

# Predictors and Outcomes of Proactivity in the Socialization Process

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This 3-wave longitudinal study aimed to extend current understanding of the predictors and outcomes of employee proactivity (involving information seeking, feedback seeking, relationship building, and positive framing) in the socialization process. Two personality variables, extraversion and openness to experience, were associated with higher levels of proactive socialization behavior. Of the proactive behaviors studied, feedback seeking and relationship building were highlighted in their importance because of their various relationships with the work-related outcomes assessed in this study (e.g., social integration, role clarity, job satisfaction, intention to turnover, and actual turnover). The results also highlighted the importance of 2 control variables (opportunity to interact with others on the job and skill level of the new job) in the experience of socialization into a new job.

Organizational socialization is the process by which “a person secures relevant job skills, acquires a functional level of organizational understanding, attains supportive social interactions with coworkers, and generally accepts the established ways of a particular organization” (Taormina, 1997, p. 29). Because successful employee socialization has been linked to increased commitment, job satisfaction, intentions to remain with the organization, and job performance, researchers have generally agreed on the need to understand the socialization process. It may be argued, however, that the need to understand the process and outcomes of socialization is now at a premium as a consequence of major changes that have occurred within the workplace. For example, because of the prevalence of organizational downsizing and reorganizing, employees are now changing jobs at a higher rate than ever before. Many employees now see “job hopping” as a strategy for staying competitive in their careers, with the thought that working for different organizations will allow them to develop their skills and credentials (Hall, 1996). Employees have to adjust and adapt to new settings more than ever before, and at the same time, organizations are going through hiring and socialization processes for positions more often.

Research on socialization has primarily focused on the stages that newcomers go through as they adapt to a new organization (e.g., Feldman, 1981; Schein, 1968) and the outcomes of the use of socialization programs or tactics by organizations (e.g., Ashforth & Saks, 1996). Less research has examined the predictors and outcomes of individual proactivity during the socialization process and the role of newcomer personality in the socialization process. The purpose of this study was to gain increased insight into the

predictors and outcomes of individual proactivity during the socialization process and to suggest that newcomer personality may be an important determinant of proactivity in the socialization process. Figure 1 provides a preview of the variables and relationships to be examined in this study. Essentially, our study examined the relationships between personality and proactivity (Hypotheses 1–5) and between proactivity and a selection of work outcomes (Hypotheses 6–8).

## Proactivity Among Organizational Newcomers

Many organizations provide orientation for new employees or have formal recognition of the newcomer as a new entrant into the organization. Socialization efforts on the part of the organization have been shown to be worth the effort. For example, formal group socialization tactics are related to lower role ambiguity, role conflict, and stress; higher job satisfaction; and decreased intentions to quit on the part of the new employee (for reviews of the relevant literature, see Bauer, Morrison, & Callister, 1998; Saks & Ashforth, 1997a).

Although efforts on the part of managers and the organization are important, recent work also emphasizes the usefulness of proactivity on the part of the newcomer (e.g., Ashford & Black, 1996; Major & Kozlowski, 1997; Miller & Jablin, 1991; E. W. Morrison, 1993; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Saks & Ashforth, 1996). Because the organization cannot possibly provide all of the information and socialization that an employee needs, the employee must make some proactive efforts to learn how things are done (Schein, 1968) and to “become fully adjusted insiders” (Fisher, 1985, p. 39). Saks and Ashforth (1997b) noted that as individuals are less and less likely to have one-organization careers, the usefulness of proactivity in the socialization process is going to become increasingly important to both newcomers and organizations. A similar position was advocated by Bell and Staw (1989), who argued that individual proactivity must be examined as a key explanation for organizational behavior.

In their study of MBA graduates, Ashford and Black (1996) examined four proactive behaviors an employee might engage in as a part of his or her attempts to fit into a new job: sensemaking (including information and feedback seeking), relationship build-

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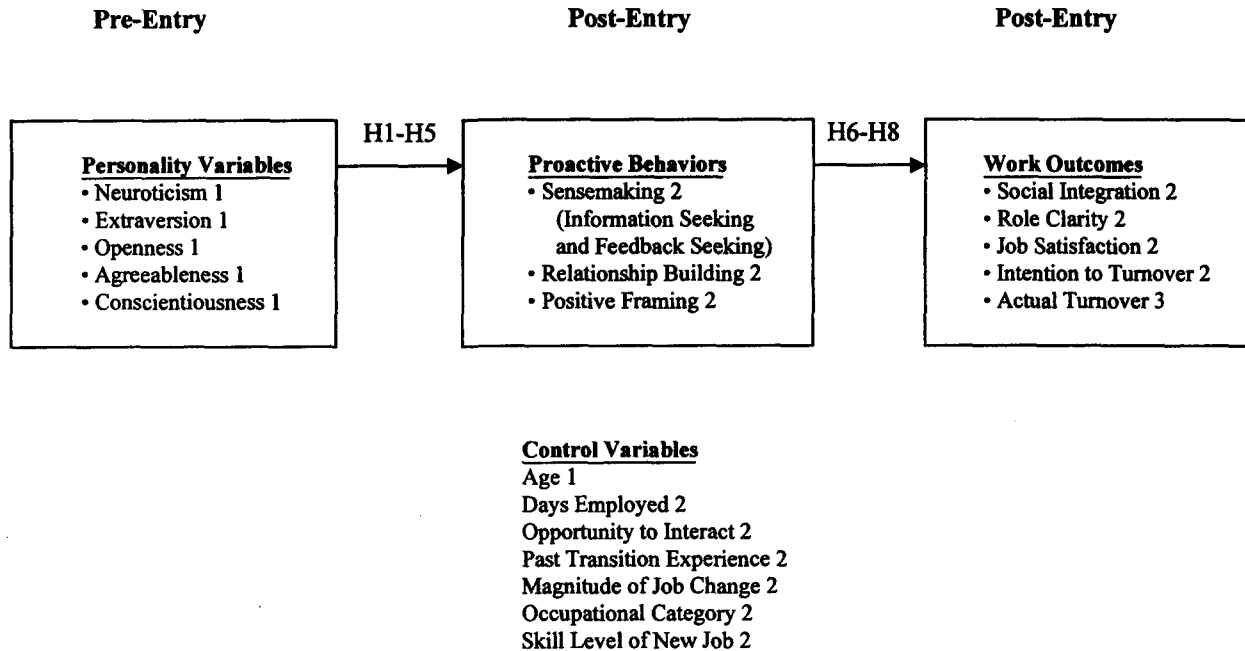


Figure 1. Overview of study variables and relationships to be examined. The numbers 1, 2, and 3 indicate the time wave when the data were collected. H1–H5 = Hypotheses 1–5. H6–H8 = Hypotheses 6–8.

ing, positive framing, and negotiation of job changes. Ashford and Black found that desire for control was related to higher levels of information seeking, relationship building, positive framing, and negotiation of job changes. The four socialization behaviors Ashford and Black examined were chosen, in part, on the basis of the extent to which these behaviors have been noted by past research as important and meaningful to the entry process. To directly build on the current understanding of the relationship between individual-difference variables and proactivity in socialization, our study focused on three of the four main proactive behaviors (i.e., sensemaking, relationship building, and positive framing) Ashford and Black (1996) studied. Negotiation of job changes, in which individuals proactively take steps to change the job requirements to increase the fit between themselves and the job, was not included in our study because of the low incidence of this behavior among organizational newcomers (Ashford & Black, 1996).

### Sensemaking

Sensemaking includes both information seeking and feedback seeking (Ashford & Black, 1996). Information seeking refers to newcomers' search for and acquisition of job and organizational information. It can be viewed as a process that newcomers use to reduce uncertainty and make sense of their new situations (Saks & Ashforth, 1997a). Newcomers most frequently seek task-related information (cf. Major & Kozlowski, 1997). New employees can acquire information directly from other newcomers, coworkers, supervisors, mentors, or written materials or by observing others in the workplace. Of the different possible forms of employee proactivity during socialization, information seeking has been studied the most (Saks & Ashforth, 1997a). Feedback seeking refers to an employee's solicitation of information about how he or she is

performing. Feedback is especially important for newcomers, who are more likely to misinterpret the environment, make mistakes, and violate organizational norms than individuals who have completed the socialization process (Ashford & Taylor, 1990). According to Ashford and Taylor, feedback allows new employees to understand when they need to learn more or when they need to reinterpret past information. Ashford (1986) noted that organizations often do not provide new employees with enough feedback and that it is common for employees to have to proactively ask for feedback.

### Relationship Building

Relationship building refers to behaviors on the part of the new employee that are directed toward initiating social interaction in the work environment. Relationship building is important for organizational newcomers as a means of avoiding loneliness and social isolation (Nelson & Quick, 1991). Ashford and Black (1996) found that building relationships with one's boss was related to job performance and general relationship building was related to higher job satisfaction. Related research has shown that social support from coworkers is related to higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Fisher, 1985).

### Positive Framing

Ashford and Black (1996) introduced positive framing as a proactive technique that individuals use during their adaptation to a new job. Positive framing was defined by these authors as a cognitive self-management mechanism new employees use "to alter their understanding of a situation by explicitly controlling the cognitive frame they place on the situation" (p. 202). For example,

an employee might explicitly attempt to look on the positive side of things and view situations as an opportunity rather than a threat. Ashford and Taylor (1990) noted that positive reinterpretation of events could be viewed as a problem-focused coping effort that acts to reduce and manage stress.

### Personality and Socialization

Research on the role of personality in the socialization process is scant. Ashford and Black (1996) noted that although individuals differ in their propensity to engage in socialization efforts upon organizational entry, very little is known about what individual differences are associated with individual proactivity in socialization. Reichers (1987) theorized that field dependence, tolerance for ambiguity, and need for affiliation would be related to higher newcomer proactivity. Ashford and Black (1996) demonstrated that individuals with higher desire for control sought more information, socialized and networked more with coworkers, negotiated more job changes, and made more attempts to frame their new situations in positive ways. Major and Kozlowski (1997) showed that individuals with low self-efficacy exhibited higher information seeking when they had access to other organizational members and when their tasks were highly interdependent. Finally, Ashford and Cummings (1985) demonstrated a link between tolerance for ambiguity and proactive feedback-seeking behavior.

Research devoted to the development of a taxonomy of personality traits has identified five broad, core dimensions of personality: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (McCrae & Costa, 1996). Although there is disagreement over the comprehensiveness of the five factors (Schneider & Hough, 1995), the five-factor model is nonetheless recognized as a strongly robust and useful means to describe personality (Mount, Barrick, & Stewart, 1998). The Big Five personality model has increased researchers' insight into personality correlates of work performance and behavior in a variety of settings and contexts (cf. Barrick & Mount, 1991, 1993; Barry & Stewart, 1997; Judge, Martocchio, & Thoresen, 1997; Mount et al., 1998). To date, however, the five factors have not been examined in the realm of socialization. The pervasiveness of this model of personality and its growing research base suggests that a useful "umbrella" picture of personality's role in the socialization process can be gained through the use of the five-factor model. A description of each of the five factors and their hypothesized role in the socialization process follows.

*Neuroticism*, or emotional stability, refers to the extent to which an individual displays anxiety, anger, hostility, self-consciousness, impulsiveness, vulnerability, and depression. Although neuroticism has not been empirically examined in the socialization context, psychological research on coping suggests that neuroticism is likely to be related to infrequent use of positive framing as a proactive socialization behavior. Individuals with higher levels of neuroticism tend to have more negative appraisals of themselves and their environment and tend to interpret ambiguous situations in a negative manner (cf. Watson & Clark, 1984). Data reported by Watson and Hubbard (1996) also showed that individuals with higher levels of neuroticism were less likely to cope with stressful situations through positive reinterpretation and growth. In the following hypothesis, we proposed a negative relationship between neuroticism and positive framing during socialization.

*Hypothesis 1:* Higher levels of neuroticism will be associated with lower levels of positive framing.

*Extraversion* refers to the extent to which an individual is outgoing, active, and high spirited. The potential link between extraversion and relationship building as a proactive socialization technique seems clear. Individuals with high levels of extraversion prefer to be around people most of the time, and extraverts spend more time socializing compared with introverts (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Likewise, Watson and Hubbard (1996) reported that higher extraversion was related to higher levels of seeking support from others during times of stress. Through their higher levels of enthusiasm, sociability, ambitiousness, and self-monitoring (R. F. Morrison, 1977; Mount & Barrick, 1995), it is also likely that individuals with higher levels of extraversion will display higher levels of sensemaking behavior, specifically information and feedback seeking. Finally, because extraversion is substantially related to positive affectivity and studies have shown extraversion to be associated with positive appraisal (Watson & Hubbard, 1996), it is likely that extraverts will demonstrate higher levels of positive framing. We proposed the following associations between extraversion and proactive socialization.

*Hypothesis 2:* Higher levels of extraversion will be associated with higher levels of sensemaking, relationship building, and positive framing during socialization.

Individuals with high levels of *openness to experience* typically display imagination, intelligence, curiosity, originality, and open-mindedness. Consistent with the intellect and curiosity that is characteristic of these individuals (Costa & McCrae, 1992), it is likely that individuals with high openness will engage in higher levels of sensemaking (including both information seeking and feedback seeking) in new environments and during a socialization experience. Furthermore, supportive of a possible relationship between openness and positive framing, Watson and Hubbard (1996) showed that openness was associated with lower levels of behavioral disengagement and denial and higher levels of acceptance and positive reinterpretation and growth during times of stress. We proposed the following hypothesis.

*Hypothesis 3:* Higher levels of openness will be associated with higher levels of sensemaking and positive framing.

Individuals with high levels of *agreeableness* tend to be courteous, flexible, trusting, good natured, cooperative, forgiving, empathetic, soft-hearted, and tolerant. Agreeable individuals show higher levels of positive reinterpretation and growth during times of stress (Watson & Hubbard, 1996), suggestive of a possible relationship in the socialization context between agreeableness and positive framing. Agreeable individuals tend to avoid controversy and defer to others when conflict arises. Because of these tendencies, those who are highly agreeable are more likely to have positive interactions with others (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Mount et al., 1998). Despite the tendency for agreeable individuals to be friendly and to have positive interactions with others, it is not apparent that agreeable individuals would be more likely to proactively seek out relationships with others. Given this fact and the lack of a basis for hypothesizing a relationship between agreeableness and sensemaking, we hypothesized only the relationship between agreeableness and positive framing.

*Hypothesis 4:* Higher levels of agreeableness will be associated with higher levels of positive framing.

Finally, individuals with high levels of *conscientiousness* are dependable (e.g., are careful, thorough, responsible, organized, and efficient and tend to plan thoroughly) and have a high will to achieve (e.g., high achievement orientation and perseverance). Individuals with higher levels of conscientiousness tend to have stronger levels of job performance (cf. Barrick & Mount, 1991) and tend to engage active planning and problem-solving coping strategies (Watson & Hubbard, 1996). We proposed that because of the organized, careful, and task-interested nature of individuals with high conscientiousness, they will seek out information and feedback at a higher level than individuals with lower conscientiousness. Specifically, we proposed the following hypothesis.

*Hypothesis 5:* Higher levels of conscientiousness will be associated with higher levels of sensemaking during the socialization process.

The relationships between personality and socialization behavior that were not directly included in our hypotheses because of a lack of explicit a priori expectations stemming from the literature were examined on an exploratory basis. Thus, our analyses for Hypotheses 1–5 tested all five of the personality variables as predictors of each of the proactive behaviors included in this study (e.g., see Figure 1).

#### Potential Outcomes of Proactive Socialization

In previous examinations of the outcomes of effective socialization, most researchers have assessed attitudinal outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment, and intentions to turnover (Bauer et al., 1998). Other potentially more proximal outcomes of socialization include getting to know others and feeling like a part of the organization (e.g., social integration, person–job/organization fit, and social identification) and mastering or facilitating one's understanding of one's role in the organization (e.g., role clarity, skill acquisition, and role orientation; cf. Saks & Ashforth, 1997a). Our study examined two of the more proximal outcomes of proactive socialization related to fitting in (i.e., social integration) and understanding one's job (i.e., role clarity), along with two of the more traditionally studied organizational attitudinal outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction and intention to turnover). We also included a follow-up assessment of actual turnover.

Social integration refers to the newcomer's integration into his or her new work group (Bauer et al., 1998). E. W. Morrison (1993) showed that information seeking and feedback seeking were related to social integration in a sample of newly recruited staff accountants. Relationship building, because it represents a direct attempt to get to know one's coworkers, is also expected to be predictive of social integration.

*Hypothesis 6:* Sensemaking and relationship building will be positively associated with social integration.

Role clarity refers to the newcomer's level of understanding of his or her job, expectations, and responsibilities (Bauer et al., 1998). Because role clarity can develop for a newcomer through both indirect (e.g., reading information, listening to coworkers talk about the job) and direct means (e.g., seeking of information and feedback; cf. Ashford & Taylor, 1990), we hypothesized that both

relationship building and sensemaking behaviors will be predictive of higher role clarity (Ashford & Cummings, 1985).

*Hypothesis 7:* Sensemaking and relationship building will be positively associated with role clarity.

Job satisfaction and intention to turnover are important attitudinal outcomes that organizations are concerned about with today's low unemployment rate and decreasing employee loyalty. Actual turnover represents critical behavioral data. We hypothesized that each of the proactive socialization behaviors included in this study is related to job satisfaction, intentions to turnover, and actual turnover. Although important exceptions exist (Ashford & Black, 1996; Bauer & Green, 1998), several studies have linked information acquisition to higher job satisfaction and lower intentions to quit (E. W. Morrison, 1993; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992; Saks & Ashforth, 1997b). General socializing, a form of relationship building, has been associated with higher job satisfaction (Ashford & Black, 1996), likely because of the strong instrumental and social benefits of networks (Ibarra, 1995). Positive framing is also likely to be predictive across the outcomes. People who are trying to look at the bright side of things are likely to be more satisfied with their jobs, to have less intentions to leave, or to take longer to leave than others when there is not a good person–job fit (cf. George & Jones, 1996). Individuals demonstrating more proactivity may also be less likely to be fired or laid off. We proposed the following hypothesis.

*Hypothesis 8:* Sensemaking, relationship building, and positive framing will be positively associated with job satisfaction and negatively associated with intention to turnover and actual turnover.

The socialization behavior and outcome relationships that were not directly included in our hypotheses because of a lack of explicit a priori expectations stemming from related research were examined on an exploratory basis because of the newness of the literature examining proactive socialization. Thus, our analyses for Hypotheses 6–8 tested each of the proactive behaviors as predictors of the work outcomes included in this study (e.g., see Figure 1). Although some of our outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction) have been studied as predictors of others (e.g., turnover) in previous research, we did not explicitly discuss or hypothesize these relationships in this study.

#### Study Participants and Control Variables

The socialization literature has been criticized for its reliance on selective samples (cf. Bauer et al., 1998; Fisher, 1986; Saks & Ashforth, 1997a). Most of the samples have included individuals that are new college graduates entering their first jobs (confounding the issue of socialization into a new job with socialization into one's first job) or have used homogeneous samples of individuals in one occupation (e.g., nurses or accountants). Bauer et al. (1998) stated: "We expect that important differences might emerge if a greater diversity of newcomers, jobs, and occupations were studied, and regard this as a fruitful avenue for future research" (p. 158). Saks and Ashforth (1997a) agreed: "The perceptions, actions, and reactions of newcomers . . . might be considerably different in samples of older, less educated, nonprofessional, and more experienced newcomers" (p. 259).

This study extends past research by following a heterogeneous sample of unemployed adults into reemployment in a wide variety of jobs, covering all nine of the U.S. Department of Labor occupational categories. Given the occupational diversity of the sample and their reemployment contexts, we assessed one demographic variable and six situational variables as control variables. We assessed age following suggestions that older employees are likely to have experienced more transitions both within and outside of the work context (cf. Ashforth & Saks, 1995). Second, we assessed length of time since job was started, given the difficulties of surveying this type of sample at the exact same time period in the employees' new jobs. Third, we assessed the extent to which the newcomers had an opportunity to interact with others. It is important in the prediction of proactive socialization behaviors that involve other people (e.g., information seeking, feedback seeking, and relationship building) to control for the availability of others to talk to. Bauer et al. (1998) noted that organizations are increasingly "externalizing work" (p. 169), with more employees, such as telecommuters, working outside of traditional organizational boundaries. They suggested that the resulting lack of opportunity to interact with others may harm the socialization process. Fourth, we assessed past transition experience. It is possible, for example, that individuals with more experience with starting new jobs, especially in recent years, have an advantage in the socialization process and may find it easier to adapt (Ashford & Taylor, 1990). Fifth, we asked individuals to report the number of hours per week they were working. Individuals working more hours likely have more opportunity to engage in socialization behavior and to get socialized. Finally, Bauer et al. (1998) noted that because of the homogeneity of previous samples in socialization research, little is known about the role of magnitude of job change and occupational level (e.g., managerial vs. nonmanagerial and skill level of the job) in the socialization process. Because employees who have a low level of job change (e.g., those who enter jobs that are similar to ones they have been in before) have less of a need to seek information and to cope with change, we assessed magnitude of job change. Because occupational characteristics may also play a large role in the amount of socialization behavior solicited, we assessed managerial status and skill level of the job.

## Method

### Data Collection Procedures

Our study had three time waves. At Time 1 of this study, our sample was unemployed, and we administered demographic and personality items in a questionnaire. At Time 2 of our study, the majority of the sample had found jobs, and reemployed individuals completed socialization and job outcome measures. A brief follow-up survey was sent at Time 3 to determine occurrence of turnover among reemployed participants. Specific details about the data collection follow.

*Time 1.* The Time 1 data were collected over a 7-week period in 1997 at 33 job service sites across the state of Minnesota. The participants were unemployed, permanently separated from their last employer, and actively seeking work. They were attending an orientation that described the services provided by the state's Department of Economic Security (DES) for unemployed individuals. During the 7-week period that the Time 1 data were collected, 708 individuals attended the orientations. At the end of each orientation, individuals were asked by the orientation leader if they would be willing to complete a survey. After completing the survey, individuals folded it and placed it in an envelope for confidentiality

purposes. A total of 571 completed surveys were returned, for a response rate of 81%. Eighty-nine of these individuals did not provide addresses to allow us to contact them for further participation in the study (16%).

*Time 2.* The objective of the Time 2 survey was to assess proactive socialization behavior and work outcomes among individuals who had found jobs. We wanted our average participant to have been at his or her new job for approximately 3 months when the Time 2 survey was completed. Because our sample consisted of unemployed individuals finding jobs at different times, we studied state unemployment statistics to calculate when the Time 2 survey would need to be mailed if we wanted to meet this goal. After much examination of this issue, we determined that the appropriate strategy would be to send one mailing of our Time 2 survey at 5 months after Time 1, then another mailing of the Time 2 survey at 9 months for individuals still unemployed at the 5-month mailing. Because Time 1 took place over a period of 7 weeks, the Time 2 survey mailing dates were staggered according to respondents' Time 1 participation date. Our mailing projections were successful, for as we describe in more detail later, the average tenure in the new job for our participants was 95.1 days ( $SD = 56.4$  days).

The Time 2 surveys were sent to individuals at their home addresses. U.S. \$1 Silver Certificates were included with the survey as an incentive and token of appreciation, and reminders were sent to nonrespondents. The 5-month mailing of the Time 2 survey resulted in 301 respondents (a total of 62% of the Time 1 sample that provided us with mailing addresses); 180 were employed and 121 were unemployed. The 121 unemployed individuals were sent another survey at 9 months after Time 1. This 9-month mailing resulted in 69 completed surveys (57% response); 31 of the respondents were employed and 38 were unemployed.

Altogether, there were 211 employed respondents to the 5- and 9-month mailings of the Time 2 survey. Of these 211 reemployed individuals, 17 indicated they were self-employed and 13 indicated their jobs were temporary. These 30 individuals were excluded from this study because of the likely different nature of their socialization experiences. Thus, the number of participants with Time 1 and Time 2 data was 181.

*Time 3.* The Time 3 survey, inquiring about turnover and reason for turnover, was sent out 1 year after Time 1 to individuals' home addresses. A total of 118 of 181 surveys mailed were returned (65%).

### Sample Characteristics

Because of the small sample size ( $n = 118$ ) of respondents at Time 3 who provided turnover information, the 181 respondents to the Time 1 and Time 2 surveys were used in all analyses except for those that involve relationships with turnover. The primary sample in this study, therefore, was composed of 181 individuals. Of these 181 individuals, 104 were men and 77 were women. Individuals ranged in age from 20 to 67 years ( $M = 40.6$ ,  $SD = 10.4$ ). The ethnicity of the respondents included 171 Whites (95%), 4 Hispanics (2%), 2 African Americans (1%), 1 Native American (0.6%), 2 Asian Americans (1%) and 1 other (0.6%). The average education level was 13.9 years ( $SD = 2.0$ ). The average income level of the participants in 1998 according to information provided by DES was \$29,754. The average tenure in the new job was 95.1 days ( $SD = 56.4$ ). Time on the job included the following: less than 1 month ( $n = 21$ ), 1–2 months ( $n = 54$ ), 3–4 months ( $n = 75$ ), 5–6 months ( $n = 25$ ), 7–8 months ( $n = 5$ ), and 9–10 months ( $n = 1$ ). The variability on days employed represents a unique opportunity to assess the role of this variable in the socialization literature. The research to date has not addressed the role that days employed plays in the socialization process (Bauer et al., 1998).

Individuals were employed in a variety of organizations. Respondents indicated that their organization employed between 0 and 65,000 other employees ( $M = 1,434$  employees). Nine occupational categories were represented, including professional, technical, and managerial (46%); clerical and sales (23%); service (8%); landscaping, agriculture, fishing, and

forestry (4%); mixing and molding, working with metal, plastic, wood, chemical, glass, and stone (0.6%); machine trades (4%); general factory work (4%); welding, electrical, and construction (2%); and other (8%). These 181 individuals, when compared demographically with the 390 individuals who were excluded from the sample because of lack of mailing address, nonresponse, continued unemployment, or special situations such as self-employment, were somewhat more educated ( $M = 13.9$  years vs. 13.37 years,  $p < .01$ ) and had a higher proportion of men (57% vs. 48%,  $p < .01$ ).

Analyses involving actual turnover had a sample size of 118, representing those individuals who responded at Time 3. Twenty-two (18.6%) of the 118 Time 3 respondents no longer worked at the same job. The reasons the 22 individuals no longer worked at their Time 2 job included layoff, downsize, or business closed ( $n = 1$ ); forced to resign or fired ( $n = 1$ ); did not like the job or voluntarily resigned ( $n = 15$ ); and other ( $n = 5$ ). Individuals who responded to the Time 3 survey were older ( $M = 42.4$  years;  $n = 118$ ) than individuals who did not respond to the Time 3 survey ( $M = 37.4$  years;  $n = 63$ ),  $p < .01$ .

### Measures

**Control variables.** The first control variable, age, was assessed in the Time 1 survey. The remainder of the control variables were assessed in the Time 2 survey, as they all represented characteristics of the new job. Days employed was assessed with a fill-in-the-blank item that asked, "How long have you been employed in your current job? Please estimate as accurately as possible." The survey provided a calendar for assistance, and the item asked for the number of months, days, or weeks the respondent had been employed in his or her new job. The item was converted into total number of days employed in the new job. Two items, answered on 5-point Likert-type scales, were used to assess the extent to which the newcomers had an opportunity to interact with others ("To what extent do you have the opportunity, if you wanted to, to talk to other employees while at work," ranging from 1 [*to no extent*] to 5 [*to a great extent*]), and "To what extent do you work nearby other employees?" ranging from 1 [*I do not work nearby any other employees*] to 5 [*I have a lot of other employees near where I work*]). The coefficient alpha of this index was .76. Past transition experience was assessed with one fill-in-the-blank item, "How many jobs have you held in the last 5 years?" Individuals who have had more transition experience may find it easier to adapt to a new job. The last 5 years was chosen as the reporting period because we wanted to capture recent transition experience. An individual may have held several jobs 15 years ago, but he or she is not as likely to remember the ins and outs of getting adapted to a new job as much as individuals who have switched jobs more recently. Magnitude of job change was assessed with three items that inquired whether the new job was in a different industry (answered yes or no), in a different occupational field (answered yes or no), and whether it involved using different skills (answered on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = *not at all different* to 5 = *extremely different*; Hall, 1980). The three items were summed to form a total in which high scores indicate more change. A coefficient alpha was not computed for this scale, as the items are not meant to be internally consistent. For example, an individual's new job might involve using new skills but may be in the same industry and occupation. Occupational level was assessed with two variables. First, occupational category of the newcomers was coded as 1 for professional, technical, or managerial in nature and 0 for other. Second, two items from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (MOAQ; Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, & Klesh, 1983) were used to assess skill level of the job. The first item asked for agreement on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) with the statement, "It takes a long time to learn the skills required to do the job I have well." The other item asked about the level of education needed for a person in that job (where 1 = *less than a high school degree* and 6 = *a graduate degree*). These two items were summed to form a total. The standardized coefficient alpha of the skill-level index was .60. Finally,

individuals were asked to report the number of hours per week they were working in their new job.

**Personality variables.** The NEO Five-Factor Inventory (FFI) was used at Time 1 to assess the five personality dimensions included in this study. The NEO FFI is a condensed version of the NEO Personality Inventory-Revised (PI-R; Costa & McCrae, 1992). With 12 items for each subscale, the test measures neuroticism (e.g., "I often feel tense or jittery"), extraversion (e.g., "I really enjoy talking to people"), openness to experience (e.g., "I am sometimes completely absorbed in music I am listening to"), agreeableness (e.g., "I would rather cooperate with others than compete with them"), and conscientiousness (e.g., "I am efficient and effective at my work"). Items were answered on 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The scales were scored such that high scores were indicative of higher neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Coefficient alphas (in this study) for the five personality scales ranged from .75 to .87.

**Proactive socialization behaviors.** The proactive socialization behaviors were assessed at Time 2. Sensemaking was assessed with a measure of information seeking and a measure of feedback seeking. Information seeking was assessed with an eight-item scale developed by Major and Kozlowski (1997). Individuals were asked to report how frequently, in a typical week, they had sought information about job-related topics, procedures for the completion of work, how to handle problems on the job, specific work tasks, work priorities, how to use equipment and materials, quantity and quality of work, and job duties and procedures. These items were answered using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very infrequently*) to 5 (*very frequently*). The items from this scale are well suited for a diversity of job situations, a necessary condition for the sample in this study. Results from Major and Kozlowski's (1997) study were supportive of the psychometric characteristics of this scale. Four items developed by Ashford and Black (1996) were used to assess feedback seeking (e.g., "To what extent have you sought feedback on your performance after assignments?"). Two items from the feedback-seeking scale were modified to include feedback from coworkers as well as from one's boss. Ashford and Black's scale assesses proactive feedback sought by inquiry (asking others for feedback), rather than more passive feedback seeking by monitoring (e.g., observing others for feedback; cf. VandeWalle & Cummings, 1997). Relationship building (three items; e.g., "Participated in social office events to meet people, i.e., parties, softball team, outings, clubs, lunches") and positive framing (three items; e.g., "Tried to see your situation as an opportunity rather than a threat") were also assessed with items from Ashford and Black (1996). One item in Ashford and Black's (1996) relationship-building scale was replaced ("Attended office parties") with an item less likely to depend on the organization's propensity to offer office parties ("Tried to socialize and get to know my coworkers"). The careful development of the feedback-seeking, relationship-building, and positive-framing scales is described in Ashford and Black (1996), along with evidence supporting the scales' internal consistency and discriminant validity. The items from Ashford and Black (1996) were answered with 5-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (*to no extent*) to 5 (*to a great extent*). Coefficient alphas (in this study) for the proactive socialization scales ranged from .73 to .92.

**Work-related outcomes.** Four work-related outcomes were assessed at Time 2. Social integration (e.g., "I get along with the people I work with very well" and "I feel comfortable around my coworkers") was assessed using four items on 7-point Likert-type scales (E. W. Morrison, 1993; Price & Mueller, 1986). Role clarity, the degree to which respondents felt they understood their roles at work, was assessed using six items from Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970). Example items are "I know what my responsibilities are" and "I feel certain about how much authority I have." Items were answered on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The scale was scored so that high scores indicated high role clarity. Evidence supporting the psychometric characteristics and validity of this widely used scale can be found in Rizzo et al. (1970) and

Cook, Hepworth, Wall, and Warr (1981). Job satisfaction (e.g., "All in all, I am satisfied with my job") and intention to turnover (e.g., "I often think about quitting") were assessed using two 3-item Likert scales from the MOAQ (Cammann et al., 1983). Responses ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Factor analyses by Cammann et al. (1983) support the discriminant validity of these two measures. Coefficient alphas for the work outcome variables ranged from .84 to .91.

**Actual turnover.** Turnover was assessed with a short follow-up survey at Time 3. Participants were asked whether they were at the same job as they were at when they completed their Time 2 surveys (this date was provided). Individuals answered the question with a "yes" (coded as 0 to indicate the absence of turnover) or "no" (coded as 1 to indicate turnover). Individuals were also asked about the reason they left their job. Options included "laid off/downsized, or the business I worked for closed," "I was forced to resign or was fired," "I did not like the job or I voluntarily resigned," and "other."

### Analyses

We used multiple regression (for our continuous outcomes) and logistic regression (for predicting the dichotomous outcome of turnover), with the control variables in the equations, to test our hypotheses. Our relatively small sample size ( $N = 181$  and  $N = 118$ , respectively) made the use of structural equation modeling with items or item parcels as indicators undesirable because of low parameter-to-subject ratios (Gavin & Williams, 1994) when assessing our complete set of variables in one model.

## Results

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, correlations, and coefficient alphas for the variables used in this study. The absolute value of the correlations between the Big Five personality traits ranged from .04 to .47. The absolute value of the correlations between the proactive socialization behaviors ranged from .27 to .44. The absolute value of the correlations among our outcome variables ranged from .05 to .72.

Our first five hypotheses concerned the relationships between the Big Five personality variables and the proactive socialization behaviors. Table 2 portrays the regressions of the proactive socialization techniques on the control and personality variables. The control variables were entered into Step 1 of the regression equations, and the personality variables were added in Step 2.

As shown in Table 2, three of the personality variables (neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) were not related to reported use of any of the four proactive socialization techniques. As a consequence, these data did not support Hypothesis 1 (suggesting neuroticism would be associated with lower positive framing), Hypothesis 4 (suggesting agreeableness would be associated with higher positive framing), or Hypothesis 5 (suggesting conscientiousness would be related to higher sensemaking).

There was partial support for Hypothesis 2. This hypothesis predicted that extraversion would be associated with higher levels of sensemaking (both information and feedback seeking), relationship building, and positive framing. As expected, extraversion was associated with higher feedback seeking and relationship building. Contrary to expectations, extraversion was not associated with information seeking or positive framing.

There was also partial support for Hypothesis 3. This hypothesis suggested that openness would be associated with higher sensemaking and positive framing. As expected, openness was associated with one aspect of sensemaking, feedback seeking. It was also

significantly associated with positive framing. Contrary to expectations, openness was not related to higher information seeking. Overall, the personality variables added incremental prediction to three of the four proactive socialization behaviors beyond the control variables.

The control variables played a meaningful role in predicting proactive socialization behavior. Age was associated with higher positive framing. Longer tenure at the new organization (days employed) was associated with higher relationship building. Opportunity to interact was associated with higher information and feedback seeking. Number of jobs held in the last 5 years (past transition experience) was associated with higher positive framing. Occupational category was negatively related to information seeking—professionals and managers were less likely to seek information than individuals in other occupational categories. Skill level of the new job was positively associated with all four of the proactive socialization behaviors, meaning that proactive behavior was more commonly reported by individuals in highly skilled jobs.

The last three hypotheses predicted relationships between the proactive socialization behaviors and the work outcomes. Hypothesis 6 suggested that sensemaking and relationship building would be positively associated with social integration. Hypothesis 7 suggested that sensemaking and relationship building would be positively associated with role clarity. These two hypotheses were partially supported. As shown in Table 3, relationship building was related to both social integration and role clarity. However, neither of the sensemaking behaviors (information seeking or feedback seeking) was related to social integration or role clarity.

Hypothesis 8 was also partially supported. This hypothesis suggested that sensemaking, relationship building, and positive framing would be positively associated with job satisfaction and negatively associated with intention to turnover and actual turnover. As expected, feedback seeking, relationship building, and positive framing were related to job satisfaction. Also as expected, relationship building was related to intention to turnover, and higher feedback seeking was associated with lower actual turnover. Contrary to expectations, information seeking was not related to job satisfaction, intention to turnover, or turnover; feedback seeking was not related to intention to turnover; and positive framing was not related to intention to turnover or turnover. Additional analyses were also conducted with turnover to assess whether additional proactive socialization behaviors were significant when reason for turnover was taken into account. No additional proactive behaviors were significant in these analyses.

Our hypotheses did not formally address possible relationships between the personality variables and our work outcomes. However, the appearance of our conceptual model (see Figure 1) suggests that proactive socialization behavior may mediate the relationship between personality and work outcomes. A necessary aspect of a mediational relationship is that the predictor variables (in this case, any of the five personality variables) must be associated with (a) the outcome variables (in this case, social integration, role clarity, job satisfaction, intention to turnover, and actual turnover) and (b) the proposed mediating variables (in this case, the proactive socialization behaviors; Baron & Kenny, 1986). When the five work outcomes were regressed (in five separate regression equations) on the personality and control variables (e.g., to assess the first condition), only three personality–outcome relationships were significant. Neuroticism was associated with less

Table 1  
Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Coefficient Alphas for Study Variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1. Age	40.62	10.40	—																					
2. Days employed	95.10	56.36	-11	—																				
3. Opportunity to interact	7.91	2.21	00	02	<b>76</b>	—																		
4. Past transition experience	2.59	1.39	-28**	03	-05	—																		
5. Magnitude of job change	4.20	1.77	-09	-01	-10	00	—																	
6. Occupational category <sup>a</sup>	0.46	0.50	11	10	24**	05	-20**	—																
7. Job skill	12.18	2.96	21**	-01	22**	-08	-10	55**	<b>60</b>	—														
8. Hours per week	37.44	10.47	-05	-03	25**	03	-11	20**	16*	—														
9. Neuroticism	18.41	7.85	-05	-01	-02	03	05	-08	-11	-14	<b>87</b>	—												
10. Extraversion	29.69	6.16	01	-07	02	-03	01	07	10	07	-41**	<b>79</b>	—											
11. Openness to experience	26.72	6.23	-01	-01	10	04	08	22**	22**	05	-07	17*	<b>75</b>	—										
12. Agreeableness	34.74	5.48	18*	03	11	-07	-05	01	04	-04	-29**	23**	07	<b>75</b>	—									
13. Conscientiousness	37.34	5.16	05	01	-05	04	-03	-04	-02	-07	-47**	36**	04	40**	<b>79</b>	—								
14. Information seeking	27.88	7.85	05	07	36**	01	05	00	27**	04	05	06	17*	08	00	<b>92</b>	—							
15. Feedback seeking	12.38	3.85	03	11	20**	02	-02	11	26**	-05	-09	22**	24**	15*	12	44**	<b>87</b>	—						
16. Relationship building	9.14	3.21	-05	20**	21**	-05	-15*	18*	25**	18*	-21**	30**	06	17*	20**	27**	33**	<b>76</b>	—					
17. Positive framing	12.11	2.59	22**	03	14	09	02	14	29**	09	-22**	25**	25**	19*	23**	44**	35**	33**	<b>73</b>	—				
18. Social integration	23.18	2.87	18*	03	24**	03	-02	06	19**	-07	-24**	20**	09	19*	17*	24**	24**	27**	30**	<b>84</b>	—			
19. Role clarity	32.16	5.93	10	02	08	09	07	00	00	00	-13	16*	-05	08	17*	12	18*	18*	13	42**	<b>86</b>	—		
20. Job satisfaction	16.61	3.95	09	-08	23**	06	06	14	24**	-05	-07	09	05	11	17*	24**	36**	28**	36**	45**	51**	<b>91</b>	—	
21. Intention to turnover	9.04	5.39	-13	07	-26**	08	-02	-20**	-26**	-09	17*	-13	-07	-11	-07	-13	-24**	-31**	-26**	-35**	-33**	-72**	<b>89</b>	—
22. Turnover	0.19	0.39	-16	05	-28**	04	-02	-20*	-15	-19*	13	-04	-05	00	08	-08	-17	06	-12	-09	-05	-34**	33**	—

Note. N = 181 for all variables except turnover, where n = 118. Decimals in correlations have been omitted. Alphas appear in boldface on the diagonal.

<sup>a</sup> Occupations of the newcomers were coded as 1 if they were professional, technical, or managerial in nature and as 0 if other.

\* p < .05. \*\* p < .01.



Table 2  
Predictors of the Proactive Socialization Behaviors

Predictor	Time 2 proactive socialization behavior							
	Information seeking $\beta$		Feedback seeking $\beta$		Relationship building $\beta$		Positive framing $\beta$	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Control variable								
Age	.05	.05	.00	.00	-.10	-.11	.24**	.23**
Days employed	.10	.11	.11	.12	.21**	.22**	.06	.07
Opportunity to interact	.36**	.35**	.19*	.17*	.13	.13	.09	.09
Past transition experience	.08	.07	.06	.05	-.05	-.05	.18*	.17*
Magnitude of job change	.07	.05	.00	-.02	-.12	-.11	.08	.06
Occupational category <sup>a</sup>	-.28**	-.30**	-.08	-.11	-.04	-.03	-.07	-.09
Skill level of new job	.35**	.34**	.29**	.25**	.23**	.21**	.28**	.24**
Hours per week	-.04	-.02	-.12	-.12	.11	.10	.06	.06
Personality variable								
Time 1 neuroticism		.12		.04		-.02		-.04
Time 1 extraversion		.07		.18*		.23**		.13
Time 1 openness		.13		.16*		-.04		.17*
Time 1 agreeableness		.04		.07		.05		.04
Time 1 conscientiousness		.02		.04		.10		.14
Multiple R	.49**	.51**	.35**	.44**	.41**	.51**	.40**	.52**
R <sup>2</sup>	.24**	.26**	.12**	.20**	.17**	.26**	.16**	.27**
R <sup>2</sup> change	—	.03	—	.08**	—	.10**	—	.10**

Note. The coefficients are standardized beta weights. *N* = 181. <sup>a</sup> Occupations of the newcomers were coded as 1 if they were professional, technical, or managerial in nature and as 0 if other.

\* *p* < .05. \*\* *p* < .01.

social integration and higher turnover, and conscientiousness was associated with higher job satisfaction. This suggests that the only possible mediation effects would be with neuroticism and conscientiousness. However, neither neuroticism nor conscientiousness was a significant predictor of any of the proactive socialization behaviors (see Table 2). Therefore, no mediational effects were supported.

### Discussion

Saks and Ashforth (1997a) noted that as individuals are less likely to have one-organization careers, the usefulness of proactivity in the socialization process will become increasingly important to both newcomers and organizations. These authors made a call for further research on the antecedents and outcomes of newcomer proactivity. Our longitudinal study answers this call by extending current understanding of the predictors and outcomes of proactivity in the socialization process in a sample of organizational newcomers that was diverse in terms of both occupation and amount of work experience.

The results of this study illustrate the relevance of personality, specifically the dimensions of extraversion and openness, to the experience of socialization. Higher extraversion among the newcomers was associated with higher feedback seeking and relationship building. Higher openness was associated with higher feedback seeking and positive framing. The examination of the Big Five in relation to proactive socialization behavior is informative in light of a literature that has only begun to examine the possible relationship between individual-difference variables and the socialization experience. Specifically, this study extends findings that have related proactive socialization behavior to only a limited

number of individual-difference variables, including desire for control (Ashford & Black, 1996), tolerance for ambiguity (Ashford & Cummings, 1985), and self-efficacy (Major & Kozlowski, 1997). Future examinations may benefit from attempting to examine the relative roles of these various individual-difference variables, along with extraversion and openness, in the socialization experience.

The findings in this study regarding personality and socialization are also informative to a broad literature that is developing concerning the relationship between the Big Five and assorted work outcomes (cf. Tokar, Fischer, & Subich, 1998). Although a good understanding of the relationship between the Big Five and work and training performance is developing, no previous studies have specifically related the Big Five to socialization behavior when the employee is starting a new job. The relationship of openness and extraversion to the proactive behaviors complements meta-analytic research showing that of the Big Five personality dimensions, these two personality variables are the ones predictive of training proficiency across occupations (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Similar to socialization, training involves learning and, often, meeting new people. It is possible that some of the relationship between openness and extraversion and training proficiency is mediated by the proactive behaviors of feedback seeking, relationship building, and positive framing.

The multivariate analyses showed no relationships between three of the Big Five personality variables (neuroticism, agreeableness, and conscientiousness) and the proactive socialization behaviors (although it might be noted that the zero-order relationships shown in Table 1, without relevant controls accounted for, show exception to this statement). Perhaps most interesting, given

Table 3  
*Predictors of Work-Related Outcomes*

Predictor	Time 2 social integration $\beta$		Time 2 role clarity $\beta$		Time 2 job satisfaction $\beta$		Time 2 intention to turnover $\beta$		Time 3 turnover $b$	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Control variable										
Age	.19*	.17*	.16*	.18*	.08	.05	-.07	-.07	-.03	-.03
Days employed	.05	.00	.04	-.02	-.08	-.14*	.07	.13	.00	.00
Opportunity to interact	.26**	.22**	.11	.06	.23**	.17*	-.21**	-.20**	-.24*	-.27*
Past transition experience	.12	.10	.14	.14	.11	.08	.03	.04	.02	.10
Magnitude of job change	.01	.03	.09	.12	.10	.11	-.08	-.11	-.14	-.11
Occupational category <sup>a</sup>	-.11	-.09	-.03	-.01	.00	.02	-.07	-.06	-.77	-.68
Skill level of new job	.19*	.09	-.02	-.10	.22*	.08	-.17	-.09	-.02	-.02
Hours per week	-.14	-.16*	.00	.00	-.14	-.14*	.00	.02	-.03	-.05*
Socialization behavior										
Time 2 information seeking		-.01		.00		-.07		.14		.04
Time 2 feedback seeking		.06		.13		.21**		-.12		-.19*
Time 2 relationship building		.20*		.20*		.18*		-.24**		.20
Time 2 positive framing		.14		-.01		.20*		-.14		-.07
Multiple $R$	.38**	.47**	.21	.32	.37**	.53**	.36**	.48**		
$R^2$	.14**	.22**	.04	.10	.14**	.28**	.13**	.23**		
$R^2$ change		.08**		.06*		.14**		.10**		
Model $X^2$									14.78	22.79*

Note.  $N = 181$  for all outcomes except turnover, where  $n = 118$ .  $\beta$  = standardized beta weights.  $b$  = unstandardized logistic regression coefficients.

<sup>a</sup> Occupations of the newcomers were coded as 1 if they were professional, technical, or managerial in nature and as 0 if other.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

the extensive literature touting conscientiousness as a valued personality trait for employees in the workplace, was the finding that conscientiousness was not significantly related to sensemaking (in either the multivariate or the zero-order results), despite our hypothesis. We had hypothesized that conscientious individuals will be more likely to seek out information and feedback in the new job, because of the underlying tendency of these individuals to be responsible, dependable, reliable, and achievement oriented. On reflection, however, the finding that those individuals high in conscientiousness did not seek information and feedback at a higher rate is likely due to these individuals' concurrent tendency (e.g., along with being dependable and achievement oriented) to be self-reliant, to be self-confident, and to expect success in the situations they are placed in (cf. Hough, 1992; Martocchio & Judge, 1997; Mount & Barrick, 1995). Conscientious individuals may have a tendency to be more confident in socialization experiences and may feel less of a need to seek out information and feedback. Martocchio and Judge (1997), in a study of employees in a computer training course, demonstrated that conscientiousness was associated with both higher self-efficacy (which in turn was associated with higher learning) and higher self-deception (which in turn was associated with less learning). Other possible reasons for the lack of a relationship between conscientiousness and proactive socialization behaviors are possible. For example, it is possible that conscientious individuals did not exhibit higher levels of information and feedback seeking because, as highly diligent and responsible individuals, they mastered their tasks more quickly and ask focused questions from the start (resulting in less need to ask further questions). Conscientious individuals might also receive more feedback about doing a good job without asking for it,

because of their higher performance on the job. Given that this is the first study examining the Big Five in relation to socialization behaviors, further analysis of the role of these variables would be interesting and informative. Even those variables that did not show significance in this study may have other important roles in the socialization experience.

Our study also examined, in a multivariate context, the relationship between the proactive socialization behaviors and five work-related outcomes. These results highlighted proactive feedback seeking and relationship building as having the most frequent associations with the work-related outcomes included in this study. Feedback seeking was positively associated with job satisfaction and negatively associated with actual turnover. Relationship building was a positive predictor of four outcomes: social integration, role clarity, job satisfaction, and intention to remain at one's job. Ashford and Black (1996) showed that relationship building (general socializing) in the participants' new jobs was related to job satisfaction. Our study replicates this finding in a more generalizable sample and extends the importance of relationship building by demonstrating that it is related to three additional work outcomes.

The consistently observed significance of the relationship building variable in our study is interesting in light of Hall's (1996) work, which stresses the importance of relationship building to careers in the 21st century. According to Hall, in today's quickly changing workplace, employees within an organization cannot afford to stay isolated and must develop a relational philosophy of work. More specifically, he suggested that successful employees of the future will be team oriented, collaborative, and willing to share knowledge with and learn from others. Mohrman and Cohen (1995) similarly portrayed the ability to establish relationships

with others as imperative in the increasingly common flatter, high-involvement organization. These authors noted that although organizational trends dictate the relational orientation as important, there have been few empirical studies linking the relational orientation to tangible organizational outcomes.

The consistent results regarding the relationship building variable are amplified by our findings that opportunity to interact, one of our control variables, was significant in the majority of the regressions shown in Tables 2 and 3. Specifically, opportunity to interact was associated with higher information seeking, feedback seeking, social integration, and job satisfaction and lower intention to turnover and actual turnover. Like the findings with relationship building, these relationships suggest the importance (at least for newcomers) of interactions with others on the job. Without the opportunity to interact, newcomers cannot make use of proactive socialization behavior or a positive socialization climate. Louis, Posner, and Powell (1983) reported the importance of the availability of daily interactions with peers to newcomers and found that the helpfulness of these peers was related to higher job satisfaction and commitment, and lower intention to turnover. As Nelson and Quick (1991) noted, if coworkers are not available for newcomers, they will not be able to be there as a source of help or support. Given the findings regarding relationship building and opportunity to interact, we suggest that these behaviors and opportunities be encouraged by employers through orientations, mentoring programs, social events, and other programs that encourage interaction among employees. Future studies can build upon this research by expanding the measurement and examination of these constructs.

The outcome variable representing actual turnover, assessed at Time 3 of our study, is of special interest to several employers today. Given the labor market shortage in several U.S. cities, organizations are increasingly interested in retention strategies and understanding predictors of turnover. Beyond opportunity to interact, hours worked per week and feedback seeking were negatively associated with turnover. Analyses regarding reason for turnover did not shed further light on the socialization behavior and turnover relationships—this may have been due to the fact that most of our sample voluntarily resigned and we had very low power to assess relationships by reason for turnover. Future research that uses a larger sample size with a larger turnover ratio may assist in further understanding the relevance of proactivity in socialization to turnover.

The diversity of this sample in terms of settings and occupations allowed us to examine the role of several control variables. Bauer et al. (1998), in a review of the socialization literature since 1986, called for research to assess the role of magnitude of job change and occupational level (e.g., managerial vs. nonmanagerial and skill level of the job) in the socialization experience. Our study shows that magnitude of job change was not predictive of use of any of the socialization behaviors or of the outcome variables. However, skill level of job proved to be a consistent predictor of the socialization behaviors. Individuals in jobs requiring higher skill levels engaged in higher levels of all four types of proactive socialization behavior assessed in this study. It is interesting that, when skill level was controlled for, being in a professional or managerial occupation was associated with less information seeking, probably because the information-seeking scale primarily focused on information seeking about work tasks and roles. Indi-

viduals in managerial occupations, for example, may feel they are supposed to be in the position of answering those types of questions for their employees. Another occupation-related variable, hours worked per week, was related to lower social integration and job satisfaction, but was nonetheless negatively associated with turnover. The negative association with turnover is perhaps partially reflective of some individuals in our sample having quit their new jobs because they did not provide enough hours of work per week.

Bauer et al. (1998) stressed the need for research that sheds light on the timing of socialization. The nature of the sample allowed us to glean some information regarding the role of days employed in the socialization experience. Number of days employed was positively associated with relationship building, but was unrelated to information seeking, feedback seeking, and positive framing. The need for proactive relationship building is likely higher a few months after a new employee starts a job; initially it is likely that others are introducing themselves to the new employee. Longitudinal research that assesses changes in proactive socialization behaviors over time among the same employees is needed. Such research may also help assess causal relationships between proactive socialization and work outcomes. Although our model portrays the work outcomes as following the use of the proactive socialization, it is also plausible that the relationships between the work outcomes and socialization behavior are reciprocal in nature or that they operate in the opposite direction.

One concern that may be raised about this study is its predominant use of self-report measures. Common method variance and concerns about consistency bias are of the highest concern for the relationships between the proactive socialization behaviors and the work outcomes (social integration, role clarity, job satisfaction, and intention to turnover), as these variables were assessed at the same time. However, because of the small number of significant relationships, common method variance problems seem not to be an issue within this set of relationships. The assessment of personality and the socialization behaviors were separated in time, reducing common method concerns. Actual turnover was also included as an objective measure, reported at a time period separated from the socialization behavior reports. Finally, there were differential relationships between socialization behaviors and work outcomes, which suggests that respondents responded differentially to items (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955). Future studies on this topic might endeavor to include additional objective outcome measures and coworker, supervisory, or organizational reports of newcomer behavior. A larger sample would also be ideal, allowing for increased power. Future research will further benefit from examining additional forms of newcomer proactivity, such as goal setting and explicit networking, that have been mentioned recently in the literature (cf. Bauer et al., 1998; Saks & Ashforth, 1996).

In conclusion, this study represents a contribution to the current literature on employee socialization. The results illustrate longitudinal relationships between newcomer personality (specifically extraversion and openness) and the socialization experience in a literature that has only begun to examine proactivity in socialization and the potential role of employee personality in the process. The results also highlight feedback seeking and relationship building as two particularly useful socialization behaviors among newcomers and contribute to a literature on this topic that has relied on homogeneous samples. The sample used in this study was unique,

in comparison with the typical socialization literature sample, in that the individuals were entering a variety of jobs, they tended to have job experience, and they were dispersed across an entire state. The diversity of this sample allowed us to investigate new questions regarding the role of context-specific variables and to extend the generalizability of the socialization literature.

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