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Investigating the Impact of Early Union Socialization Experiences and Union Justice on Union Commitment and Participation

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INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF
EARLY UNION SOCIALIZATION EXPERIENCES AND UNION JUSTICE ON
UNION COMMITMENT AND PARTICIPATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

John F. Springer

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Title: Investigating the Impact of Early Union Socialization Experiences and Union Justice on Union Commitment and Participation

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This study explores the relationship between union members' perceptions of the welcome, support, and fair treatment they experience within their local union and their level of union commitment and participation. By analyzing data from 3,855 public employee union members surveyed by the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA) in the Spring of 2010, this study examines the extent to which members' perceptions of their first-year socialization experiences (i.e., new member socialization/support) and the fairness of the formal and social aspects of decision-making within their local union (i.e., union justice) influence their level of commitment to their local union and participation in its activities. Members who reported positive perceptions of union justice within their local union exhibited stronger union commitment attitudes and higher levels of participation in local union activities, as did members who reported positive early socialization experiences. A hypothesized mediation model was tested using multiple regression analysis and structural equation modeling. The test results provide support for the model indicating that member socialization/support and union justice exert their influence on union participation indirectly through union commitment (i.e., intervening variable). Implications of the results of this study for unions and similar organizations, and for future research, are discussed.