boumans et al., 2012; Ng & Feldman, 2012), may benefit from an initial dose of individualized and divestiture tactics to enhance their openness to it. Second, our theory suggests that experienced newcomers have likely developed valuable ties in other workplaces. Hiring a middle era adult's former coworkers may create a more amenable relational context for them, perhaps making them more inclined to socially connect with others in a new workplace. Such practices may be particularly feasible given that employees with strong social bonds may be amenable to changing jobs together (Bartunek et al., 2008).

Limitations and Areas for Future Research

The limitations of this study suggest opportunities for future research. First, particular characteristics of our focal firm have shaped our findings in ways that may not hold in other organizational contexts. Most importantly, prior research on DEC (e.g. Schein, 2004) has noted its adherence to cultural principles that emphasized internal labor market practices (Pfeffer & Cohen, 1984). The use of such approaches, which may systematically prime individuals to develop valuable ties in a workplace, has attenuated in recent years, as evidenced by the rise of labor market intermediaries (Bonet, Cappelli, & Hamori, 2013), virtual work, and portfolio

careers (Hall, 2002), as well as rapidly declining expectations regarding lifetime employment. These changes potentially reduce individuals' opportunities for the routine interactions that enable their workplace ties to become valuable (Dahlander & McFarland, 2013). It could thus be questioned whether our findings would generalize to contexts that are less oriented towards internal labor markets. While further research on relationship formation and maintenance in such contexts would provide a substantive complement to our findings, there is evidence that valuable workplace ties are a pressing concern and a feasible goal in geographically dispersed work contexts (e.g., Halgin, Gopalakrishnan, & Borgatti, 2015; Joshi, Lazarova, & Liao, 2009). These findings suggest that the motives to form and maintain such ties that we found in an internal labor market-driven context are likely to shape individuals' behavior in workplaces that provide fewer tangible occasions to develop them.

While contemporary workplaces may make the development of valuable ties a more challenging endeavor, we also recognize that the importance of support from former coworkers is stronger than ever (e.g. Kleinbaum, 2012). For instance, in a study of contemporary careers, Gershon (2017) noted that over 60% of the narratives she analyzed involved a former coworker helping an individual find a job. She proposes that this finding represents a dramatic change from the 1970s, when “networking was a strategy for learning that a job existed in the first place, not, as it primarily is today, a strategy for calling a hiring manager’s attention to a resume” (p. 107). She attributes the changes to the contemporary media ecology, and points out the advantages during the job search process for applicants who are recommended by former coworkers. Indeed, while the rise of social media may make it less difficult for individuals to maintain ties with former coworkers, we believe that our findings regarding age at hire, tenure, and age during employment can still shed light on the propensity of individuals to take up such opportunities.

We encourage future research that explores the effects of changes in the employment contract that are shaping individuals' expectations and intentions with regards to workplace relationships.

In addition, demographic trends, such as extending life expectancies and retirement ages, could give rise to doubts about whether the curvilinear relationship we find would continue to hold true in the future. However, given the longstanding evidence of distinct life stages (e.g., Levinson, 1986; 1996; Hall, 2002; Nakai et al., 2011), the effect of age at hire we found should remain even if the ages that define the life stages evolve. In particular, the inverted-U-shaped effect of age at hire might elongate as the age boundaries of early and middle adulthood potentially change. Future research could corroborate this belief through studies of populations in countries with different life expectancies and retirement practices.

It is also important to note possible explanations of our results that we cannot definitively rule out with our analyses. First, it is possible that some of the relationships that individuals are maintaining have other contemporary bases that are sustaining them. Scholars have long noted the prevalence of multiplex ties, which are anchored by interactions that transpire in more than one context. Thus, the survival of a given relationship may owe to an unreported affiliation, such as mutual membership in a social club or ties among similarly aged children. While the control measures and post hoc tests we have employed were designed to mitigate this possibility, future research could corroborate our findings by directly inquiring about the particular ways in which individuals interact with their maintained ties. Such work holds great promise to advance understanding of the effects of sequentially working together with individuals in multiple work contexts. Second, the effect of tenure that we found could owe to individuals with longer tenures having fewer opportunities to form workplace ties after they exit and thus are more likely to maintain their relationships with former colleagues from DEC. It is worth noting that in an

unpresented model we found a significant and positive interaction between tenure and age at hire that is consistent with this speculation. In general, the positive impact of tenure on maintained relationships is enhanced when individuals join later in life and (by definition) exit at an older age. While the interdependence of our measures of age at hire, tenure, and age at exit preclude us from simultaneously studying the effects of all three factors, future research could provide greater insight about how individuals construe their opportunities for relationship formation after exit by examining the effect of the age one leaves. Finally, our research sheds light on specific causes and effects of maintaining ties with former coworkers, but it is important to recognize that investigating other contributing factors would broaden scholarly understanding of this phenomenon. We encourage future research on other potential individual-level explanations, such as gender, organizational identification, and occupation, as well as contextual characteristics that may shape tie maintenance, such as industry and national culture.

Lastly, the design of our study introduces the prospect for retrospective bias. Given that respondents exited DEC many years before we conducted our survey, it is possible that they are not accurately recalling their experiences at the organization. While we sought to mitigate this problem by focusing on measures that were relatively objective (i.e. age, tenure) and on an individual's maintenance of relationships in the present day, our measure of social integration is grounded in one's perception of an experience that happened at some point in the past. Future research could more fully redress the potential for retrospective bias by studying the experiences of individuals who are currently acclimating to a new organizational context and gathering data about the prior relationships that remain salient in their lives.

Conclusion

Workplace relationships are both crucial sources of support in the rapidly changing world of work and difficult to maintain. Maintained workplace relationships enable individuals to socially integrate themselves in new contexts, and such ties serve purposes that transcend the shared contexts that gave rise to them. The particular points in time at which individuals work in an organization have lasting implications for their preparedness to invest themselves in maintaining their ties after exit. This research points to the formative and lasting influence of the value of ties formed in a workplace. When individuals join a new workplace, they are faced with opportunities to create relationships that develop lives of their own, as evidenced by their ability to survive despite the loss of a shared context. This research illuminates how the timing of one's employment in an organization leads some members to carry forward valuable workplace relationships throughout their careers.

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Table 1
Descriptive statistics and pairwise correlations (continued on next page)

	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Maintained relationships (friendships)	3.88	3.63												
2 Age	55.67	7.57	0.05											
3 Gender (male =1)	0.75	0.43	-0.14	0.19										
4 College (bachelor or above = 1)	0.70	0.46	-0.02	0.04	0.08									
5 Alumni group affiliations	0.60	0.62	0.05	0.03	0.07	0.001								
6 Entrepreneur	0.001	0.07	0.001	0.01	0.001	-0.01	-0.02							
7 Currently unemployed	0.03	0.17	0.001	0.001	-0.01	-0.01	0.02	0.30						
8 Seeking a job	0.04	0.19	0.02	0.001	0.01	-0.01	0.02	-0.01	0.74					
9 Functional areas	1.13	0.45	0.001	0.07	0.001	-0.03	0.01	-0.02	-0.03	-0.01				
10 Highest position	2.16	1.35	0.10	0.33	0.16	0.16	0.13	-0.03	-0.02	-0.02	0.09			
11 Work location (USA = 1)	0.60	0.49	0.09	0.24	-0.09	0.08	-0.24	0.04	0.07	0.07	-0.01	-0.09		
12 Tenure with DEC's acquirer	1.86	3.23	0.06	-0.11	-0.02	-0.05	-0.08	-0.01	0.001	0.01	-0.01	-0.13	0.05	
13 Need for affiliation	1.58	0.6	0.13	-0.03	0.01	0.04	0.06	-0.02	0.02	0.01	0.05	0.11	-0.09	0.02
14 Self-monitoring	28.49	3.37	0.06	0.09	-0.03	0.04	-0.05	0.01	-0.04	-0.05	-0.01	-0.04	-0.03	0.001
15 Current distance to work location	2086.06	2626.09	-0.05	-0.17	0.08	-0.08	0.13	-0.03	-0.03	-0.05	0.04	0.07	-0.68	-0.07
16 Interconnectedness of relationships	3.41	0.82	0.15	-0.03	0.04	-0.01	0.07	-0.04	-0.08	-0.04	0.04	0.04	-0.06	0.02
17 Size of social network	3.78	0.71	0.27	-0.08	-0.04	-0.01	0.07	-0.01	-0.03	0.001	-0.02	0.13	0.05	0.09
18 Pre-entry ties	0.41	0.82	0.16	0.04	0.02	0.001	0.01	0.08	-0.02	-0.02	-0.03	0.001	0.01	0.02
19 Age at hire	28.31	6.41	-0.05	0.59	0.13	0.12	0.04	-0.01	-0.04	-0.03	-0.02	0.19	-0.02	-0.07
20 Employment growth at hire	0.19	0.18	0.11	0.43	0.09	-0.04	0.01	0.001	0.01	0.02	0.10	0.14	0.25	-0.02
21 Profit margin at hire	0.09	0.04	0.05	0.21	-0.03	0.01	0.001	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.001	0.05	0.15	0.001
22 Organizational tenure	14.3	6.46	0.18	0.42	0.05	-0.09	0.001	0.01	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.16	0.26	0.18
23 Change in employment over tenure	-0.23	0.19	-0.10	-0.36	-0.08	0.03	-0.02	0.01	-0.03	-0.03	-0.08	-0.12	-0.24	0.10
24 Change in profit margin over tenure	-0.95	1.09	0.05	-0.02	-0.01	0.02	0.001	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.02	-0.03	0.19
25 Midlife transition	6.30	4.53	0.13	0.33	0.06	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.04	0.03	0.12	0.12	0.36
26 Pre-midlife transition	6.76	5.44	0.09	0.04	-0.02	-0.07	0.001	0.01	0.08	0.08	0.02	0.04	0.12	-0.17
27 Post-midlife transition	2.56	4.43	0.08	0.57	0.13	0.01	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.05	0.18	0.16	0.13
28 Social integration	3.88	0.66	0.10	-0.03	0.07	0.07	0.10	0.001	0.05	0.02	-0.02	0.03	0.11	0.05
29 Age at exit from DEC	42.08	10.29	0.11	0.61	0.14	0.04	0.04	0.02	0.02	0.05	0.03	0.21	0.16	0.29
30 Other contacts	1.47	2.75	-0.27	-0.02	-0.06	0.02	0.07	0.02	0.01	0.04	-0.02	0.07	-0.06	-0.01

Correlation coefficients greater than 0.04 are statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics and pairwise correlations (continued from prior page)

	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
14 Self-monitoring	-0.04																
15 Current distance to work location	0.02	0.05															
16 Interconnectedness of relationships	0.07	-0.03	0.03														
17 Size of social network	0.19	-0.10	-0.01	0.38													
18 Pre-entry ties	0.07	-0.03	-0.01	-0.05	0.02												
19 Age at hire	-0.03	-0.02	0.06	-0.03	-0.17	0.09											
20 Employment growth at hire	0.001	0.06	-0.2	0.02	0.07	-0.03	-0.19										
21 Profit margin at hire	0.02	0.08	-0.17	0.05	0.08	-0.01	-0.10	0.34									
22 Organizational tenure	0.01	0.12	-0.24	0.05	0.14	-0.05	-0.29	0.56	0.28								
23 Employment change over tenure	-0.02	-0.05	0.17	-0.04	-0.09	0.04	0.15	-0.88	-0.30	-0.50							
24 Change in profit margin over tenure	-0.04	0.05	0.01	-0.02	-0.01	0.02	-0.03	0.03	0.001	0.04	0.18						
25 Midlife transition	0.05	0.13	-0.12	-0.01	0.08	-0.01	0.08	0.26	0.13	0.55	-0.27	0.05					
26 Pre-midlife transition	0.02	0.04	-0.12	0.04	0.08	0.01	-0.21	0.21	0.11	0.32	-0.27	-0.12	0.08				
27 Post-midlife transition	0.001	0.07	-0.13	0.06	0.02	0.04	0.36	0.23	0.11	0.42	-0.21	0.06	0.39	0.28			
28 Social integration	0.12	-0.15	-0.18	0.09	0.20	-0.02	-0.07	0.07	0.01	0.06	-0.05	0.01	0.02	-0.02	0.01		
29 Age at exit from DEC	0.03	0.11	-0.13	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.44	0.24	0.11	0.48	-0.26	0.001	0.79	0.37	0.78	-0.01	
30 Other contacts	0.04	-0.06	0.03	0.04	0.16	0.09	0.001	-0.03	0.02	0.01	0.02	-0.01	0.01	0.03	-0.02	0.06	0.01

Correlation coefficients greater than 0.04 are statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

Table 2. Ordinary Least Squares Regression Predicting Social Integration into Subsequent Workplace

	m1	m2
Maintained relationships (friends)		0.029** (0.01)
Other contacts		0.025* (0.01)
Need for affiliation	0.111* (0.05)	0.086 (0.05)
Self-monitoring	-0.030** (0.01)	-0.029** (0.01)
Male	0.025 (0.08)	0.043 (0.08)
College (bachelor or above = 1)	0.137* (0.07)	0.117+ (0.07)
Age at exit from DEC	0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
Highest position (2 nd level)	0.18 (0.11)	0.145 (0.11)
Highest position (3 rd level)	0.125+ (0.07)	0.099 (0.07)
Highest position (4 th level)	0.009 (0.09)	-0.006 (0.09)
Highest position (5 th level)	0.14 (0.12)	0.091 (0.12)
Administration	-0.145 (0.15)	-0.133 (0.15)
Finance	-0.115 (0.15)	-0.071 (0.15)
Human resources	-0.011 (0.14)	-0.035 (0.13)
Information technology	-0.045 (0.1)	-0.036 (0.1)
Customer service	0.103 (0.09)	0.125 (0.08)
Engineering	0.036 (0.10)	0.069 (0.10)
Manufacturing	0.094 (0.12)	0.067 (0.11)
Sales	-0.03 (0.09)	0.015 (0.09)
Marketing	-0.105 (0.1)	-0.082 (0.1)
Consulting	0.269 (0.25)	0.285 (0.24)
Other function	0.054 (0.15)	0.082 (0.15)
Constant	4.382** (0.28)	4.315** (0.28)
R squared	0.08	0.10

Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Two-tailed tests for all variables. N =498. Note that the N is reduced from 539 because respondents who did work after leaving DEC were not included in this analysis.

+ p < 0.10, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01

Table 3. Poisson Models Predicting the Number of Relationships with Former Coworkers

	m3	m4	m5	m6
Age at hire		0.020** (0.001)	0.024** (0.001)	-0.006 (0.001)
Employment growth at hire		0.346+ (0.20)	0.357+ (0.20)	0.173 (0.20)
Profit margin at hire		-0.041 (0.36)	-0.131 (0.37)	-0.052 (0.36)
Organizational tenure		0.034** (0.001)	0.035** (0.001)	
Employment change over tenure		-0.001 (0.17)	0.001 (0.17)	-0.121 (0.17)
Change in profit margin over tenure		0.031* (0.01)	0.032* (0.01)	0.040** (0.01)
Age at hire squared			-0.001** -0.001	
Midlife transition				0.017** (0.001)
Pre-midlife transition				0.008** (0.001)
Post-midlife transition				0.002 (0.001)
Age	0.002 (0.001)	-0.023** (0.001)	-0.024** (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
Male	-0.329** (0.03)	-0.332** (0.03)	-0.338** (0.03)	-0.333** (0.03)
College (bachelor or above = 1)	-0.068* (0.03)	-0.03 (0.03)	-0.048+ (0.03)	-0.044 (0.03)
Alumni group affiliations	0.090** (0.02)	0.075** (0.02)	0.072** (0.02)	0.077** (0.02)
Entrepreneur	-0.014 (0.20)	-0.028 (0.20)	-0.075 (0.20)	-0.054 (0.20)
Currently unemployed	-0.203+ (0.12)	-0.195 (0.12)	-0.179 (0.12)	-0.206+ (0.12)
Seeking a job	0.234* (0.09)	0.196* (0.09)	0.194* (0.09)	0.193* (0.09)
Functional areas	0.001 (0.03)	-0.008 (0.03)	-0.006 (0.03)	-0.016 (0.03)
Highest position (2 nd level)	0.088+ (0.05)	0.088+ (0.05)	0.087+ (0.05)	0.088+ (0.05)
Highest position (3 rd level)	0.285** (0.03)	0.255** (0.03)	0.253** (0.03)	0.265** (0.03)
Highest position (4 th level)	0.261** (0.04)	0.239** (0.04)	0.239** (0.04)	0.240** (0.04)
Highest position (5 th level)	0.321** (0.05)	0.266** (0.05)	0.273** (0.05)	0.288** (0.05)
Work location (USA = 1)	0.183** (0.03)	0.120** (0.03)	0.129** (0.03)	0.127** (0.03)
Tenure with DEC's acquirer	0.020** (0.001)	0.002 (0.001)	0.002 (0.001)	0.010* (0.001)
Pre-entry ties	0.146** (0.01)	0.155** (0.01)	0.159** (0.01)	0.150** (0.01)
Constant	1.135** (0.10)	1.489** (0.12)	2.136** (0.21)	1.323** (0.14)
Log likelihood	-5097.41	-5019.89	-5012.47	-5043.70

Standard errors are in parentheses. Two-tailed tests for all variables. N=1678

+ p < 0.10, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01

**Table 4. Poisson Models Predicting the Number of Relationships with Former Coworkers
(continued on next page)**

	m7	m8	m9	m10	m11	m12
Age at hire ^a	0.024** (0.001)	0.024** (0.001)	0.021** (0.001)	0.021** (0.001)	-0.006+ (0.001)	-0.006+ (0.001)
Employment growth at hire ^a	0.202 (0.21)	0.354+ (0.2)	0.396+ (0.2)	0.385+ (0.2)	0.172 (0.2)	0.274 (0.2)
Profit margin at hire ^a	-0.13 (0.37)	-0.56 (0.46)	-0.209 (0.39)	-0.038 (0.36)	-0.037 (0.39)	-0.207 (0.36)
Organizational tenure ^a	0.034** (0.001)	0.035** (0.001)	0.041** (0.001)	0.035** (0.001)		
Employment change over tenure ^a	-0.021 (0.17)	-0.007 (0.17)	-0.027 (0.17)	0.039 (0.17)	-0.121 (0.17)	-0.209 (0.17)
Change in profit margin over tenure ^a	0.034* (0.01)	0.033* (0.01)	0.031* (0.01)	0.024 (0.02)	0.043** (0.01)	0.039** (0.02)
Age at hire squared	-0.001** -0.001	-0.001** -0.001				
Midlife transition					0.017** (0.001)	0.034** (0.001)
Pre-midlife transition					0.008** (0.001)	0.007** (0.001)
Post-midlife transition					0.002 (0.001)	0.004 (0.001)
Age at hire × Employment growth at hire	-0.022+ (0.01)					
Age at hire squared × Employment growth at hire	0.003+ -0.001					
Age at hire × Profit margin at hire		0.035 (0.06)				
Age at hire squared × Profit margin at hire		0.004 (0.01)				
Tenure × Employment change over tenure			0.012 (0.01)			
Tenure × Change in profit margin over tenure				-0.002 (0.001)		
Midlife × Change in profit margin over tenure					-0.002 (0.001)	
Midlife × Employment change over tenure						0.039* (0.02)
Age	-0.023** (0.001)	-0.024** (0.001)	-0.024** (0.001)	-0.024** (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
Male	-0.341** (0.03)	-0.341** (0.03)	-0.330** (0.03)	-0.333** (0.03)	-0.333** (0.03)	-0.333** (0.03)
College (bachelor or above = 1)	-0.048+ (0.03)	-0.047+ (0.03)	-0.031 (0.03)	-0.029 (0.03)	-0.044 (0.03)	-0.047+ (0.03)
Alumni group affiliations	0.070** (0.02)	0.071** (0.02)	0.075** (0.02)	0.075** (0.02)	0.077** (0.02)	0.075** (0.02)
Entrepreneur	-0.055 (0.2)	-0.069 (0.2)	-0.025 (0.2)	-0.026 (0.2)	-0.052 (0.2)	-0.057 (0.2)
Currently unemployed	-0.187 (0.12)	-0.178 (0.12)	-0.198 (0.12)	-0.194+ (0.12)	-0.207+ (0.12)	-0.212+ (0.12)

**Table 4. Poisson Models Predicting the Number of Relationships with Former Coworkers
(continued from prior page)**

	m7	m8	m9	m10	m11	m12
Seeking a job	0.205*	0.192*	0.194*	0.198*	0.195*	0.192*
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.09)
Functional areas	-0.007	-0.006	-0.007	-0.007	-0.016	-0.017
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Highest position (2 nd level)	0.085	0.087+	0.090	0.088+	0.086+	0.091
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Highest position (3 rd level)	0.256**	0.255**	0.254**	0.256**	0.265**	0.266**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Highest position (4 th level)	0.239**	0.240**	0.239**	0.238**	0.239**	0.241**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Highest position (5 th level)	0.281**	0.276**	0.270**	0.267**	0.289**	0.292**
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Work location (USA = 1)	0.127**	0.127**	0.119**	0.120**	0.128**	0.127**
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Tenure with DEC's acquirer	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.002	0.011*	0.009
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Pre-entry ties	0.158**	0.159**	0.155**	0.156**	0.151**	0.151**
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Constant	2.162**	2.116**	2.003**	1.967**	1.363**	1.361**
	(0.23)	(0.21)	(0.16)	(0.15)	(0.15)	(0.15)
Log likelihood	-5009.23	-5010.85	-5019.07	-5019.35	-5043.36	-5040.84

Standard errors are in parentheses. Two-tailed tests for all variables. N = 1678

^aVariables are mean-centered before forming squared terms and interaction terms.

+ p < 0.10, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01

Table 5. Post-hoc Poisson Models Predicting the Number of Relationships with Former Coworkers with Additional Controls (continued on next page)

	m13	m14	m15	m16
Age at hire ^a		0.029**	0.035**	0.009
		(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Employment growth at hire		0.962**	0.938**	0.829*
		(0.35)	(0.35)	(0.35)
Profit margin at hire		0.388	0.061	0.353
		(0.7)	(0.71)	(0.7)
Organizational tenure		0.027**	0.027**	
		(0.01)	(0.01)	
Employment change over tenure		0.323	0.265	0.185
		(0.3)	(0.31)	(0.31)
Change in profit margin over tenure		0.03	0.038	0.035
		(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Age at hire squared			-0.001**	
			(0.001)	
Pre-midlife transition				0.002
				(0.001)
Midlife transition				0.009
				(0.01)
Post-midlife transition				0.008
				(0.01)
Age	0.004	-0.029**	-0.031**	-0.014*
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Male	-0.203**	-0.209**	-0.218**	-0.208**
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
College (bachelor or above = 1)	-0.084+	-0.06	-0.075	-0.076
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Alumni group affiliations	0.035	0.014	0.01	0.016
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Entrepreneur	-0.413	-0.406	-0.443	-0.404
	(0.34)	(0.33)	(0.33)	(0.33)
Currently unemployed	0.055	0.145	0.169	0.092
	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.22)
Seeking a job	-0.195	-0.224	-0.234	-0.224
	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)	(0.18)
Functional areas	-0.102*	-0.126*	-0.123*	-0.123*
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Highest position (2nd level)	0.089	0.105	0.101	0.098
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Highest position (3rd level)	0.211**	0.182**	0.180**	0.190**
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Highest position (4th level)	0.141*	0.139+	0.152*	0.132+
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
Highest position (5th level)	0.279**	0.235**	0.253**	0.259**
	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)	(0.08)
Work location (USA = 1)	0.183**	0.150*	0.163**	0.155*
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Tenure with DEC's acquirer	0.020**	0.004	0.003	0.01
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Need for affiliation	0.162**	0.167**	0.173**	0.161**
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)

Table 5. Post-hoc Poisson Models Predicting the Number of Relationships with Former Coworkers with Additional Controls (continued from prior page)

	m13	m14	m15	m16
Self-monitoring	0.023** (0.01)	0.020** (0.01)	0.020** (0.01)	0.021** (0.01)
Current distance to work location	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)	0.001 (0.001)
Interconnectedness of relationships	0.090** (0.03)	0.086** (0.03)	0.090** (0.03)	0.089** (0.03)
Size of social network	0.272** (0.04)	0.259** (0.04)	0.250** (0.04)	0.261** (0.04)
Pre-entry ties	0.121** (0.02)	0.122** (0.02)	0.127** (0.02)	0.124** (0.02)
Constant	-1.092** (0.31)	-0.38 (0.33)	0.649 (0.43)	-0.378 (0.36)
Log likelihood	-1553.92	-1531.78	-1527.14	-1537.82

Standard errors are in parentheses. Two-tailed tests for all variables. N = 539
^aVariables are mean-centered before forming squared terms and interaction terms.
+ p < 0.10, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01

Figure 1. Graph of the Estimated Main Effect of Age at Hire

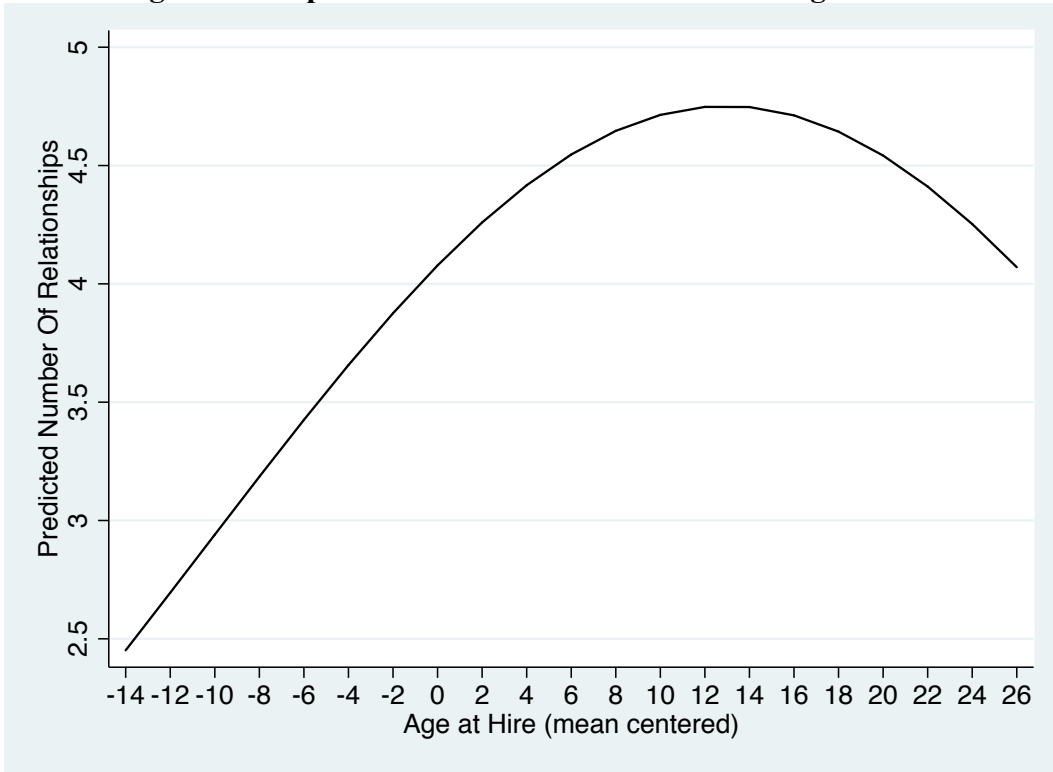
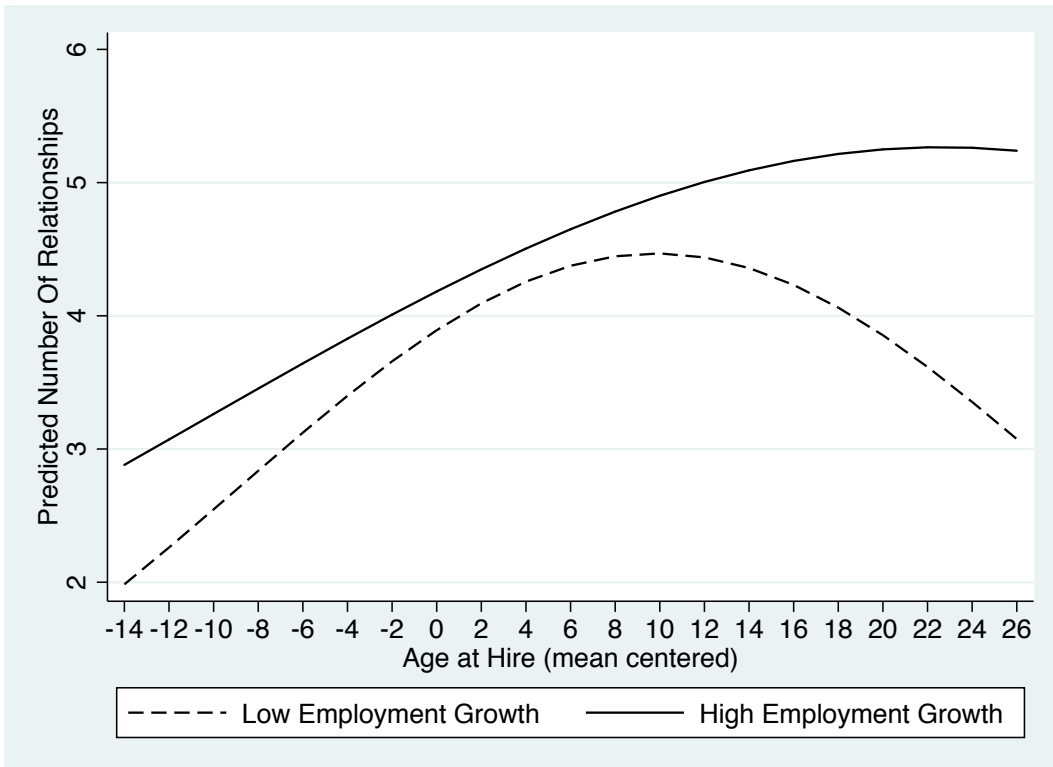


Figure 2. Graph of the Estimated Effect of Age at Hire Moderated by Employment Growth at Hire



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