

## SUPPORT, UNDERMINING, AND NEWCOMER SOCIALIZATION: FITTING IN DURING THE FIRST 90 DAYS

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**While much organizational socialization occurs through interpersonal interactions, evidence regarding how these processes unfold over time has not been forthcoming. Results from a 14-wave longitudinal study with a sample of 264 organizational newcomers show that support of newcomers from coworkers and supervisors declines within the first 90 days of employment. Early support and undermining had more significant relationships with work outcomes assessed after 90 days of employment than did increases or decreases in support and undermining over that time period, suggesting early support and undermining may lay a foundation for later work outcomes. Proactive behavior partially mediated the relationship between support and more distal work outcomes, including withdrawal behaviors. Supervisor undermining was uniquely associated with higher turnover (exit) hazard.**

When most people think back to their first days on a new job, they are prone to recall positive and negative social interactions. Some will remember a particularly tense conversation with a supervisor that made them realize that their adjustment would not be easy, whereas others remember especially helpful colleagues who steered them in the right direction. But are there really significant impacts from these early interpersonal interactions? The academic literature on newcomer socialization has been comparatively silent on this front. The preponderance of the socialization literature has placed either the broader organization or the newcomer as the key drivers of socialization. Meta-analytic summaries of the literature either focus on organizational tactics alone as the exogenous source of socialization (Saks, Uggerslev, & Fassina, 2007), or only include newcomer information seeking and organizational tactics (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007). In general, coworkers and supervisors have been entirely subsumed under the “organization” side of social-

ization, or otherwise are simply treated as a passive source of information available only after newcomers initiate information seeking via proactivity. Clearly, however, insiders can make an effort to help newcomers adjust or even, in certain cases, make the process of adjustment especially difficult.

Another unresolved issue for socialization research involves time. Socialization is a dynamic process, involving change and evolution (Fisher, 1986). Some researchers have proposed that initial interactions can have powerful effects on subsequent outcomes (e.g., Wanous, 1992), highlighting the need to measure interactions, behaviors, and attitudes very soon after organizational entry to determine how they have effects further down the line. Others propose that changes over time are important (Chen, Ployhart, Cooper-Thomas, Anderson, & Bliese, 2011), so it is necessary to measure not just the initial status of newcomers, but also the ways in which processes play out over time within each individual. At present, the question of how dynamic processes of socialization play out in relation to one another is unanswered.

In a study incorporating both socialization dynamics and interpersonal processes, Jokisaari and Nurmi (2009) illustrated that among new employ-

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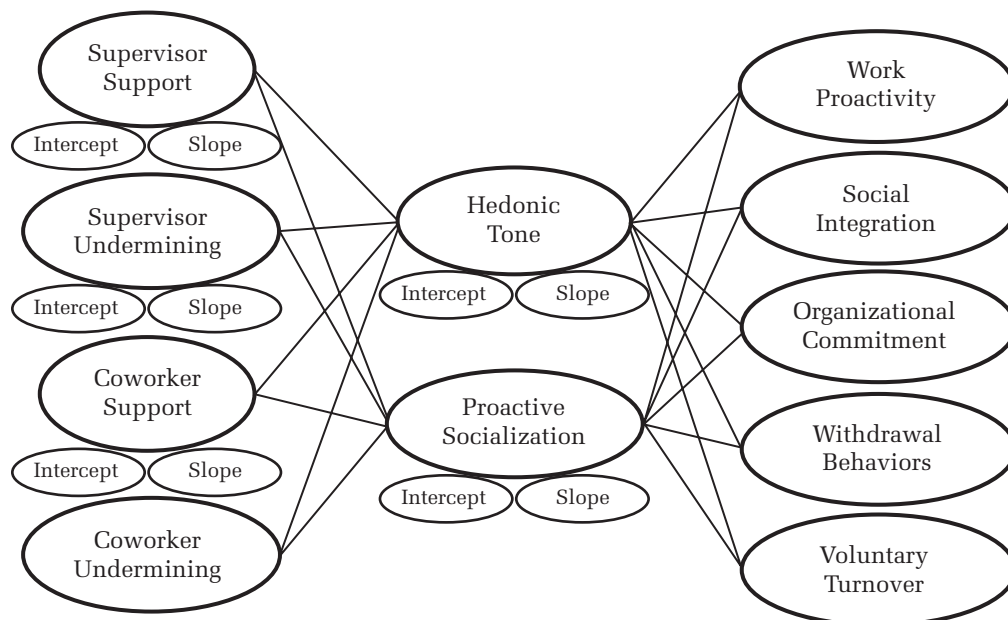
ees, declines in supervisor support were related to decreases in newcomer role clarity and job satisfaction, and a slower rate of salary growth. We extend theory about the role of interpersonal processes in socialization in three substantial ways. First, we examine the role of not only supervisor support, but also coworker support. Comparing supervisor and coworker relationships allows us to see how newcomers might differentially respond to interactions with different agents of socialization (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). Second, responding to a call by Bauer et al. (2007), we explore the extent to which destructive behaviors (coworker and supervisor undermining) hinder newcomer adjustment. Finally, we examine whether positive hedonic tone (i.e., positive mood, happiness, or pleasant feelings at work) and proactive socialization behaviors (i.e., volitional activities to assist adaptation to the workplace) explain *how* and *through what mechanisms* support and undermining impact newcomer adjustment outcomes. This approach complements a growing body of research demonstrating the importance of moods and emotions in organizational behavior (e.g., Elfenbein, 2008; Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) as well as the emphasis on newcomer proactivity (e.g., Ashford & Black, 1996; Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000).

To investigate these relationships in a way that is consistent with our emphasis on the temporal nature of the socialization process, we used a repeated-measures design, surveying newcomers weekly over a period of three months. We incorporate a latent growth modeling strategy (e.g., Chan & Schmitt, 2000; Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2009; Lance, Vandenberg, & Self, 2000), allowing us to observe the independent effects of the initial status of variables (e.g., at start of employment) and changes in those variables (e.g., slopes or trajectories) over time. This strategy enables us to demonstrate the importance of social support in the first 90 days of new employment, extending previous research, and also to test hypotheses regarding changes in social undermining that have not been examined.

### THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT AND HYPOTHESES

The conceptual model guiding our study is shown in Figure 1. We begin with a discussion of the role supervisor and coworker support and undermining are posited to play for newcomers over time using a combination of affective events theory (AET) and socialization theories. We then describe how newcomer hedonic tone and proactive socialization will mediate those processes. Hedonic tone

**FIGURE 1**  
**Model of Social Support, Undermining, Hedonic Tone, Proactive Socialization, and Newcomer Adjustment Outcomes**



represents one pole of an affect “circumplex” with happiness and pleasant feelings on one end and unpleasantness and sadness on the other end (e.g., Elfenbein, 2008; Russell, 1980; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). We focused on hedonic tone as a higher-order index of affect rather than assessing positive and negative affect separately. Though less common in organizational research than the positive/negative affectivity (PA/NA) model, a hedonic tone model confers notable theoretical and methodological advantages. First, at the within-person level of analysis, positive and negative affect are strongly negatively correlated with one another (Scollon, Diener, Oishi, & Biswas-Diener, 2005), making state (temporary) mood under the PA/NA model difficult to interpret. To that end, the PA/NA model might be more useful as a trait-based affectivity model; however, for the purposes of our weekly study time frame, hedonic tone may better capture changes in mood (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Second, research suggests that hedonic tone models are more robust in factor analysis across different forms of surveying affect (Russell & Ridgeway, 1983) and also show better fit to data (Green, Goldman, & Salovey, 1993). Third, hedonic tone is particularly important for organizational newcomers, since it is likely to be the initial affective appraisal made as employees react to work events (Frijda, 1986).

According to AET (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), events influence affective experiences at work. Individuals will first be exposed to some incoming stimulus and will base their choice about consciously attending to it on its inherent novelty or worth. Following this, they will appraise the situation relative to their self-schemata, to learn if the incoming stimulus contains some sort of relevant meaning and has the potential to impact them (Plutchik, 1994). The more positive (or negative) an event, and the more personally important the event is to the person, the stronger the emotional reaction that is likely to be experienced (Carver & Scheier, 1998). Employees report that work events related to interpersonal interactions produce some of the most salient emotional responses (Boudens, 2005; Elfenbein, 2008; Kelly & Barsade, 2001). In a qualitative study, Boudens (2005) found that some of the most frequently cited positive triggers include personal support and connectedness, while negative triggers included interpersonal conflict, power struggles, and violations of trust.

In terms of the AET appraisal process, compared to more tenured employees, during their first weeks

on a job newcomers are likely to consider most, if not all, of their work experiences to be novel and meaningful, since each new piece of information obtained on the job facilitates the process of making sense of an unfamiliar environment (Lewin, 1951; Weick, 1995). As such, events such as interpersonal interactions are likely to resonate especially strongly with newcomers, thus establishing the foundation for future attitudes and job behaviors. In the present study, we focus on social support and social undermining as positive and negative patterns of interpersonal events that each affect the adjustment process. Further, recognizing that “interpersonal interaction” is somewhat of an umbrella term, we aimed to sharpen our conceptual understanding by exploring how two different sources of support and undermining (i.e., coworkers and supervisors) uniquely contribute to socialization.

Theoretical work in the area of organizational socialization has proposed that established organizational insiders can exert especially strong influences on newcomer adjustment, filling in where organizational socialization efforts fail to provide information and social validation (Moreland & Levine, 2001). These organizational insiders represent the social setting into which a newcomer is attempting to fit (Miller & Jablin, 1991), so signs of social support can be interpreted as evidence that the environment for the newcomer will be positive and accepting, whereas undermining will send a strong signal that the environment for the newcomer will be negative and rejecting. We discuss these issues in greater depth now.

### **Support, Undermining, and Hedonic Tone**

Social support consists of “transactions with others that provide the target person (i.e., the recipient) with emotional support, affirmation of the self, appraisal of the situation, instrumental support, and information” (Vinokur & Van Ryn, 1993: 350). Organizational newcomers may be particularly in need of social support because of the uncertainty that accompanies meeting new people and learning new tasks. Supervisors and coworkers are in an ideal position to provide newcomers with assistance in adjusting to the demands of their work role (Moreland & Levine, 2001). We examine both coworker and supervisor support and undermining both because prior research shows these two sources have complementary effects on employee attitudes and behaviors (Chiaburu & Harrison,

2008; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010) and because we contend that their effects begin very early in the socialization experience.

Theory and research in other contexts suggest that social support may have an important influence on individuals' hedonic tone, for the good (if support is high) or bad (if low). The idea that human beings will have especially strong emotional reactions to supportive interactions with one another has been frequently noted in theories related to mood formation (e.g., Elfenbein, 2008; Watson, 2000). Indeed, some have proposed that, as social animals, humans have a basic need for supportive interactions (Baumeister, 2005). Supporting this contention, studies have demonstrated the power of supportive interactions on moods in daily life (Rafaeli, Cranford, Green, Shrout, & Bolger, 2008; Vinokur & Van Ryn, 1993; Watson, Clark, McIntyre, & Hamaker, 1992). First impressions exert a powerful influence on an individual's beliefs and attitudes about a workplace (Stohl, 1986), so we expect that initial levels of supervisor and coworker support will be found to have a relationship to early levels of newcomer hedonic tone.

*Hypothesis 1. Initial levels of supervisor and coworker support are positively related to initial levels of newcomer hedonic tone.*

In addition to hypothesizing a relationship between initial levels of supervisor and coworker support and newcomer hedonic tone, we also examine what happens when support of a newcomer decreases (or increases) over time. Coworkers and supervisors may be more inclined to provide support to newcomers early on, since it is generally expected that coworkers and supervisors will greet a newcomer and provide them with necessary information. As time passes, however, we expect that some coworkers and supervisors will sustain support, whereas others will not, even within the first 90 days of a newcomer's organizational entry. For whatever reasons (e.g., assumptions that the new employee has settled in; lack of time), early offers of help and inclusion may dwindle in some work environments, while continuing in others. Newcomers who are welcomed with high levels of support may experience changes in hedonic tone if support is progressively withdrawn, even though they may have expected (or needed) it to continue. In this way, withdrawal of support can also be classified in AET as an event (i.e., as a change from one circumstance to another) with emotional consequences. Newcomers who perceive decreases in

support over time may interpret this decrease personally, thinking they did something wrong, or they may feel unnoticed, unimportant, and without an outlet for questions.

In other situations, individuals may start their jobs with low perceptions of support. Researchers have noted stories of individuals beginning their first day at work receiving little fanfare as to its being stressful or negative experience (e.g., Wanous, 1992). In some work environments, support will remain low, whereas in others it may grow as newcomers begin to meet individuals in their work environment. In either circumstance, our theoretical framework suggests that the change in experience catalyzes the process of event significance appraisal and the subsequent evaluation of how positive/negative that event was for a newcomer (Elfenbein, 2008; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Specifically, we expect that individuals who feel that support is decreasing over time will have lower levels of hedonic tone over time, while those who feel support is increasing over time will have improved levels of hedonic tone over time.

*Hypothesis 2. There is a positive relationship between trends in supervisor and coworker support and trends in newcomer hedonic tone over a newcomer's first 90 days of employment.*

Social undermining is anger or dislike directed at an individual, criticism of the individual's characteristics, actions, or behavior, or actions that hinder the individual's goal attainment (Vinokur & Van Ryn, 1993). Social undermining is not the same as an absence of support, because it involves an active set of behaviors that make the recipient's situation worse than it would be otherwise (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002). In this sense, a person who abstains from support could be conceived of as neglectful rather than undermining, whereas a person who abstains from undermining could be conceived of as innocuous rather than supportive. From this perspective, it is possible for an individual to demonstrate both high support and high undermining (e.g., be extremely helpful in some regards but engaging in negative behaviors in others); high support and low undermining; low support and high undermining; or low both support and undermining (e.g., neither helpful nor harmful, but simply "there").

Although many studies have supported the idea that undermining and related negative behaviors toward newcomers and subordinates exist in work-

places (e.g., Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Duffy et al., 2002; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010), we are unaware of any investigations of undermining in the context of newcomer adjustment. Yet such research is important, as Ashforth, Sluss, and Saks indicated when they called for research to examine psychosocial dynamics that can undermine the adjustment of newcomers (2007: 460). Undermining may be directed at a newcomer for myriad reasons, including jealousy, lack of trust, fear that the newcomer's actions will result in unwanted changes at work, or simply a bad start. We expect that social undermining events experienced by newcomers will be related to lower levels of hedonic tone. Since newcomers are in a precarious state of trying to feel welcome and get up to speed, such negative behaviors will obstruct goal achievement (see, e.g., Vinokur, Price, & Caplan, 1996) and will frustrate, irritate, and discourage the newcomers. In terms of AET, newcomers attend to undermining from others as salient events that can impact their performance, and they will therefore initially react with negative feelings when they see that such behavior is meant to hinder their progress. As with support, we expect that first impressions of undermining will be related to more negative hedonic tone from the start of the employment experience.

*Hypothesis 3. Initial levels (intercepts) of supervisor and coworker undermining are negatively related to initial levels of newcomer hedonic tone.*

Similar to the proposed relationships between trends in support and hedonic tone, a relationship between trends in undermining and hedonic tone is also expected. In some work environments, undermining may increase over time as colleagues interact more frequently with newcomers. As time passes, initial patience and attempts to portray a rosy picture to them may subside (Schein, 1978). Collaborations and interactions increase, allowing conflicting opinions and competition for territory and recognition to surface. Individuals who perceive increases in undermining behavior may come to feel that members of their social environment are rejecting and bullying them, which can lead to increasingly negative moods. As Duffy et al. noted, "social undermining behaviors are insidious, in that they weaken gradually or by degrees" (2002: 332). In this sense, it is not only a person's first impressions of social undermining that matter, but also a continual trajectory of either constant or increasing undermining from supervisors and co-

workers that impacts moods negatively. Theory and research support the contention that negative events generate more salient and lasting emotional impact than do positive events (Elfenbein, 2008; Miner, Glomb, & Hulin, 2005; Weiss & Beal, 2005). Therefore, it is important to understand not only that negative events are related to negative mood, but also how such negative interactions factor into long-term adjustment.

On the other hand, some newcomers may experience a decrease in undermining, as an initial period of initiation or wariness subsides (Reichers, 1987). Or it may simply take time for some coworkers and supervisors to come to trust and respect a newcomer as a fellow employee. Our theoretical framework suggests that this change in circumstances from higher to lower levels of criticism is likely to be evaluated positively, as the removal of such aversive stimuli is negative reinforcement that will help facilitate goal success (Stein, Trabasso, & Liwag, 1993). To reiterate, the important consideration here is change over time as a result of recurring social interactions (i.e. events): AET posits, and research corroborates the assertion that the absence of unpleasant events does not necessarily generate positive emotional reactions (Stallings, Dunham, Gatz, Baker, & Bengtson, 1997). Our expectation is that declines in undermining will be associated with recovery in positive emotions over time.

*Hypothesis 4. There is a negative relationship between trends in supervisor and coworker undermining and trends in newcomer hedonic tone over a newcomer's first 90 days of employment.*

### **Support, Undermining, and Proactive Socialization Behavior**

Newcomer reactions to a work environment are partially the result of environmental social influence but can also be the result of a newcomer's own proactive socialization behavior (e.g., Ashford & Black, 1996; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). Organizations and coworkers are incapable of providing newcomers with all the information they need in a new work environment, and therefore it is important for newcomers to enact certain efforts that will facilitate their own adjustment (Miller & Jablin, 1991). However, proactive socialization behavior is also socially costly, bringing the potential for rejection or embarrassment if established organ-

ization members do not support a newcomer (Ashford, Blatt, & Vande Walle, 2003; Bolino, Valcea, & Harvey, 2010; Grant & Ashford, 2008). These proactive efforts include establishing social relationships with others and seeking feedback regarding work performance.

Theorists typically posit that proactivity is a product of a newcomer's own initiative, but newcomers who receive higher levels of support feel more comfortable with their work environment and will therefore exert greater efforts toward proactively fitting in, much as those who experience higher levels of organizational socialization tactics engage in higher levels of proactive socialization (Gruman, Saks, & Zweig, 2006). Insiders, who are more comfortable with the social milieu, are in an excellent position to take the first steps to approach a newcomer and invite him/her in. Such an initially supportive attitude may foster feelings of confidence in the newcomer, which will encourage him/her to reciprocate this positive social interaction in the form of increased proactive socialization. When existing organization members provide support, it creates an environment of psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999; Schein & Bennis, 1965) that promotes newcomer proactive socialization. In other words, a safety net of frequent socially supportive interactions enables people to make themselves subsequently vulnerable to others (McAllister, 1995). Individuals need such an effort from supervisors and coworkers to be able to admit gaps in knowledge, or to know that it is okay to ask questions and develop relationships. Those who feel high initial support from coworkers and supervisors are likely to feel that their work group wants them to succeed, which will in turn lower the perceived costs often associated with proactive behavior (e.g., Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006).

*Hypothesis 5. Initial levels of supervisor and coworker support are positively related to initial levels of newcomer proactive socialization behaviors.*

Miller and Jablin noted that "newcomers have reported to us that they become increasingly hesitant to ask questions of co-workers because they feel like they are 'bugging' them and fear being reprimanded or 'cut off' from future information" (1991: 97). Continuation of social support can send a signal that a newcomer is not being overly solicitous of help and assistance and in this way can encourage more proactivity over time. When newcomers experience higher levels of social support

over time, they will feel increasingly validated and will expect that their efforts to fit into the work environment will be rewarded. In particular, as newcomers become more integrated into the social environment, expectations for their performance will become more exacting (Fisher, 1986), so maintenance of social support during this crucial period is extremely important for encouraging continued proactive socialization behaviors. On the contrary, we anticipate that newcomers who believe their supervisors and coworkers are withdrawing social support over time will respond in kind by also reducing their initiative to fit into the workplace.

*Hypothesis 6. There will be a positive relationship between trends in supervisor and coworker support and trends in newcomer proactive socialization behavior over a newcomer's first 90 days of employment.*

Undermining a newcomer, especially in the initial weeks of work, will send a strong signal that he or she is not welcome (Baron, 1988). Social undermining also provides negative feedback to the newcomer about his or her fit with a work group and an organization, which will reduce the newcomer's self-efficacy (Duffy et al., 2002) and will therefore dampen the newcomer's motivation to proactively engage her/his environment. Under these conditions, it is likely that the newcomer will reciprocate these overt efforts to exclude or undermine his or her position by withdrawing from the work group and engaging in fewer proactive efforts to fit in.

*Hypothesis 7. Initial levels of supervisor and coworker undermining are negatively related to initial levels of newcomer proactive socialization behaviors.*

Initial levels of social undermining are likely to negatively influence levels of newcomer proactivity, but changes in social undermining will also be associated with changes in newcomer proactivity. A newcomer who experiences a positive trend in undermining is likely to feel that the environment is becoming progressively less and less welcoming and therefore will have a corresponding decreasing trend in proactive socialization. Following a pattern much like what we propose for hedonic tone, those who feel that undermining is constant or increasing will have more negative reactions in terms of proactive socialization behaviors than those who see undermining decrease over time.

*Hypothesis 8. There is a negative relationship between trends in supervisor and coworker undermining and trends in newcomer proactive socialization behaviors over a newcomer's first 90 days of employment.*

### Relationships with Socialization Outcomes

We posit that these processes have important consequences for newcomer adjustment to work environments. To assess newcomer adjustment, we focus on work proactivity, social integration, organizational commitment, and withdrawal behaviors between 90 and 100 days after organizational entry, as well as actual turnover (exit) one year after our final survey period. Our choice of socialization outcomes matches that of prior research, which has identified social integration and commitment (Bauer et al., 2007; Fisher, 1986), as well as work withdrawal and remaining with an organization (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003), as indications of positive newcomer adjustment. Our inclusion of work proactivity as an outcome in a study that incorporates proactive socialization responds to a call for better integration of proactivity across a variety of domains (Grant & Ashford, 2008). In contrast to proactive *socialization* behaviors (e.g., proactivity related to socialization, such as developing relationships and seeking feedback [Ashford & Black, 1996]), *work proactivity* relates to the extent to which employees make suggestions for improved efficiency in their work units and become involved with ways to increase the effectiveness of their organization (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007).

Theoretically, we anticipate that the effects of support and undermining on these work outcomes will be mediated through hedonic tone. The role of hedonic tone in newcomer socialization has yet to be explored, but there are reasons to expect that it may be a critical variable in the adjustment process. According to the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001), individuals in more positive moods are motivated to expand resources and pursue goals, which may facilitate work. Affective events theory and other related models of emotional processes in organizations propose that following exposure to an emotion-eliciting event, changes in affect will ultimately result in changes in attitudes (Elfenbein, 2008; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). In socialization models (e.g., Bauer et al., 2007; Fisher, 1986), feelings of social integration (at the work group level) and organizational commitment (at the organizational level) are the most rel-

evant job attitudes to assess for newcomers. We also anticipate that hedonic tone may influence newcomers' desire to actively contribute to and remain in an organization. Individuals in more negative affective states tend to have higher levels of withdrawal and turnover intentions in both cross-sectional research (e.g., Cropanzano, James, & Konovsky, 1993) and daily diary studies (e.g., Grandey, Tam, & Brauburger, 2002), likely because these individuals wish to remove themselves from situations and environments in which these negative feelings tend to occur. For newcomers, who have little stake in an organization in which they have only been working for a short period of time, this desire to leave may be especially salient, as they arguably have less to lose than others who have invested more time and personal resources into their jobs.

*Hypothesis 9. Hedonic tone acts as a mediator between supervisor and coworker support and undermining and the socialization outcomes of work proactivity, social integration, organizational commitment, withdrawal behaviors, and voluntary turnover.*

Besides the relationship between hedonic tone and adjustment outcomes, newcomer proactive socialization behaviors will also mediate between support and undermining and important work outcomes. Socialization theory posits that newcomers who engage in more proactive behaviors will have a better sense of their work environment and their role in it (Miller & Jablin, 1991). Those who proactively seek out feedback and build relationships will have both knowledge and social resources to behave more proactively in their work roles than those who do not have this knowledge and social resource base. Proactive newcomers will also feel they are a part of their organization as a whole because they will understand more about their environment (Ashford & Black, 1996; Morrison, 1993), which should in turn increase their feelings of organizational commitment. Efforts to proactively build relationships and seek out information should also alleviate feelings of social separation, confusion, or alienation, which can lead to work withdrawal (Hanisch & Hulin, 1991).

*Hypothesis 10. Proactive socialization behaviors act as a mediator between supervisor and coworker support and undermining, and the socialization outcomes of work proactivity, so-*

*cial integration, organizational commitment, withdrawal behaviors, and voluntary turnover.*

## METHODS

### Data and Sample

The initial pool of participants consisted of 906 new hires at a major research university in the upper Midwest. Potential participants were identified from organizational hiring records. Respondents received an e-mail and follow-up phone call inviting them to participate in the online survey. The average age of respondents was 34.27 years (s.d. = 9.54), and the average number of years of professional experience (in any occupation) was 8.93 (s.d. = 9.19). Sixty-five percent were female, 46.4 percent were married, and 77.3 percent were white. Finally, 49.8 percent of respondents held a graduate or professional degree, indicating this was a highly educated sample. Common occupations for participants included research specialist, technician, academic advisor, coordinator, teaching specialist, and accounting.

We did not include faculty in our sample. Our focus on support and undermining requires a degree of regular interaction with coworkers and supervisors. At this university, faculty are not required to work in their offices, whereas administrative employees work in an office with other employees. Telecommuting is quite common among faculty members but is less so for administrative personnel (Ng, 2006). Furthermore, unlike the general workforce, faculty members do not usually interact with their supervisors on a regular basis (Olsen, 1993), nor do they regularly work in group settings. Further, faculty differed from the general workforce in the extent of formal training or institutionalized socialization they experience (Jones, 1986).

Of the 906 newcomers e-mailed to solicit participation, 316 completed the introductory survey (34.9% initial response rate). The first survey was distributed within individuals' first two weeks of employment. Weekly surveys were distributed over the next three months, for a total of 14 possible surveys. Our sample was limited to those who worked over 30 hours per week, since part-time workers may differ in their socialization processes. This screen eliminated 25 respondents. An additional 8 individuals dropped out of the study after the introductory survey. Thus, 264 participants were included in the weekly ongoing survey pool.

Participants were tracked in cohorts based on the date they were hired; in each week we obtained an updated list from hiring records for the new cohort starting work that week. Our sample consisted of 37 weekly cohorts for which data were obtained over our total sampling period of 51 weeks. Of the 264 respondents included in the ongoing pool, 255 (28.1% overall response rate, 97% ongoing study retention rate) were surveyed through all 14 rounds. The 30-person discrepancy from the beginning to end of the survey periods was due to 30 individuals being removed from the sample for failing to complete at least 11 of the 14 surveys on time (within the survey week).

The use of the three-month time frame (i.e., surveys taking place over the first three months of the newcomer experience) matched the often stated conviction that what matters in "onboarding" is the first 90–100 days (Bradt, Check, & Pedraza, 2006; Watkins, 2003). Research has furthermore shown that the first three months of a newcomer's tenure represent the greatest amount of change in work attitudes (Lance et al., 2000). Weekly rather than less frequent assessments were used to allow us to adequately model the decline or increase in our variables over this three-month period. Finally, in contrast to less frequent assessments, one-week intervals are discrete and easy to recall.

### Measures

All independent variables were collected via a weekly internet-based survey.

**Independent variables.** Our measures for *social support and undermining* were taken from Vinokur et al. (1996). Social support was measured with five items regarding supervisors and five items regarding coworkers that asked whether they had engaged in behaviors such as "provided you with encouragement," "listened to you when you needed to talk," or "helped you understand and sort things out" over the past week. Undermining was measured with five items regarding supervisors and five items regarding coworkers that asked about whether they had acted in ways such as "made your life difficult," "acted in ways that show they dislike you," or "criticize you" over the past week. Responses ranged from 1 ("to no extent") to 5 ("to a great extent").

*Hedonic tone* was measured using a scale developed by Scollon et al. (2005). This scale measures affect with eight adjectives (four for pleasant mood, four for unpleasant mood). Example adjectives in-



clude “happiness,” “liking/affection,” “irritation” (reverse-scored), and “sadness” (reverse-scored). Respondents indicated the extent to which they had felt this way over the last week at work (1, “very slightly or not at all,” to 5, “extremely”). High scores indicate positive hedonic tone.

We also included the newcomers’ self-reported *proactive socialization behavior*, using items presented in Ashford and Black (1996). Four items were used to assess information/feedback seeking (e.g., “To what extent have you sought feedback on your performance after assignments?”); three items assessed general socializing with coworkers (e.g., “To what extent have you attempted to form social relationships with co-workers?”); and three items assessed relationship building with one’s boss (e.g., “To what extent have you tried to spend as much time as you could with your boss?”). Evidence supporting the scales’ internal consistency and validity is provided in Ashford and Black (1996). Responses were answered with respect to the past week on scales ranging from 1 (“to no extent”) to 5 (“to a great extent”).

**Dependent variables.** With the exception of turnover (which was measured one year after the end of the study), our work outcome variables were measured in the last survey round, on a separate occasion from the measurement of the independent variables and mediators. For all work outcome variables, responses were on a scale ranging from 1, “strongly disagree,” to 5, “strongly agree.”

*Work proactivity* was measured with nine items (Griffin et al., 2007). Each began “How often in the last week have you,” followed by, for example, “initiated better ways of doing your core tasks,” “improved the way your work unit does things,” and “come up with ways of increasing efficiency within the organization.”

*Social integration* was measured with seven items answered with respect to the last week (Chao, O’Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994; Morrison, 1993). Examples include “My coworkers seem to accept me as one of them,” and “Within my work group, I would be easily identified as ‘one of the gang.’”

*Organizational commitment* was measured with the nine-item version of the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979). Example items include “I find that my values and this organization’s values are very similar” and “I really care about the fate of this organization.” *Withdrawal behavior* was measured with a ten-item scale assessing the frequency of engaging

in a variety of withdrawal behaviors (Roznowski & Hanisch, 1990). Example items include “I often fail to attend scheduled meetings,” “I often let others do my work for me,” and “I am often absent from work.” *Voluntary turnover* was assessed one year after the last survey through archival organizational records of whether the employee had voluntarily terminated his or her employment and the date of the last day of work.

**Control variable.** Because research suggests dispositions affect individuals’ perceptions of negative behaviors from others (Bowling & Beehr, 2006), proactivity (Grant & Ashford, 2008), and job attitudes (Thoresen, Kaplan, Barsky, Warren, & de Chermont, 2003), we included a measure of trait (stable) *neuroticism* collected in the first week of employment in all analyses. The source of this scale was the International Personality Item Pool (Goldberg, 1999). Respondents indicated the extent to which statements such as “worry about things” and “have frequent mood swings” described them. Responses ranged from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”).

## Analyses

All analyses except those for turnover were estimated using latent growth modeling (Chan & Schmitt, 2000). Because the number of survey rounds made our model extremely complex, we fit measurement models independently of our structural model. We used tests of measurement invariance by comparing models with factor loadings and intercepts of items or item parcels (for scales with more than five items) in terms of fixed versus free as described by Chan (1998). Comparing CFI and RMSEA values between the free and constrained models at two decimal places yielded no differences, suggesting that measurement invariance is a tenable assumption. We investigated the form of growth trajectories of our time-varying predictors (supervisor and coworker support and undermining) by estimating both linear and nonlinear models (e.g., Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2009). All models were estimated with Mplus 6.1 (Muthén & Muthén, 2010). Model fit was assessed with chi-square, CFI, RMSEA, and SRMR.

Initially, we fit linear models by setting the coefficients of all variables to 1 on the intercept factors (time 1 survey variables) and to 0 through 11 on the slope factors (survey variables over time). These models showed poor fit when estimated for each variable individually and failed to converge when

estimated as a unified structural model. Thus, we estimated a nonlinear model that allowed the parameters to freely vary within a range from 0 (first round) to 1 (last round). These nonlinear specifications fit the data comparatively well ( $\chi^2 = 4,772$ ,  $df = 2,642$ ; RMSEA = .05, CFI = .90, and SRMR = 0.07). Examination of the slope coefficients and associated predicted values for each variable over time demonstrated that supervisor support, coworker support, and hedonic tone all followed nonlinear trajectories that decreased more substantially at first, and then leveled off somewhat. Overall trends among participants in supervisor and coworker undermining and proactivity were not significant, suggesting no consistent increases or decreases in these variables over time among the sample as a whole. All slopes had significant variance coefficients, demonstrating variability in slopes across individuals.

We analyzed turnover using hazard modeling (Morita, Lee, & Mowday, 1993) with repeated measures of the independent variables (i.e., time-varying covariates). In these analyses, job duration measured in days is the dependent variable, and each survey round is included as a predictor of turnover. Data on all respondents who did not voluntarily quit prior to the final survey round were treated as right-censored.

## RESULTS

Descriptive statistics, reliability information, and zero-order correlations among study variables are

presented in Table 1. The average of between-persons contemporaneous correlations across waves are presented below the diagonal, with the relevant within-person correlations presented above the diagonal.

As shown in Table 2 and illustrated in Figure 2, the mean growth rate trajectories in supervisor support, coworker support, and hedonic tone were significant and negative, suggesting that over the first 14 weeks, supervisor and coworker support and hedonic tone declined. The mean growth rate functions for supervisor and coworker undermining were not significant, suggesting no detectable average change in these variables over time (e.g., see Figure 2). For all variables, however, *between*-persons variance in initial status and growth rates was significant, so these variables can act as predictors of between-persons differences in outcomes. The covariance between initial status and growth was significant for both supervisor support and supervisor undermining. Higher initial levels of supervisor support were associated with greater declines in support over time. Higher initial levels of supervisor undermining were associated with greater increases in supervisor undermining over time.

Table 3 portrays the relationships between supervisor and coworker support and newcomer hedonic tone. Hypothesis 1, suggesting initial levels of supervisor and coworker support are related to initial levels of newcomer hedonic tone, was supported. After controlling for neuroticism, we found that initial levels of supervisory and coworker support, respectively, were positively related to initial lev-

**TABLE 1**  
Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Correlations<sup>a</sup>

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
		Between	Within											
1. Neuroticism	2.49	.66		<i>.91</i>										
2. Supervisor support	3.11	.76	.57	-.23	<i>.94</i>	-.07	.46	-.03	.24	.40				
3. Supervisor undermining	1.16	.43	.24	.28	-.12	<i>.93</i>	-.02	.35	-.21	.08				
4. Coworker support	3.39	.69	.48	-.26	.55	-.07	<i>.92</i>	-.02	.25	.33				
5. Coworker undermining	1.18	.42	.23	.19	-.09	.58	-.14	<i>.91</i>	-.16	.01				
6. Hedonic tone	3.71	.61	.33	-.45	.37	-.32	.42	-.31	<i>.86</i>	.18				
7. Proactive socialization	2.64	.65	.42	-.17	.57	-.01	.52	.01	.36	<i>.89</i>				
8. Work proactivity	3.38	.80		.03	.19	.05	.17	.08	.16	.32	<i>.96</i>			
9. Social integration	3.93	.58		-.29	.23	-.11	.33	-.24	.38	.29	.09	<i>.87</i>		
10. Organizational commitment	3.78	.66		-.30	.24	-.12	.30	-.12	.42	.28	.14	.29	<i>.92</i>	
11. Withdrawal behaviors	1.48	.51		.09	-.12	.17	-.24	.27	-.24	-.17	-.18	-.23	-.33	<i>.86</i>

<sup>a</sup> Coefficients below the diagonal represent the average between-person correlations across each survey wave for repeated measures; coefficients above the diagonal represent the average within-person correlation across survey waves. Average internal consistency reliability estimates (alpha coefficients) are on the diagonal in italics.

**TABLE 2**  
Parameter Estimates of Latent Growth Models<sup>a</sup>

Variables	Supervisor Support	Supervisor Undermining	Coworker Support	Coworker Undermining	Hedonic Tone	Proactive Adjustment
Mean initial status	3.45**	1.13**	3.72**	1.17**	3.8**	2.64**
Variance in initial status	0.58**	0.14**	0.35**	0.09**	0.32**	0.72**
Mean growth rate	-0.46**	0.03	-0.47**	0.01	-0.14**	-0.05
Variance in growth rate	0.38**	0.06**	0.34**	0.03**	0.11**	0.53**
Covariance (initial status and growth rate)	-0.17**	0.02*	-0.05	0.01	-0.01	-0.15

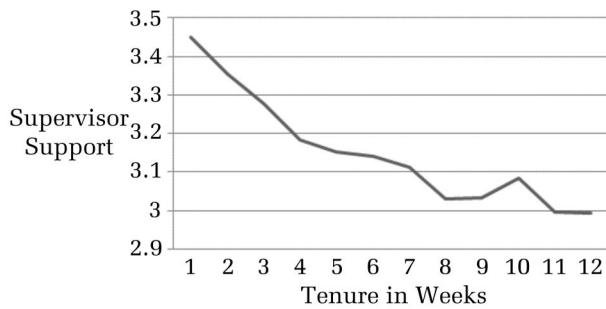
<sup>a</sup>  $n = 264$ .

\*  $p < .05$

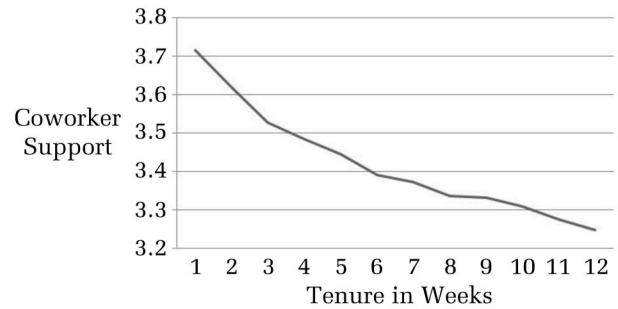
\*\*  $p < .01$

**FIGURE 2**  
Support, Undermining, Affect, and Proactivity over Time

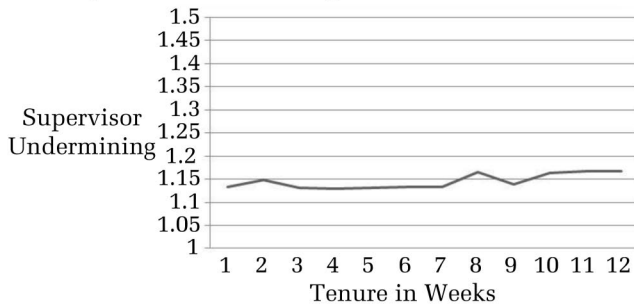
**(2A) Supervisor Support**



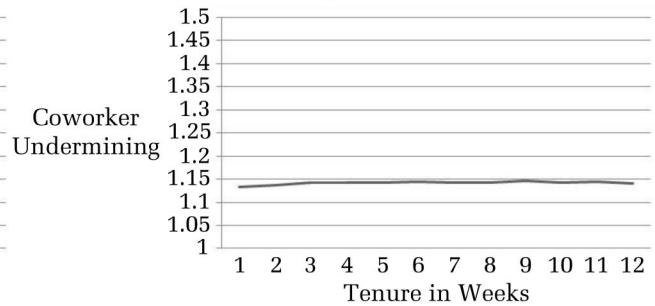
**(2B) Coworker Support**



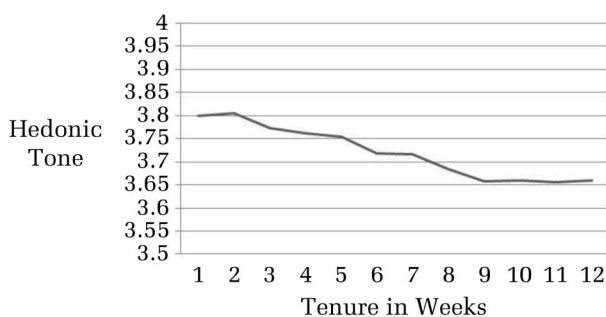
**(2C) Supervisor Undermining**



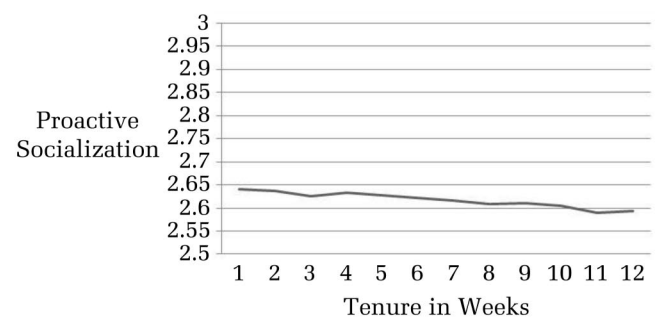
**(2D) Coworker Undermining**



**(2E) Hedonic Tone**



**(2F) Proactive Socialization**



**TABLE 3**  
Predictors of Hedonic Tone<sup>a</sup>

Variables	Initial Status (Intercept) of Hedonic Tone	Change (Slope) in Hedonic Tone
Neuroticism	-0.54**	0.12
Supervisor support intercept	0.15*	
Supervisor support slope		0.51**
Supervisor undermining intercept	0.07	
Supervisor undermining slope		-0.06
Coworker support intercept	0.29**	
Coworker support slope		0.08
Coworker undermining intercept	-0.34**	
Coworker undermining slope		-0.13

<sup>a</sup>  $n = 264$ .

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

els of newcomer hedonic tone ( $\gamma = .15, p < .05$ ;  $\gamma = .29, p < .01$ ).

Hypothesis 2 predicts positive relationships between the trends (i.e., slopes over time) of supervisor and coworker support and hedonic tone. Partially supporting this hypothesis, this relationship was statistically significant for supervisor support ( $\gamma = .51, p < .05$ ) but not coworker support. The significant finding shows that within persons, as individuals experienced increases in supervisory support over time, they also reported more positive levels of hedonic tone. Similarly, as individuals experienced decreases in supervisory support over time, they reported more negative levels of hedonic tone.

Hypothesis 3, suggesting initial levels of supervisor and coworker undermining are related to initial levels of newcomer hedonic tone, was supported only for coworker undermining. Initial levels of coworker undermining were negatively related to initial levels of newcomer hedonic tone ( $\gamma = -.34, p < .01$ ). Hypothesis 4, predicting negative relationships between the trends (i.e., slopes over time) of supervisor and coworker support and hedonic tone, was not supported. Neither slope of undermining was related to the slope in hedonic tone.

Table 4 portrays the relationships between supervisor and coworker support and newcomer proactive socialization behaviors. Supporting Hypothesis 5, we found a positive relationship between the initial status of proactive socialization behavior and both supervisor support ( $\gamma = .50, p < .01$ ) and

**TABLE 4**  
Predictors of Proactive Socialization<sup>a</sup>

Variables	Initial Status (Intercept) of Proactive Socialization	Change (Slope) in Proactive Socialization
Neuroticism	-0.06	0.04
Supervisor support intercept	0.50**	
Supervisor support slope		0.42**
Supervisor undermining intercept	0.09	
Supervisor undermining slope		-0.04
Coworker support intercept	0.28**	
Coworker support slope		0.23**
Coworker undermining intercept	0.05	
Coworker undermining slope		0.02

<sup>a</sup>  $n = 264$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$

coworker support ( $\gamma = .28, p < .01$ ). Supporting Hypothesis 6, we also found positive relationships between the trends of supervisor and coworker support and proactive socialization behavior over time ( $\gamma = .42, p < .01$ ;  $\gamma = .23, p < .01$ ). This finding suggests that as individuals experienced increases (or decreases) in supervisory or coworker support over time, they also reported increased (or decreased) levels of proactive socialization behavior.

Hypothesis 7 posits that higher initial levels of undermining are related to lower initial levels of proactivity, while Hypothesis 8 suggests that more positive trends in undermining would predict decreases in proactive socialization. However, results indicated that the neither the intercepts nor the slopes of undermining were significantly predictive of proactive socialization, and so neither Hypothesis 7 nor Hypothesis 8 was supported.

Next, we examined Hypotheses 9 and 10—thus investigating whether hedonic tone and proactive behaviors mediate the relationship between support and undermining and socialization outcomes (work proactivity, social integration, organizational commitment, withdrawal behaviors, and voluntary turnover). Direct effects (support, undermining, and the mediators predicting socialization outcomes) are shown in Table 5. Indirect effects (support and undermining mediated by hedonic tone and proactivity) are shown in Table 6. We note that while the indirect effects were tested with the direct effects also included in Figure 1, the arrows for direct effects are not presented, to make the image easier to read. Finally, results for voluntary turnover are reported separately, in Table 7, since this

**TABLE 5**  
**Direct Effects Predicting Socialization Outcomes<sup>a</sup>**

Variables	Work Proactivity	Social Integration	Organizational Commitment	Withdrawal Behaviors
Neuroticism	0.27**	-0.13	0.04	-0.11
Supervisor support intercept	-0.05	-0.08	-0.09	0.15*
Supervisor support slope	0.08	-0.01	0.10	-0.10
Supervisor undermining intercept	-0.02	0.29**	0.05	-0.10
Supervisor undermining slope	-0.12	0.04	-0.09	0.00
Coworker support intercept	-0.03	0.10	0.11	-0.18*
Coworker support slope	0.02	0.07	-0.05	0.02
Coworker undermining intercept	0.22	-0.38**	0.04	0.27**
Coworker undermining slope	-0.09	-0.11	-0.11	0.09
Hedonic tone intercept	0.19*	0.10	0.32**	-0.07
Hedonic tone slope	-0.07	0.05	-0.02	0.04
Proactive socialization intercept	0.33**	0.11	0.15*	-0.13*
Proactive socialization slope	0.17*	0.05	-0.02	0.04

<sup>a</sup>  $n = 264$ .

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

variable required a different analytical approach (i.e., hazard modeling).

Table 5 portrays several significant direct effects. Particularly of interest is the differential pattern of relationships found for coworker support and undermining relative to supervisor support and undermining. For instance, initial supervisor undermining (at the start of employment) was *positively* related to social integration 90 days later ( $\gamma = .29, p < .01$ ), yet the intercept for initial coworker under-

mining was negatively related to social integration at 90 days ( $\gamma = -.38, p < .01$ ). Moreover, we found that while initial levels of supervisor support were positively related to withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism ( $\gamma = .15, p < .05$ ), a negative path coefficient was found for coworker support ( $\gamma = -.18, p < .05$ ). Finally, results suggested that initial levels of hedonic tone and both initial levels and the slope of socialization proactivity were predictive of work proactivity (see Table 5).

**TABLE 6**  
**Indirect Effects of Support and Undermining Predicting Socialization Outcomes<sup>a</sup>**

Variables		Work Proactivity	Social Integration	Organizational Commitment	Work Withdrawal
Supervisor support intercept	Hedonic tone intercept	0.03	0.02	0.05*	-0.01
	Proactivity intercept	0.16**	0.06	0.07*	-0.07*
Supervisor support slope	Hedonic tone slope	-0.04	0.03	0.00	0.02
	Proactivity slope	0.07	0.02	0.00	0.02
Supervisor undermining intercept	Hedonic tone intercept	0.01	0.01	0.02	-0.01
	Proactivity intercept	0.03	0.01	0.01	-0.01
Supervisor undermining slope	Hedonic tone slope	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Proactivity slope	-0.01	0.00	0.00	-0.01
Coworker support intercept	Hedonic tone intercept	0.05	0.03	0.10**	-0.02
	Proactivity intercept	0.09**	0.03	0.04*	-0.04**
Coworker support slope	Hedonic tone slope	-0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00
	Proactivity slope	0.04	0.01	-0.01	0.01
Coworker undermining intercept	Hedonic tone intercept	-0.06	-0.04	-0.11	0.02
	Proactivity intercept	0.02	0.01	0.01	-0.01
Coworker undermining slope	Hedonic tone slope	0.01	0.00	0.00	-0.01
	Proactivity slope	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

<sup>a</sup>  $n = 264$ .

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

**TABLE 7**  
**Prediction of Voluntary Turnover Hazard<sup>a</sup>**

Variables	Voluntary Turnover			
	Hazard Ratio	z	Hazard Ratio	z
Neuroticism	1.58	1.41	1.38	0.95
Supervisor support	0.87	-0.48	0.81	-0.65
Supervisor undermining	3.01	3.22**	2.79	2.96**
Coworker support	1.10	0.28	1.08	0.23
Coworker undermining	0.53	-1.37	0.51	-1.47
Proactive socialization			1.43	0.97
Hedonic tone			0.66	-1.09
Wald $\chi^2$ (df)	14	(5)	16	(7)

<sup>a</sup>  $n = 264$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$

Results in Tables 6 and 7 show partial support for Hypotheses 9 and 10. As shown in Table 6, initial supervisor and coworker support were positively related to all four socialization outcomes through the two mediators (hedonic tone and proactive socialization behavior). The relationship between initial levels of coworker undermining and reduced organizational commitment 90 days later was also mediated by hedonic tone and proactive socialization behavior.

Table 7, reporting the repeated-measures turnover analyses described earlier, show that supervisor undermining over time was a significant predictor of the speed and occurrence of newcomer turnover. Those employees who reported greater levels of undermining from their supervisors voluntarily left their positions sooner than those who did not report experiencing such behaviors (hazard ratio = 3.01,  $p < .01$ ). Interestingly, the turnover hazard was not statistically significant for reported undermining from coworkers (hazard ratio = 0.53, n.s.). Neither proactive socialization nor hedonic tone was related to this outcome. As such, there was no evidence for the mediation hypothesis involving the outcome of turnover. Drawing on a suggestion from an anonymous reviewer, we also estimated models that used only the initial levels of support and undermining as predictors of turnover, in keeping with the procedure described in Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Glomb, and Ahlburg (2005). This model was not significant overall, nor were any of the individual coefficients, suggesting that it is the pattern of undermining over time that is associated with turnover rather than just the experience of undermining in a first week.

## DISCUSSION

Newcomer socialization involves repeated interactions of newcomers with coworkers and supervisors. Yet a substantial amount remains to be learned about the power and meaning of initial and dynamic social interactions for organizational newcomers. Our study provides a unique glimpse into these processes, exploring how perceptions of supervisor and coworker support and undermining are important for newcomer adjustment both initially and over time. In the present investigation, we aimed to assess how social support and undermining are related to newcomer hedonic tone and proactive socialization behaviors and how hedonic tone and proactive socialization, in turn, act as mediators between support and undermining and a variety of socialization outcomes. In examining these hypotheses, we offer three major contributions. First, our incorporating both supervisor and coworker support into common models to test their independent and complementary effects corresponds with a growing body of research that suggests that both supervisors and coworkers are critical to the social environment for employees (e.g., Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Duffy et al., 2002; Herschcovis & Barling, 2010). Second, we examined whether early entry undermining and support, as well as changes over time in these constructs, are related to adjustment outcomes for organizational newcomers. Third, we explored the *mechanisms* by which support and undermining might be related to a variety of indicators of newcomer adjustment.

### Implications for Theory and Research

As we noted in the introduction, two key areas of controversy motivated this investigation. The first issue involves interpersonal interactions as a potential source of newcomer adjustment patterns. Our results clearly show that contributors to the socialization literature should not overlook the role of interpersonal interactions when conceptualizing how newcomers become adjusted to their new work environments. Theories of newcomer socialization will need to incorporate both support and undermining and might well incorporate ideas from the literature on interpersonal relationships that explores some of these same issues (e.g., Vinokur & Van Ryn, 1993). Moreover, although some models position newcomer proactivity as largely the result of newcomers' own initiative (e.g., Miller

& Jablin, 1991), here it appears that proactivity is more likely when the appropriate initial social environment is present together with a pattern of continued support. This model is similar to the interactionist model of employee proactivity put forward by a number of scholars (e.g., Grant & Ashford, 2008; Parker et al., 2006) that positions proactive behavior as the result of both of personal and situational determinants. Prior research in a sample of experienced employees has demonstrated that abusive supervision was related to turnover (Tepper, 2000). We extend this research with results showing that these relationships occur quite early in the organizational entry period and are only significant for undermining by supervisors.

The second issue involved the dynamic relationships among socialization variables. Our results portray clearly that what happens initially—first impressions—is very important to newcomers. There is a substantial literature on the importance of first impressions as a catalyst for forming attitudes toward other individuals through a process of confirmatory bias (e.g., Dougherty, Turban, & Calender, 1994; Tetlock, 1983). Our study suggests that first impressions may also serve to develop an organizational newcomer's impression of the social environment in her/his new workplace as a whole, as Stohl (1986) suggested. Future research might address this theoretical area by examining whether newcomers seek out information that is consistent with their first impressions of support and/or undermining.

Our investigation provides further information on the extent to which *changes* in support and undermining are important over time. Our results suggest that newcomers continue to need support over time as they become acclimated (e.g., Fisher, 1986; Wanous, 1992). The effects of support over time suggest that colleagues can, at least in part, make up for a "slow start." At the same time, the positive relationship between the slope of undermining and withdrawal behaviors at the end of the study suggests that some work groups start positively, and undermining increases little by little over time. Such increases are related to higher withdrawal behaviors on the part of the newcomer. Most theory on newcomer adjustment has not specifically taken a position on how changes over time in a social environment might influence newcomers, so further work following the direction laid out by Ashforth (2012) to deal with socialization dynamics will be informative.

It is worth noting that our hypotheses regarding the negative influence of undermining on proactive socialization were not supported. One anonymous reviewer suggested that some individuals who are undermined may engage in more proactive socialization in an effort to overcome the active efforts to block their goal progress. Our results could thus potentially indicate that countervailing forces act on undermined newcomers and that some undermined newcomers engage in more socialization to work against the fact that they've been undermined, whereas other newcomers engage in less socialization because they feel rejected and dispirited.

Finally, our conceptual model addressed the mechanisms (hedonic tone and proactive socialization behavior) by which newcomer support and undermining are posited to relate to important socialization outcomes, including organizational commitment, work proactivity, social integration, work withdrawal, and turnover. Although AET was used as a theoretical framework to explain the relationship between support and undermining and the terminal work outcomes of proactivity, commitment, social acceptance, and withdrawal, our data tend to show that hedonic tone intercepts or slopes do not act as mediators but do have some main effects. Instead, our results clearly suggest that the intercept of proactivity was the most important mediating variable, affecting work proactivity, organizational commitment, and work withdrawal. This pattern is consistent with theories of proactive socialization that propose that newcomers who take an active role in their own adjustment tend to have superior outcomes (e.g., Miller & Jablin, 1991).

### Limitations and Future Research Directions

Our study also adds to the organizational socialization literature by demonstrating the combined effects of coworker and supervisor behaviors on a variety of outcomes. Prior research on socialization has mostly focused on the influence of supervisors (e.g., Bauer, Erdogan, Liden, & Wayne, 2006; Bauer & Green, 1998; Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2009). Our study also showed that supervisors are important, but coworker support and undermining exert additional influence on outcomes. This pattern of findings matches those of prior research showing that supervisor and coworker social behaviors are related to numerous work outcomes (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Herschovis & Barling, 2010). Future research might build on this foundation by exam-

ining the outcomes of different aspects of support, such as the differences between affective and instrumental support found in previous research (Cohen & Wills, 1985). For instance, affective support may be more strongly related to social integration outcomes than to core task outcomes, as insiders exhibit behaviors aimed at developing friendships and making newcomers feel as if they are now insiders themselves. In comparison, instrumental support may be more associated with outcomes such as task efficiency and work group performance.

Our results demonstrating the decline of supervisory and coworker support, as well as newcomer hedonic tone (within the first 90 days of employment) as generalized trends are intriguing. Our finding extends findings by Boswell and colleagues that individuals tend to experience a decrease in job satisfaction over their first year of employment (Boswell, Boudreau, & Tichy, 2005; Boswell, Shipp, Payne, & Culbertson, 2009). In addition to focusing on a mood-based construct (hedonic tone), our findings indicate that declines in hedonic tone are evident within a much more defined time frame and with the use of weekly assessments. Although the employees in our study belonged to a diverse array of work groups and environments, future studies will be needed to examine the generalizability of our findings. Researchers might endeavor to understand why declines in support occur and examine further to what extent these declines in support are a concern. It seems from our results that it would be valuable for organizations to prevent such declines in support; other consequences of declining support would be valuable to identify.

Newcomers may be particularly vulnerable as they try to make sense of an unfamiliar work environment (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Wanous, 1992). To this end, future research should explore moderating effects of support and undermining, respectively, on the relationship between early entry stressors and socialization outcomes. Specifically, how might supportive coworkers and/or supervisors help newcomers as they navigate their new work roles, acquire new skills, and handle unperformed demands? Having been in the same position at one time themselves, coworkers may be especially able to empathize with and support newcomers. Of equal interest, how might undermining in the first weeks of a job interact with work stressors to predict distinct patterns of socialization outcomes? A criticizing supervisor could make the experience of typical stressors be instead felt as much more acute.

Future research might also look into individual differences that moderate the relationship between undermining and moods or proactivity. Although undermining doesn't influence hedonic tone or proactivity in general, some employees may be especially prone to experience sadness and perseverate about rejection, and also to withdraw efforts to fit in. Social psychology researchers have identified rejection sensitivity as an individual difference that makes some people especially prone to have negative reactions when rejected (Ayduk, Mendoza-Denton, Mischel, Downey, Peake, & Rodriguez, 2000).

One limitation of our investigation is the use of self-report scales for constructs, raising the possibility that common method variance is accounting for our observed relationships (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). However, a number of features of our investigation help to guard against this explanation. Specifically, we included controls for dispositional neuroticism, which might influence perceptions of a variety of work features. Second, we separated our predictors and outcomes over time and estimated how changes in our dynamic variables were related to one another. Third, we used an objective, behavioral turnover indicator as a dependent variable in addition to our self-reported relationships. Future research could examine coworker and supervisor perceptions of support and undermining over time to see how they correspond with results from our self-report survey. However, our focus on the newcomers' perceptions of these behaviors is consistent with findings from Bennett and Robinson (2003), who urged researchers to examine deviance from a victim's perspective.

Another limitation of our study was the lack of a measure of pre-entry knowledge. Prior research has indicated that individuals who report higher knowledge of an organization in advance have more positive socialization outcomes (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Wanous, 1992). Future research might see how this pre-entry knowledge contributes to newcomer adjustment by possibly facilitating social relationships or enhancing confidence needed to engage in proactive socialization behaviors.

### Practical Implications

From a management perspective, the results of our study reinforce the importance of supervisors and coworkers as providers of initial socialization



for organizational newcomers. Supervisors should be trained to recognize how important they are as providers of feedback and support (Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992). Training and development sessions for managers should emphasize that a new employee's first weeks on a job are likely to have an effect on her/his subsequent adjustment and that it is within her or his supervisor's power to create conditions to facilitate this adjustment. Supervisors need to take a more proactive role in their employees' development, which doesn't simply end after two or three weeks, but remains important during the entire 90-day initial adjustment period. It is also necessary to train coworkers to provide support. Studies in the past have sometimes included providing support and assistance to newcomers as elements of extra-role behavior (e.g., Van Dyne & Lepine, 1998); our study suggests that organizations should try to transform this support into a regular in-role requirement.

Our study also demonstrates that organizations should acknowledge that supervisor and coworker undermining does exist and should be minimized as much as possible because it decreases feelings of social acceptance and increases withdrawal and turnover. Research in the past has demonstrated that incivility levels are less pronounced among employees who perceive that levels of fairness and equity in their workplace are high (Blau & Andersson, 2005). Again, this appears to underscore the importance of the supervisors, since frontline supervisors often are the ones who create an environment of either high or low procedural justice.

In sum, our study of newcomer adjustment over the first 90 days of a new job demonstrates that initial levels of support from coworkers and supervisors enhance hedonic tone and proactivity, whereas changes in support were related to changes in hedonic tone and proactivity. Initial levels of support from supervisors and coworkers were generally positively related to work proactivity, social integration, and commitment. Despite the general trend favoring the importance of support, we also found that coworker undermining decreased social integration and withdrawal behaviors, and supervisor undermining was uniquely related to voluntary turnover.

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